

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

BROOKINGS DOHA CENTER

AFTER THE JASMINE REVOLUTION:
TUNISIA'S ROAD AHEAD

Doha, Qatar

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. SHARQIEH: Well, thank you very much. I am very delighted to welcome everyone for our discussion today on a very promising transformation, very promising change that's happening in the region, Tunisia, Tunisia that everyone is proud of what Tunisia has accomplished. Unfortunately, with not very encouraging news from different parts of the region, we thought that we should also not forget about the positive, about the hope that's already available in this region.

Tunis has given the Arab region the revolution, but also we look at Tunis has also to give the solution, not only the revolution, but also the solution for Arab transitions.

As you know, everyone is watching Tunis and everyone is watching how you manage your transition process. And with every single step that Tunisia has made, the entire world has been watching, not only the Middle East, and you have absolutely impressed everyone in Tunisia with your latest accomplishment

and your latest achievement of approving the constitution, your new social contract.

This has been a milestone, a very important, major accomplishment, in that Tunisia's transition, and not only for Tunisia, but also for the entire region.

The hope, the progress, the achievements that Tunisia makes, these are all important -- they give hope and change for the region as well.

So, I always reminded my Tunisian friends that watch carefully what you're doing because what you're doing, you're not doing it only for Tunisia, but you're doing it for the entire region. So, we continue to watch carefully and to wish you the best of luck with the hope that you'll continue to make the progress and the achievement that you have made over the past three years.

For that reason, we decided here at Brookings Doha Center is to host this special event for Tunisia, again, with unfortunately depressing news from other parts of the region, we thought that it's

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about time, not only to look at the depressing and the negative news that's happening in the region, but also to look at the positive and to remember and to remind everyone that Tunisia is there and Tunisia is managing its transition.

I am very delighted today to welcome our four guests to this debate and this discussion about the Tunisian experience, the Tunisian model in transition, and where Tunisia is going today, whether you feel that you have accomplished enough to make sure that the Tunisian model is a successful transition, or maybe there are still other challenges down the road.

We are very fortunate to have this conversation with you today and to allow for our audience to ask you the questions that they have on their mind about Tunisia and to learn from you about where Tunisia is heading and what should we expect from Tunisia down the road.

I would like to welcome our great speakers, Amer Al-Areed, to be the first speaker. Amer Al-

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Areed, as you know, is the head of the political bureau of Ennahda Movement in Tunisia. He is a member of the National Constituent Assembly and the chairman of the Assembly's first committee.

Mr. Amer was in exile for almost 20 years in Paris and only in 2011 Mr. Amer came back to Tunisia, to his home country, to contribute and to participate in creating a new future for Tunisia. We are very lucky to have you, Mr. Amer, with us today, and I would like to begin with you and give you five to seven minutes to tell us about your views of where Tunisia is today and where Tunisia is heading and any other messages that you would like to convey for our audience here about Tunisia. The floor is yours.

MR. AMER: In the name of (inaudible), the most compassionate, thank you very much. I thank you for being so much interested in Tunisia and this, of course, gives Tunis an extra responsibility, in fact, in that they must succeed so that they will be a model for success in the region. And I am honored to be here in this event in Doha, this beautiful city, and

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this very nice country and people.

In fact, we are beginning a new stage in Tunisia, built on the national dialogue engagement. After the revolution in Tunis that toppled that dictatorship, you know, what happened, what political movements, and we ended up by organizing good and honest elections that led to the creation of the National Constituent Assembly and that led to the writing of the constitution.

But building on these experiences, we faced so many challenges, such as terrorism, which targeted some of the political figures, including the member of the political (inaudible) party, Rahimi and the political situation became a bit disturbed.

But after that, a number of organizations from the civil society have presented a sort of roadmap for national dialogue and we all began going into this dialogue so that we reach a consensus that does not cancel the legitimacy of the elections, but in a way that this (inaudible) becomes sort of (inaudible) and agreement to the different parts.

So, we have noticed that the constitution authorization period, usually they're numerical majority is not enough. What we need is a sort of consensus and compromises between the different categories and the different points of view, the different competitive -- competing groups so that one can reach an historical consensus and agreements in order to be able to build the new state and to coexist.

We are also convinced, and this was another constructs of our political thinking, that those who disagree with us in Tunisia are not our enemies, no, they are only political competitors. We have some political rivalry, but they are not enemies. It is not a hostile relation between the different political parties, that's why we were able to get into this dialogue and to avoid confrontation.

There are some radical tendencies that called for confrontation, but we imposed -- we, the political domain -- major political parties and the civil society -- we were imposed the dialogue and

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consensus to (inaudible) that we wish to writing the constitution, which includes the most important (inaudible), including the public system, the Arabs and Islam, and this constitution also includes all the rights and liberties.

I call this constitution the constitution of rights and liberties. In fact, there's a problem in all of the Arab world, the freedom or liberty issue is an essential one, it's not a marginal one.

So, we have two choices, either go into conflictual situation that might lead to confrontations, or to choose -- to change or to modify the balances -- the political balances that came out of the constituent (inaudible) in 2011 by reaching some consensus and agreements that pave the way for liberties and freedom and the continuation of the transitional democratic process in Tunisia.

So, we decided to be on the side of freedom and to give all the (inaudible) so that soon Tunisia will be on the democratic path and will not deviate from it.

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In fact, we give so many sacrifices, including, for example, abandoning the government and -- in order to have a good constitution. We said that we would give up the government, but as a condition for writing the constitution, and we said our condition was that we should be an independent election committee, and through dialogue we have reached all this -- agreed on all this. Now we have a supreme constitution or committee that is supervising the elections and we have a partnership -- partnership constitution because all the partners -- political partners and parties took part in the formulation of this constitution, which received about total unanimity, more than 200 votes, and we have a maximum date for the elections.

We could not decide what date, but the constitution stipulated that it should be at the latest in 2014 and we expect that the elections will be end of September or October or the worst case it will be about November.

We have presidential elections and then

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parliamentary elections, and then after that, six or eight, ten months after that, there will be local elections and also the new constitution gives authority -- a large authority to the local authorities that are elected. They have the authority of adopting their budgets. This is the real democracy.

Democracy should be supported locally, not only centrally. This is a good protection for democracy just like having the supreme constitutional accord, which protects the constitution.

So, today I can say that Tunisia is on the path of elections and on the path of elections with an agreement or a political agreement between different (inaudible). This does not mean that there are no competitions. No, the competition is very high between the different parties and different groups, but all of this will be within some of the patriotic and national constants.

We can say that we consider Tunisia as a ship that carries us all together and we must organize

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our differences inside this ship so that it does not sink. This is the logic by which we went into and took part in the national dialogue just as the other - - most of the other political parties, and we hope that this will lead us to very good result in the very near future.

MR. SHARGIEH: (Inaudible) your commitment to the time. And to giving us this incite about the Tunisian model and the Tunisian experience.

I would like to ask Rachid Khechana to speak next. Rachid is a program editor at Al Jazeera Network. He was the former Deputy Secretary General of the Progressive Democratic Party in Tunisia. Rachid is a member of the Tunisian League for Human Rights. Rachid has vast experience in journalism with a focus -- a particular focus on the Middle East and North Africa. He worked as the Bureau Chief of Al Hayat newspaper in Tunisia, and Rachid has also spent quite a long time in exile and he was --

MR. KHECHANA: In jail.

MR. SHARGIEH: -- in jail as well. And so

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Rachid (inaudible) opposition to the Tunisian dictatorship, Zine El Ben Ali, and those who are (inaudible). We are very fortunate and lucky and delighted to have you, Rachid, here to be with us and share with us your insight of the Tunisian experience today. The floor is yours, Rachid.

MR. KHECHANA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It's an honor and a pleasure to be with you today and I have perhaps to mention that the first time you held similar about the Arab spring was here in this center on March, 2011.

English -- since English is not my mother language and since you have very competent translators, Dr. Saman and Dr. Moufack, I'll speak in Arabic because I will be more fluent in my mother language.

(Through translator.)

Your Excellency, ambassadors, ladies and gentlemen, good evening. It is true that we Tunisians, we have puzzled the world and puzzled ourselves by our revolution, which ended very fast

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with a very low cost and succeeded in achieving a very good result after three years of the revolution. And it is true what my colleague just said, that the Tunisian revolution give its fruits, unlike other revolutions, this fruit is the constitution that is presented as a gift to the people, which is a very progressive constitution, even compared to some European constitutions.

It is true now we are close to new elections, which is another step towards more democratic achievements, but I think we should not only be proud of what we have done and achieved, to make sure that this revolution continues, we should look back a little to see where we made mistakes so that you correct them in the future and do not repeat them.

I will now speak very briefly about two stages. Before the elections of the third of November -- sorry, October, 2011, and then after these elections. Before the elections, I think the country, through it's political parties, was heading to the

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choosing the Constituent National Assembly, which was a wrong decision, because the Constituent Assembly simply became a parliament and did not study the constitution.

So, before that it became a parliament that approved the formation of governments and promulgated laws just as any other parliament. So, that's why the political conflicts inside the parliament were inflicted on the democratic process.

I think in September, 2011, 11 political parties -- major political parties, agreed upon a document that they signed in front of the TV cameras, which (inaudible) document -- I have it here, it is two pages, and its third point, it says agreeing on the idea that this National Constituency Assembly should be no longer than one year so that the country can serve our main problems and issues, whether the social ones or the economic ones.

What happened is exactly what this (inaudible) were worried about, that the assembly itself, instead of focusing on facing the social and

economic challenges that we have in a country where we have very limited revenues, this parliament -- the parliament, which was in fact, it is an assembly, this constituency became a sort of -- discussions of political consultations took place.

Then after the elections, what happened is that they were supposed to have a government of bureaucratic, that is to say of those who are competent people, who are not political, but what happens that the government that were formed were purely political just sort of (inaudible) agreement that led us to different political conflicts that (inaudible) progress of the country because instead of focusing on the development of the country, they focus on other things, such as writing the constitution.

The other thing, there, to this technocrat government, had a (inaudible) in January 2012 (inaudible) was proposed by Mr. Hamadi Jebali, but this proposition was not accepted and that's why we lost a full year to go back to the starting point that was suggested a year ago. So, at that point, with all

the conflicts and the assassinations that one could have saved ourselves that had we began this technocrat government right from the beginning.

What the reflection of this on the (inaudible) public is that we found that those who are competent people in the society who are the basis for the development such as the media people, such as the judicial system, did not have the opportunity to be active and to (inaudible) institutions. I remember that there were two decrees about the media and the organization of this very difficult sector were not implemented at all, although some parts of it were implemented but very lately, such as the creation of the television.

Another thing and another result of this, that the main sources of information was that radio, TV, or press are the same sources that dominated the situation -- the media in the older (inaudible) regime. We take the same press, the newspapers were there, and even the personalities, the older regime began working again, and the same thing happened in

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the judiciary system. I will not go into details of that because it's knowledge that's well known by everybody.

As a result of this, and in my opinion, we found -- we faced the phenomena of terrorism in our political life in such a way that toppled all our ambitions. At the beginning, our revolution was peaceful and there should be no violence in it, but it did not achieve success by military force, such as was the case in Libya or Syria.

But nevertheless, despite that, the germ of terrorism did get into us and we had to take the defensive position. I remember when we began hearing terrorist threats against some political personalities, we faced this phenomena in a defensive way by appointing guards and protection for these political personalities instead of studying how can we limit (inaudible) and how can we fight -- how we can stop it.

So, we did not have a policy for confronting this terrorism phenomena in a way that brings together

security, the political and the social together.

I think this reached the top of the agenda when the attack on the American embassy occurred and then a realization came into existence of the necessity of doing something about terrorism. It was very late in the day, whether we liked it or not.

Another point I would like to allude to is the postponement of transitional justice and reaching a national consensus. By that stage, things were becoming clearer, but the period leading up to that period was a period of struggle, which paralyzed the states' different organs, and three years have passed, yet we have not seen a phase marking what we all know as transitional justice and the faces we see now, the parties and things which are prominent today, should have been taken care of prior to that and this has not happened, contrary to the experience of other countries like Latin America. And in Morocco, something similar happened, not complete, but what we experienced in Tunisia, we have what we call as the improvement of the revolution or refinement of

revolution law, and all of this produced some negative results.

And postponed until a very late stage the producing of a constitution for the country.

Another point is, we have a track now, which takes the people of Tunisia, population of the country, from a designation of subjects to proper citizens, and this is something which we have achieved, and some people commented that the Tunisian revolution is going in a different track to what's -- I mean, in Egypt, for example, the revolution there is going in the opposite direction and the old regime of Hosni Mubarak is being reproduced now.

The only success stories of our Arab revolutions is the experience of Tunisia, despite some violent acts and assassinations. Hence, a question, and that is, how can we protect this Tunisian model?

We have a situation of division, but thank god it's only a political one, it's not religious or sectarian or otherwise. There is, however, some sort

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of a struggle between two blocks belonging to different cultures and they can reach a historic compromise, as with the Italian politician (inaudible), calls the historic compromise as some sort of a common understanding between two blocks, each keeping to its own identity and culture, but agreeing on how to run a country together on some sort of bipartisan political agreement.

Thank you.

MR. SHARGIEH: (Inaudible) our guest Amine Ghali. Amine, he is a program director of the Al Kawakibi Democracy Transition Center where he works on issues of democracy reform and transition in the Arab region. Amine has been appointed a member of the National Commission to Investigate Corruption and a member of the National Commission on Transitional Justice in Tunis. And I had -- I was very fortunate to see Amine in action, to visit him in his office in Tunis and to see the great work that their center, Al Kawakibi Center, is pioneering, actually, in the entire Arab region, of establishing, for example, the

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first library on transitions and to make the advice on transitions available, not only for Tunis, but for others in the region.

And I also, as I shared with Amine, I also like about the Center it's name, Al Kawakibi. It's an authentic center that also resonates with the region. So, we're fortunate to have you, Amine, with us today, and the floor is yours.

MR. GHALI: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Ibrahim, thank you for this introduction. Thank you for the audience for coming to listen to what we all have to say about the Tunisian experience, and as Mr. Khechana said, everyone speaks English and Arabic here, so I'll switch to Arabic and then on the second session, I'll speak in English.

(Through translator.)

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for being with us this evening, and listening to what we have to say about the Tunisian experience. I thank Mr. Ibrahim for his introduction on the Tunisian experience, although I think we cannot really call it

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a success story only after three years because we cannot really assess and evaluate an experience after only three years.

In the opinion of experts, and by definition, they say it's the period which starts from the revolution's being launched and the starting point, to having a proper parliamentary -- or two parliamentary elections. We have only an exceptional thing, and that is the election of a constituency -- a National Constituent Council and hopefully we will see the first parliamentary elections and maybe after the second one in about eight years into the revolution, we can then perhaps decide whether or not we have succeeded or not.

But nevertheless, the three years have seen some successes on the road to democratization in Tunisia, and like what Mr. Rachid has said, in the last few weeks only, which is like formulating somewhat positive constitution, also the election of a national commission for elections after two years of bitter discussions and discussions, and also the

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endorsement of somewhat late transitional justice draft law, which was there since 2013, but was not ratified or endorsed until about a year later, that's December 2013, and also the formation of a government of technocrats, which is also something which happened a bit late in the day.

Therefore, what our colleagues and brothers in Arab countries talk about, what they say, in fact, they say they tried to learn from our mistakes. Of course, we were hoping rather they would learn from our successes, but nonetheless, this is what happened.

One of the most important mistakes, if you can call them that in Tunisia, is transition to democracy does not start with partisan approaches, but by national consensus. We in Tunisia, after the revolution, embarked on the path of starting a new democratic state, not to build a new Tunisia, but a new democratic state in Tunisia, and this is something which cannot be achievable except through reaching consensus, and every time we use the formula of majority and minority, we ended up in failure.

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Immediately after the revolution, we had a new approach of managing the public affairs of the state through civil society. More often than not, by that I mean the contrast between civil society vis-à-vis political organizations and the civil society organizations are made up of lawyers, media people, et cetera, and this is, of course, I place that in contrast with political parties and organizations.

By this general definition, what we call the (inaudible) Committee or the Committee for National Democratization or something, used to reach decisions -- the membership of that committee was about 150 people, mostly from the civil society organizations and a few from political organizations, and even -- well, the majority of the members were representing themselves and not in their capacity as representing their organizations. And this commission has really accomplished many successes, more than 130 decrees, which are similar to laws, were passed, and the vast majority of those were positive in nature like the ones pertaining to the media, political organizations,

and audio/visual media outlets, and many other laws.

In the same period, public affairs used to be managed through independent commissions like the Fact-finding Commission on Corruption, the Commission on Violence, the Commission on Independence. These were all independent commissions, not based on bipartisanship or partisanship, but after the 23rd of October elections, this was the choice of the people, which produced the National Constituent Council. After that, the political partisan approach began to dominate the scene, and the thinking along the lines of majority/minority, and we know the majority people who call themselves the majority did not win the elections, they just came first in it. And they tried to compel others and impose their point of view, and this caused a lot of -- despite some successes, by and large, this delayed the process, delayed the passing of the constitution, and electing a national elections commission, also tackling the problems and reforming the judiciary, the security apparatus, the economic situation, so much so that we reached -- we started

teetering on the brink of disaster and violence.

There were some attacks on political parties and things started getting really complicated. There were attacks against universities, academicians, et cetera, and this was the biggest distortion of democratization process in Tunis until the summer of 2013 when the second or third major political assassination took place of Mr. Mohamed Brahmi. This really set back the civil society and the four largest organizations of the general workers syndicate and the Human Rights Commission, the Lawyers Syndicate, and others.

This was the first time such an alliance was formed between the two parts -- the civil society (inaudible) showed that it was much more mature than the political parties and organizations because it managed to produce a roadmap to expedite things, mainly on the constitution track and general elections, et cetera.

Every time we set aside the political majority/minority approach, we were successful. This

initiative, called "the National Dialogue" and this entails many positive conations, of course, because it was successful in producing another commission in the midst of the National Constituent Council because the council, thus far, used to rely wholly on the approach of minority/majority and use the same proportional representation which was produced in the elections.

So, therefore, they established a committee on what they call the Committee on Compromises, or Consensus, which is really indicative of the attitude behind it and we managed, in the few weeks of the process, to bypass many of the delays we experienced in the many months prior to that, and the national dialogue managed to produce the kind of results, which took the process forward and therefore an endorsement of the constitution took place in the three weeks rather than a year or so, which we took prior to that, without any success, and hence we see the importance of the approach based on national consensus rather than minority/majority formula, which left many black spots in the process, which, unless tackled

positively, will always limit the successes of the Tunisian experience, which was marred by violence and terrorism. The economy, which is teetering on the brink of disaster and collapse, and thirdly, I do not want to use the word "failure", but I'll say, delay the reforming of the security regime.

The security apparatus was one of the most important tools of oppression in the hands of the Ben Ali regime and in a democratic regime, we should not see similar experiences. Thank you.

MR. SHARQIEH: (Inaudible) and now this approach to Tunisia's constitution. Monica's work focuses primarily on Islamism, youth politics, and security reform in Tunisia. Her work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *Foreign Policy*, and *The Huffington Post*, as well as many academic publications as well. And I would like to remind everyone that we have a copy of her paper that's ready. It's available online, of course, and also hard copy available, and we're very lucky to have had this opportunity with you, Monica, to write to us about the Tunisian model,

the Tunisian experience, from an independent analysis view.

So, now I would like to ask you also to share with us your insights on the Tunisian experience, again, from an independent analysis view and how you see things in Tunis. The floor is yours.

MS. MARKS: All right. Thank you so much. I'm really happy to be here. I'm not sure how many Tunisia expert types we have in the audience, so I'm going to try to keep it intelligible to everyone.

I think a very common way to look at the passage of the Tunisian constitution right now is a little bit thin. A lot of people are applauding the constitution and that's wonderful, we should be applauding, this is a remarkable achievement, but getting here was not easy and this is the first of many, many steps in what will be a long and arduous transition, and it's not at all clear exactly how it's going to pan out.

The constitution, at the end of the day, is a document. Tunisia had a pretty good constitution

before. It's wonderful that they have a new democratically written constitution in a post-revolutionary context now, but at the end of the day, constitutions are documents. All Tunisia's legislation needs to be reformed to coincide with the new constitution. That has to be done by a constitutional court, which hasn't yet been formed entirely.

The local courts have to be brought into synergy with the new constitution too, in addition to all these different realms of institutional reform, security sector reform, judicial reform, reform inside pretty much all of the ministries, which were heavily corrupted and corroded, especially the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Justice under the old regime.

So, all sorts of reforms need to be carried out. So, this is really just the beginning and I think it's wonderful that we're all here tonight in the spirit of positivity, in the spirit of applause, but it might be a little early to talk about models,

and I think it's very important -- one of the main things we've learned from this constitutional drafting process is managing expectations is central.

So, it's important in our optimism, in our happiness for this moment, to also manage expectations, which is something that Tunisia's Constituent Assembly failed to do many, many times, which is part of the reason why you had this summer, in the wake of the coup in Egypt, very, very vocal calls from the Tunisian opposition, the unelected opposition party, (inaudible) Tunis, to completely dissolve the Constituent Assembly, which was just days away from beginning to vote on the final draft of the constitution to have those final ratifying votes this July. It was just, you know, days away from fully appointing the new nine-member election board. They'd appointed eight of the nine members. So, many things were on the cusp of being finalized this summer when you had what I considered to be the greatest threat to Tunisia's constitutional drafting process, which was calls from the unelected opposition to completely

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dissolve the entire constituent assembly, which is, in effect, burning the house down.

So, I'm going to talk about a few issues. I'm going to talk about identity issues, I'm going to talk briefly about this talk of technocracy and consensus, because one of the main questions that we've seen in Tunisia, and I think Amine brought these questions up, and we might have some slight differences -- one of the main questions is how to craft a constitution in a de-politicized context that is both de-politicized and democratic. How do you have a context -- a structure to create a constitution that's de-politicized but also democratic? If you're having an unelected body writing a constitution, how is it democratic? Who's appointing these people? It's really wonderful to talk about consensus. That's something that Tunisia's two post revolutionary presidents, Habib Bourguiba and Ben Ali, talked about a lot. They talked about unity, kind of these Jacobin ideas of unity, we are all one, we're all homogeneous, we're all unified, we're all secular, we're all

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peaceful, we're all Tunisians. And it sounded really good, but at the end of the day, people disagree, and disagreeing is democratic. And you have to have a forum in which those disagreements play out. And part of that process is political. How do you do that by means that are not political?

So, this has been a major question.

And then I'll also talk about the importance of structures. So, just to say a few sentences about each and hopefully dynamize the audience to ask some really wonderful questions.

Identity. I think something that is often ignored when we talk about Tunisia's constitution and constitutional drafting in general, we tend to think about it in a sort of anodyne way, in a legalistic way. It's all part of having the right mechanisms, the right structures, saying the right things, creating the right document. But in a post-conflict or post-revolutionary context, writing a constitution is a collective, soul-searching endeavor, and it's a collective, soul-searching endeavor that takes place

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in a context that hasn't seen real transitional justice.

So, in Tunisia's case, you had a country in which people had many, many differences, but they were told that they didn't. They were told, you're all one, you're all unified, which is exactly what the dictator wanted people to believe, because it made people easier to control if they weren't constantly talking about their differences. So, you had this lid held very tightly on the societal pot. And you had all these tensions buzzing and percolating inside that pot. And the lid threw the pod -- the lid of the pot off, and all of the sudden, people are talking about what makes them distinctive.

You've got, in a country where women had their hijabs pulled off of them and they were spit on for wearing the hijab simply, in a country where you had police officers stationed in mosques listening to the Friday sermons where young men would be arrested and sometimes tortured for simply wearing a beard, you had, all of the sudden, people daring to wear niqabs.

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Massive change. All of the sudden you had young men growing very thick beards and proclaiming themselves to be Salafi jihadis. But on the other side of the equation, you also had secular oriented people speaking out in ways they never had before. You had leftists speaking out against the government in ways they never had before. You had films like *Persepolis* being shown. You had Nadia El-Fani's film, *No God, No Master*, being shown. You had a very secular art exhibit in La Marsa in summer 2012 that wrote suppan (ph.) "Allah" in ants and this really provoked some riots between secularists and Salafis.

So, all of the sudden you have differences, and I think it's very important for us to place ourselves in that mental universe to empathize with that kind of change, to begin to understand what writing a constitution in this context is like. It's a very, very difficult thing because you're codifying identity in a country that hasn't been able to have a candid discussion of identity.

So, it's chaotic. You know? You've got all

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of these boiling, buzzing particles and you're trying to codify them? It's very difficult.

So, this has been part of the process. At the same time that you've had this fear of the other on multiple sides, this fear of who we are, and finally, after so many years of being forced to look at ourselves in Ben Ali's funhouse mirrors, we're finally seeing ourselves maybe as we are, and it can be really scary.

In addition to all this stuff, you've also got big, big economic and security challenges that really are not direct results of political polarization at all. They're very natural, understandable results of completely upending a dictatorial command structure in institutions like the Ministry of Interior, which was very top down, like the Ministry of Justice, where Ben Ali purposefully kept communication between and within these ministries to a nil, all of the sudden you're telling the Ministry of Interior, they need a public relations guy, they need to be doing interviews, they need to be

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transparent, and they need to somehow go from a Muhabarat-based structure, what they call in Tunisia (inaudible), to looking at forensics, to not using torture, to having transparent rule of law, arrest, and trials.

These are massive, massive challenges that are going to take years, and all the government, the new government is trying to deal with all of these challenges in a spinning vacuum of identity, economic challenges. You know, for a whole lot of Tunisians, the economy was one of the main motivations for the revolution. When they talk about Karama, dignity, they're talking about being able to put enough food on the table for their families. And inflation is rising. People are very angry because of this.

For a whole lot of Tunisians, the main question in the country is not these political debates in the capital. This is something that Rachid had said, and I really appreciate that. We often forget it as internationals coming to Tunisia. We think that it's all about the constitution, it's all about the

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political debates, but you need to get out of Tunis, you need to get out of the capital and see that for a whole lot of people, the members of the Constituent Assembly were kind of fat cats with big salaries who weren't addressing their daily concerns, who weren't really addressing the police officer who tortured them.

I spoke to one woman who said, "I see my rapist everyday." So, they want to see transitional justice on the local level, they want to see economic material changes in their day-to-day realities, and they weren't seeing that. So, when the Constituent Assembly kept missing its deadlines because of promises that 11 out of the 13 main parties made before the elections, not just Ennahda, these are promises that loads of parties made, and they kept breaking these deadlines, breaking these promises, the anger really mounted and the desire for stability, for security, and for economic stability, mounted, which created a population that was much more vulnerable to these calls to completely dissolve the Constituent

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Assembly, to anti-democratic calls.

A couple more words on the idea of consensus and technocracy. There's been a lot of talk about consensus and legitimacy, and Ennahda and the other parties of the troika, mainly CPR, argued that we have electoral legitimacy. And I think what you heard from Mr. Amer Al-Areed was very interesting because he said, very candidly, one of the main things we learned is that it's not about electoral legitimacy, it's about consensus, but these lessons are hard learned and even though consensus sounds like a very pretty buzzword, it's very difficult to achieve. And how do you say to your party that it is democratic for us to be negotiating with unelected actors when we're the ones who were elected? How do you defend that? These are difficult things to do, especially when so many people inside your party are saying these guys are counter-revolutionaries, these guys are old regime members, these guys are rats and they're crawling out of their holes again.

That's very difficult for Ennahda to do.

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And we need to understand the challenges that Ennahda was grappling with, and as well as the criticisms from the secular side, you know, for a lot of secularists in Tunisia, they saw Ennahda leading with quite conservative positions on a number of issues, leading with criminalization of blasphemy, (inaudible), which was a very, very problematic position, leading with language on women's status that, instead of very clearly stating equality said, (inaudible), their two roles complement each other within the family, so it was complementary language.

So, these sorts of things scared a lot of secularists, and so they said, from the other side, that Ennahda won't back down, they won't compromise unless we go -- basically go crazy on them. We need to get all the civil society organizations together, we need to mount international pressure, and then they'll back down.

So, it wasn't -- it's not simply a happy-go-lucky story about compromise, it's a story about lots of mutual suspicion, lots of polarization, an

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environment where people lacked the tendons and linkages of trust that naturally build in a more democratic environment.

People weren't allowed to talk across the table. A lot of people were told that people in Ennahda were terrorists for a very long time, and so they're constantly second-guessing, they're constantly saying, what are Ennahda's real motivations.

Just a couple final words about structures. It's been very difficult for the government in Tunisia to meaningfully reform institutions without the legal skeleton of a constitution, so they've been in a kind of catch-22 situation where everyone is saying, we need judicial reform, we need a police structure that works, we need to have a coherent response to the Salafi jihadi issue, all of these things, all of these demands. But it's very difficult to begin reforming the flesh of all of that legislation without the central skeleton of a constitution. Economically, it's also been very difficult for foreign direct investors to come in and make critical deals with the

government because the government isn't sure how much sovereignty it has and that legal architecture isn't in place, and that's still the case in Tunisia right now with the (inaudible) government.

So, it's very important to keep in mind the structures, to keep in mind the institutions, to really have a view towards process oriented partnership instead of the hit and run interest in the constitution alone. (Inaudible) Tunisia has written its constitution wonderful, let's move on. So, hopefully that will incite some good questions.

MR. SHARGIEH: Thank you very much, Monica. Thank you. I appreciate this. I'm sure the audience, they also have questions. I will begin, take advantage of my role. So, I will get back to you after I ask my questions.

My very first --

SPEAKER: (Inaudible.)

MR. SHARGIEH: After the question you can, if you have a comment.

(Inaudible.)

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MR. SHARGIEH: Now, my question to you, Mr. Amer, Ennahda is in a very critical position as I learned from many of the discussions that I had with Tunisians, where Ennahda is generally viewed by the Salafis that too much accommodating the liberals, while the liberals also accuse Ennahda of too much accommodating for the conservative Salafi movement.

So, you're kind of in the middle over here and you have pressure from both sides, where each party accuses you of being -- or accommodating or (inaudible) the other party. And with the Salafis saying that you're not really seriously committed to the major principles of Islam, all that, so my question actually is not about the Salafis, it's not about the liberals. My question is about your own constituencies.

Now, while you're negotiating the constitution, and you negotiated very serious, critical, tough issues, like the Sharia law, like blasphemy, like many other things, how were you able to handle these issues within your own constituency?

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Did you face any opposition within the party, within Ennahda party itself? Was there understanding? Were there defections? Were there protests? How did wide support for Ennahda itself view this? And how you managed to convince your constituencies that you are doing the right thing?

MR. AL-AREED: (Through translator.) Thank you very much, (inaudible), your question goes to the heart of the problem. It's a very important point really what you're making.

When we gave concessions, we considered them as sacrifices for the sake of the country. We did not give up on our principles. What we did was sacrifice for the sake of the country and contrary to what Mr. Ghali has said, if we had a political agenda, we wouldn't have made these concessions.

All the countries, which are moving on the process of democratization, no government is changed unless through another election, but some of our partners did not want us to go all the way. What can we do? We are really keen on the interests of this

country no matter how much we agree or disagree with them, we are all equal citizens. So, therefore, we chose consensus out of conviction, and for the sake of the country, and we really went beyond any narrow political agendas for the sake of the country as a whole.

This is the first point. The second point is when we used to discuss the constitution, this constitution is not made in the image of any of us as Tunisians, not 100 percent individually, but it's in the image of all of us, all of us can find ourselves in it by a large percentage, but it's not exclusively a reflection of any of us or either of us. And when we were discussing the work of the commission on the question of elections, a question was posed: Where do we start?

I was head of a commission. I had 13 draft constitutions, one from Ennahda, one from the Worker's Syndicate or Union, and there were fears on the part of the small parties regarding the entire process. We in Ennahda said we will start with a blank white paper

so that no party can claim hegemony or domination on the others, and we started with a blank page, a clean sheet, and we engaged experts from inside and outside the country, we engaged the civil society and the society at large in a dialogue so that the constitution will be one for the entire people of Tunisia, not for Ennahda or the ruling Troika or the political parties represented in the National Constituent Assembly.

So, therefore, there were points of disagreement. We in Ennahda are very sensitive to the question of freedoms. We enter the political scene through the gate of freedom. In our Islamic worldviews, freedom, liberties, are the essence and the individual public freedoms, we should be all equal in them regardless of any political affiliation, social status, et cetera.

So, therefore, when we came to discussing the issues pertaining to freedoms, we did not encounter many disagreements. Of course there were some discussions on the freedom of belief, et cetera,

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expression. We in Ennahda have no qualms about that whatsoever. We are convinced that we defend all these freedoms, whether individual or public, and we are proud that this is enshrined in the constitution, not only that, but there are chapters, that's Article 49, which really bans any violation of the essence of these freedoms and any pretext whatsoever.

So, therefore, there's nothing, no one can find a pretext in this constitution and Article 49 in particular. I think this replies to your question.

MR. SHARGIEH: (Inaudible) question that the Egyptian experience has influenced your decisions and your experience and the way you dealt with the latest crisis after the opposition withdrew from the Constituent Assembly. My question to you, to what extent, really, the Egyptian experience has impacted or influenced your decisions and your way of dealing with the politics in Tunisia? In what way it impacted you?

SPEAKER: (Unidentified.) (Speaking through translator.)

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Definitely, the military coup in Egypt has impacted not only us in Tunisia, but the entire region, and the most important lesson we learned from the Egyptian experience is like what Rachid said is not to follow in the footsteps of the Egyptian experience because it's been very problematic and it caused many disasters.

Secondly, when the coup happened in Egypt, we were in the 11th hour of endorsing the constitution and setting all the important dates. The coup took place in Egypt and immediately after that, the late Mohamad Brahma was assassinated, so the process was brought to a halt in its tracks because some people in the opposition called for the complete cancellation or the abolishment of the process in its entirety.

The majority of people said, we cannot really respond to this demand by the opposition, then there was this push and pull. Eventually, we started a dialogue and a roadmap was produced, and the roadmap which was produced was balanced, to a large extent, and then we agreed that it can be possible or it must

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-- the government should be changed, the government should resign, and government made up of technocracy should be established, our independence, and in the return for neutralizing the government, we agreed that we should restart the process, the country should be put back on the path of elections.

This was a win-win situation for everybody. The whole country won. There were no winners or losers, but the whole country won, and I think this is important in the entire process.

MR. SHARGIEH: (Inaudible) Rachid, if I can put it this way, toppling the government or changing the government in Tunisia, so they withdrew from the Constituent Assembly and they protested nonstop, and they forced the government to change the government and bring a new government that's focusing on the expertise of the ministers rather than autocrat government -- the technocrat government, sorry, rather than a government composed of political parties.

Now, and they were successful, they insisted, all the way to the end. Now, my question to

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you is that, now that we have seen a new constitution, and a new technocrat government, and the opposition achieved their goals, to a large extent, how are they going to do politics after the elections? What if Ennahda comes back to politics with a majority again and there are crises? Are we going to see more opposition going to the streets, withdrawn from the Constituent Assembly? And also, with the experience, actually, that we saw during this crisis, many defections within the opposition themselves, so this, in my view, poses a very serious challenge to the opposition itself. How are they going to run and manage politics after the elections?

MR. KHECHANA: There are two parallel phenomena, many parties are disintegrating into four or five smaller groups and also new groups are being formed on the basis of political affiliation, cultural, or the (inaudible) and individual, et cetera. These two phenomena are moving hand-in-hand in parallel and I think we are on the countdown for elections and this rearrangement of political parties,

everyone is trying to put their own house in order and this will undoubtedly impact alliances within the opposition groups.

An important factor here, which should not be missed out, is there is more closeness, which is bringing political parties together and closer to each other, and that is the threat of terrorism, because they are having to face a challenge they have not experienced before, and that is the threat of terrorism. Every person who lives in Tunisia attaches huge importance to his own security, the security of his family, and also what -- your question to Mr. Amer, I would like to make a comment on, I think there is an important component of the Tunisian experience, which people tend to forget, and that is the role of the military establishment.

Fortunately, in Tunisia, the army is not politicized and this is because in the days of Bourguiba, in 1962, there was a failed military coup, which really resulted in depoliticizing the army and also he learned from other countries in the Levant,

and kept the army as an army in charge of protecting the country, facing an enemy, an external threat, and not an enemy within.

And also, for example, in some countries they politicize their army, like the experience of the Ba'ath party or they allow the army to take part in elections.

MR. SHARGIEH: (Inaudible) this committee --

SPEAKER: (Inaudible.)

MR. SHARGIEH: (Inaudible) committee, that drafted the original transitional justice law, which I have to admit is that transitional justice law in Tunisia is probably one of the best, actually, the way it was developed like from a bottom up approach with the heavy involvement of civil society and the way that you worked with the different parts of Tunisia, held meetings, heard from the victims, heard from the formal lawyers.

So, it's a very solid way that you drafted and you built the transitional justice law, which as an experience by itself is solid, is remarkable,

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especially when you look at it from a regional perspective.

Now, one of the major gaps or the major challenges to the transitional justice law that the transitional justice law in Tunisia targets those individuals that they were involved in corruption or human violations. So, unlike, for example, in Tunisia, political organizations or others, so it targets individuals.

This means, if any politicians in the former regime, was not directly involved in a human rights violations or corruption, then this person is said to transform to the new political or to the Tunisia's post-revolution political landscape, and like what's happening -- like what happened with (inaudible) or others, that they became -- they were part of the former regime, now they're invited to the national dialogue meetings.

So, to what extent that the transitional justice law that you developed in Tunisia allowed for the former regime to transform itself and become,

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instead of a party that should have revolted against them, now that they're invited to the national dialogue and they're taking part with the national dialogue?

SPEAKER: Thank you for this question, very kind of -- coming from someone who is following what's going on in the country, but first I would like to take 30 seconds to reply to two comments. The first is that, yes, democracy is about election, but election is about mandate. You cannot elect someone for an open term. It needs to be defined. The election of October 23rd was for a mandate of one year. No single person opposed the results of October 23rd. So, no one was opposed to the legitimacy of people who came first, second, third, fourth.

But then, when they spent more time than their actual mandate, their term, we had to question their legitimacy. So, this is very important. Yes, election is about -- democracy is about election, but defined in time.

The second thing is about political and non-

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political. Maybe there is an issue in translation. I'm talking about partisan approach, not political approach. Yes, transformation, democratization is about the political approach, but maybe not a partisan approach. So, maybe that's missed in the translation.

Back to your question about transitional justice law. First of all, let me insist that transitional justice did not start in Tunisia. The official process started only one week ago or two weeks ago when we started selecting the people that would be in the transitional justice committee. So, for the past three years we did not have official transitional justice, we had the preparation of the process. That's why we have some figures of the old regime, of maybe some of the bad dynamics, getting involved in day-to-day politics, into media, into justice, into sometimes reform, while they are viewed as part of the old regime. It's because the transition justice process did not start yet and we did not start to question their involvement in the past wrongdoings.

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The other thing is that transitional justice is holding people responsible for their individual responsibility and collective responsibility. When we talk about the dissolved political party, RCD, the leading party, that's a collective responsibility. But we cannot blame people as a collective punishment. This is against human rights.

Whenever we need to punish someone, we need to punish him according to individual indictment, individual accountability, otherwise we would be violating one of the basic rules of human rights.

So, yes, the law, the new law, talks about collective responsibility and individual responsibility in terms of human rights violation, in terms of corruption and wrongdoings, but when it comes to accountability, it needs to be individually based.

MR. SHARGIEH: Thank you. Monica, you are an Ennahda expert --

MS. MARKS: I don't know about that. I think Mr. Al-Areed is the expert here.

MR. SHARGIEH: And this is an opportunity to

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ask you this question about Ennahda as a major political party in Tunisia, especially that there is always the debate with -- that we're having that Ennahda is different from the Brotherhood in Egypt, is different from probably the Islah in Yemen, is different from the (inaudible) in Libya, and where others tell you that, you know, no, the Brotherhood, regardless of where you go, so Ennahda is the same as the Brotherhood in Egypt and so forth.

So, if you can shed light on this debate, how Ennahda is different from the rest of -- if different, I don't know, you're the expert -- if it's different from the rest of the -- or the other Islamist parties in the region, and to what extent there are differences, and on what level.

MS. MARK: Okay. Okay, great. First of all, I really applaud Amine's very brief, very concise answer. I tend to be rambler than that, so just cut me off.

I've been in Tunisia for much of the past three years talking to people at different levels of

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Ennahda, so while I don't think of myself as an expert, by any means, I can talk from that experience.

I think something a lot of foreign journalists and researchers do when they go to Tunisia is they simply talk to people in the party's national headquarters in Montplaisir, in Tunis, and everything seems like a very well organized, tightly run ship, and the analysis can be a little bit thin sometimes because there's quite a bit of diversity.

So, to answer Ibrahim's question, I think there's been a tendency for academics in general to have very polarized views about Islamist parties, and that polarization has only gotten worse after the Arab spring, the events of the Arab spring. No one conducts scholarship in a vacuum, and this context, the war on terror context, the secularism versus Islamism context, the tendency for Westerners to see Islamists as fascists, this really polarizes research and that's very unfortunate because there's real pressure on journalists and researchers to take one side or the other, and the sides are kind of like

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this: there's kind of one group of people who tends to see Islamist movements as part of an international cabal, and they're all ideologically motivated, they're kind of like ideologically programmed robots, I call it the zombie hypothesis, that they may talk really nice during the day, they may seem like kind, ordinary people, but at the stroke of midnight they turn into, you know, kind of blood-thirsty, Sharia implementing creatures of the dark, so you must always be careful.

And you hear this same sort of discourse amongst some (inaudible) people in the Maghreb as well, not all, of course, and I think this is diminishing the more people get to know each other, and this is natural, too, in a post-authoritarian context.

The other side argues for contextualization. They say, it's not that these movements are necessarily ideological. We shouldn't essentialize them. They are embedded in their own context. One person on the executive board of Ennahda gave me one

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of the most memorable quotes I've heard, he said, "Monica, Islamist movements are like rivers. They get their color -- the water gets its color from the bedrock, from the soil and the rocks underneath. These are not -- it's not that everyone is the same. We have to look at things in their contexts." So, you have people who argue for that approach, but often in a quite polarized way where it's very tempting if you're a contextualist to give short shrift to the ideological, and visa versa.

So, it's very difficult as a researcher in this very pitched, geo politicized context to try to do good work.

For Ennahda, the party itself is in transition, which is the main argument of this report that just came out. Like UGTT, the labor union in Tunisia, like the Tunisian League of Human Rights, like any old established institution in the country, it's in transition. It's operating in a very, very different political context, and that different environment is forcing it to rethink its organization,

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rethink it's ideology in new ways.

The same thing is happening with UGTT, what I consider to be the other, real, big institution in Tunisia, and it's often ignored. There's all this focus on Islamist groups, I can't tell you how many think tank type people and researchers come and talk to me about radicalization and Salafism and Islamism, without understanding Ennahda in its context.

So, this is a natural process, and it's been quite difficult for Ennahda's leadership to sell a lot of these compromises, these pragmatic, political compromises, to the base, which is something I also talk about in this report.

One of the counter-intuitive findings of the research, talking to grassroots supporters and low-level party activists, and regional representatives, from Tunis to Tataouine and back, has been that the biggest controversies inside of Ennahda, to me, maybe Mr. Al-Areed will disagree with this, but to me they seem not to be ideological, they seem to be how to deal with the old regime, things like the law for

the immunization of the revolution. That was extremely controversial for Ennahda to back away from that.

It was, I think, Ennahda's support inside the party was at a nadir, it was at a low point during the national dialogue because a whole lot of people were very, very angry that the party went into dialogue to leave government and then to form a new government with unelected actors, with the labor union, the employers' union, ironically, the Tunisian League of Human Rights, and the magistrate's union.

So, that created a lot of controversy within the party. This is not to say that ideological issues haven't been important. Not putting Sharia in the constitution was problematic for a number of people, especially young people who supported Ennahda, but their families were not in the movement, so they were a little bit unfamiliar with what the movement stood for, and they thought, oh, it's an Islamist party, 100 percent, but wait, where's Sharia?

And so these young people, some of them now

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self-identify as Salafi, some of them don't, but they say, what is this party standing for? I voted for this party because I thought it was pious, I thought it was different, I thought it would reform our horribly corrupted, kleptocratic institutions through Islam, but it hasn't. So, it's just the establishment now. It's just like everybody else, they say.

And then a number of other people who have a more revolutionary spirit say, how has the party really changed the dynamics of government? You know, you had protests against the Ennahda leadership from within Ennahda, like the (inaudible) protest in September 2012, in Kaswa. A lot of reporters said that that was just a pro-Ennahda rally from people inside Ennahda, but if you went, you saw that actually it was a lot of people inside Ennahda who had been political prisoners, who were very angry at the leadership and they were saying, (inaudible), tighten up on these guys, make sure that we have change.

So, these are political problems and a lot of people just want to see Ennahda as part of an

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internationalist, ideological kind of cabal, and this is not to diminish some similarities -- familial similarities, people like Carrie Wickham bring this out who have done work on the Muslim Brotherhood, much more work than I have, and this is real. There are those linkages, but it is also a Tunisian movement. You know, they talk about Tunisian Islam all the time. Salafis talk about the true Islam. You hear Salafis saying, this is the true Islam. Ennahda people never say that. They say, this is Tunisian Islam.

So, this is something very important to realize. We have to contextualize, but also give attention to the ideological and try to get out of this war on terror, hyper-polarized research context that is so suffocating for people like myself.

MR. SHARGIEH: Thank you, Monica. Yes. Actually, the debate continues on where Ennahda is and Tunisia Islam is, so that's why, you know, on this, there is this argument that Tunisia's Islamists are Libya's liberals.

So, there are many hands, but I'll give you

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one minute, Mr. Amer, since you asked for this -- for a quick comment. Just one minute before we go to the audience for questions, if you want just to comment on this.

MR. AL-AREED: I want to thank Monica. I just have a quick comment to make. We are a party, which is going through some internal discussion. We have differences of opinion. We are not blocks, as such, but we have some revolutionary youth, we have intellectuals, and different factions of society are represented within the movement.

More often than not, we see that the dirty laundry of political parties in Tunisia is made widely available for everyone to see, and why don't we do that in Tunisia? I think we have enough scope within the movement for internal debate.

Yesterday, I attended the (inaudible) council. They were in deep discussion on the forthcoming national congress of the party and there were differences of opinion on the agenda and everything.

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MR. SHARQIEH: Please introduce yourself and

--

SPEAKER: We thank -- Al Arabi Asanti (ph.), I am a Tunisian media worker. First of all, it's nice that the Tunisian revolution is named the Jasmine revolution and tolerance was present, and this is something we all welcome, but we have to say, however, that people who rule the country with Ben Ali are still in Tunisia. They are still enjoying many privileges, and their public appearance now is something -- is there for everyone to see on national television.

So, therefore my question to Mr. Amer, to what extent is the Ennahda movement responsible for these people remaining and these opportunists who are still benefitting from the previous regime, the former regime. Until now, nobody has been questioned, held accountable, and all the slogans about holding these people accountable did not materialize, and unfortunately, some people now are being questioned now because of the political assassinations of

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martyrs. And they may be the members of the security forces are being tried, but nobody else is.

Also, on the question of terrorism, we in Tunisia now suffer from this plague of terrorism and what happened in Jendouba lately, to what extent is Ennahda responsible for this, especially in view of some leaks, which show -- and video clips, which show that there is some sort of collusion or collaboration?

Also, my question to Mr. Rachid, he is a media person and an observer of events in Tunisia, to what extent are the political parties in Tunisia responsible for this? You are all clapping for the new constitution, but it's nothing more than some ink on paper and maybe it will not be as important a document as you seem to think.

And also my final question to Mr. Amine, and this question pertains to civil society organizations and how they should present financial -- statements of their financial sources and resources. This is very important.

SPEAKER: (Inaudible). (Through
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translator.) I am a Tunisian academic. I thank the speakers. I thank Brookings center for this very informative evening. And I think one of the success stories of the troika and the revolution is the achievement of this constitution, which establishes four very important concepts regarding the question of citizenship, which may be ranks high among international documents and constitutions.

TRANSLATOR: Please slow down here, the gentleman is told.

SPEAKER: (Through translator.) And I thank the speakers, the panelists, but I notice absence of the media in the democratic process, especially the attempts by some people who belong to the former regime who are trying to really have a go at what we can call counter-revolution, and especially on Mr. Khechana when he says that not many attempts were made to benefit from the qualifications and expertise of people in the political parties.

I think we have to say -- we have to admit that the kind of challenges which were encountered by

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the troika government were enough in many countries to bring down, and I think the many strikes organized by the labor movement was aimed at really bringing down the regime, if nothing else, and also we must say that there was not enough attempts to help the Tunisian people to get a better life, but these unions were trying to bring down the government.

Also, what we call the former regime, the remnants of the former regimes, which were hindering the work of the prime minister and many ministers, what -- how do you see the attempts to activate the role of the media to be more in the service of the democratization process in a more positive manner? Because until now, the government and the National Constituent Assembly has not done much when it comes to reforming or reorganizing the media.

And a quick question to Monica in English. (Inaudible) and encourage the democratic transition in Tunisia specifically. But obviously, in my opinion, they were forced to do that. It was not part of their strategy, neither it was part of their agenda.

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Obviously, later on they were forced to accept it and deal with it.

Now, after the failure of the example in Egypt and also the eruption of the probably another form of spring in Syria, we've seen a complete -- approach with regard to the Arab spring in Egypt, in Syria, and also in Libya.

I mean, my question to you is, how do you see -- I mean, why do you see this faltering between an obvious support for the Tunisian example with regard to its approach, and also an obvious kind of silent -- kind of blind eye with regard to the massacres that are happening in Egypt, with regard to the massacres that are happening in Syria, and so forth? Thank you.

MR. SHARQIEH: Thank you very much. Fair question.

SPEAKER: (Inaudible), University in Morocco. I have a question about transitional justice to Mr. Al-Areed. Now that the transitional justice law has passed and the commissioners are in the

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process of being appointed, can you give us a very approximate date when the truth commissions will start working?

MR. SHARQIEH: Thank you very much. Yes, sir? Your name and affiliation.

SPEAKER: (Inaudible). Professor of law at the University of Qatar. I have, first of all, a remark. I think that we must distinguish between the transitional period in democracy and the natural stage and stabilized stage. In the transitional stage, it is a stage of building -- rebuilding the state institutions, so there's a rebuilding of institutions -- the media, the political institutions, the (inaudible), et cetera.

Today, Tunisia has succeeded in the first transitional stage before the elections and the second stage after the elections of October 2011. And succeeded with difficulty. Why? Because there's a development from an election democracy to consensus dialogue democracy. My question is, in the stabilized permanent stage, will Tunis have a good opportunity of

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building democracy? And my question is put to all the panelists because it looks into the future. Democracy is essentially elections and a state cannot always be run by consensus, no, because consensus is only to solve a crisis or it is -- it reflects that it's impossible to rule the country by elections and consequently the elections should be strengthened by consensus.

And the future, for ten coming years, will Tunisia be able to build real democracy? That is to say, through election democracy? Today -- I'm sorry to be long -- the constitutions nowadays give the opposition an institutional official role to avoid conflicts and crises. That's why there is a sort of partnership in running the stabilized stage. The election -- democracy is not the tyranny of the majority, and the consensus in one way of seeing -- one aspect of this.

So, my question is, do we have any hope -- and this is an old question -- can Tunisia be democratic? Do we have any hope that we will build

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election democracy?

MR. SHARQIEH: Who would like to begin?

MR. GHALI: (Through translator.) I thank the last speaker, which said something through -- (Back to English.) -- absolutely rightful, that the idea or the question of would we succeed in building the democracy in the near future, five to seven years or eight years, this would be the test of the constitution.

We wrote the constitution to manage the democracy building for the next, of course, four to five decades, but the hardest part is the next decade, the next five, seven, ten years when we will put into practice this piece of paper, but it's not only a piece of paper. It's a piece of paper that manages our common fate as Tunisians.

The other question about media, even though -- I don't know if it was addressed to me or to the whole panel, we want media to play a positive role in the transition and looking into other transitions, we saw that media can play a positive role when it is

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independent from the executive branch, and for the past two years, we have not been able to reform media in the proper way because the executive branch wanted to keep a hand on media. They were -- the executive branch was very reluctant to free media to establish an effective (inaudible) and to give the right, let's say, give the media, with the help of the legislative branch, to establish the track of reform.

The other small thing is that according to the Ministry of Social Justice, (inaudible), the pace of demonstrations triggered by UGTT has slowed down between the phase two and phase one. What I mean phase two and phase one is from revolution until election, and from election until the last days -- I mean, until the crisis of summertime.

So, the pace of demonstrations slowed down in that second phase.

MR. SHARGIEH: Thank you very much. Rachid?

MR. KHECHANA: (Through translator.) Thank you. I begin quickly answering the question of

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(inaudible) about the role of the opposition in reaching what we have reached in the constitution. I don't speak for the opposition. I'm an independent intellectual person nowadays and at the time Ben Ali and Bourguiba. But in general terms, what I notice as an observer, that the opposition has a very important role, not the (inaudible).

I remember some of the stages that you have followed such as the sitting in of (inaudible) and the rallies and that brought all of the parties together to put pressure on the Constituent Assembly, including the withdrawal of the opposition from this assembly, which is something really serious.

So, I think as much as (inaudible) was flexible and (inaudible) situation as I have observed, (inaudible) to the new context and Tunisia (inaudible), but nevertheless, the opposition played a very important role because (inaudible) a balancing force cannot create a society, that's why we talk about the compromises and the (inaudible) the example we saw in Italy, the democrats -- the Christian

democrats, and there was the opposing party, and the chief of the party, who had had certain positions regarding Russia and the Soviet Union at the time, said you must reach consensus between us so that it continues its path.

The other (inaudible) just as the (inaudible) and there was a big economic crisis.

To face all this, we must get together, all of us, on a consensus as much as possible. This will be the only way to create, as Mr. (inaudible) said, the (inaudible) Tunisia (inaudible). That's not only plan only next elections we will win. I think there are some voices that you've probably heard in the media from different political parties saying that the coming stage after the elections will be a consensus, not a majority stage period.

So, I think if Tunisia (inaudible) succeed is that it will not (inaudible) on the (inaudible) democracy as it is now, but in the future, after two, three sessions, the (inaudible) will get accustomed to democracy and of course will depend on elections.

The last question about the (inaudible) and activating them, yes -- the media, sorry -- yes, I agree that the media did not play its role as it should, because in the beginning of the (inaudible) it was not given priority. In fact, the (inaudible) of this sector was -- did not begin, in fact, so right after the revolution, some other faces began (inaudible) to how the -- different faces and the same people who worked during Ben Ali on the TV channels and the press.

So, this sector should have been -- should have been reformed institutionally. A few days after the revolution I was nominated as head of (inaudible). I apologized, I said, I cannot accept this because you don't have any reforms. So, he said, who would you suggest? I said, (inaudible), and he said, who is this gentleman. He said, this gentleman lives in the United States but he is a very well informed Tunisia media person. So, (inaudible) could not take any decisions against (inaudible).

MS. MARKS: What's your name again? I'm

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sorry? Nourideen. Okay. Your question about why the United States and the EU are faltering, I can't speak for them. I happen to be American by birth and I study in the UK, but -- and I often wonder just as much as you do, but I think it's quite clear that when we look at structural reasons why Tunisia has succeeded in places others are not, unfortunately, we can't just look at things like lack of sectarian conflict, relatively small population, relatively decent levels of standard of living, education, et cetera, we also have to look at Tunisia's geographical position and Tunisia has been quite lucky not to sit next door to Israel, not to have vast natural resources that Western powers are fighting over, not to control access to the Suez, et cetera. That's been quite good. Tunisia's been left alone, more or less.

That having been said, it's still very important for the EU to keep stability in Tunisia because of the migrant issue and stability is the main, I think, answer to your question. Dictators

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were known quantities and it was a bit easier to keep a stable situation regarding our geo political interests, et cetera, if we had a known quantity. Revolution and political demands are not terribly conducive to stability, unfortunately. It's been tremendously vexing to watch the United States continue funding for the military in Egypt, for example, and I ask that question as much as you do.

Your question about UGTT is a very important question and the labor protests. I am continually irked that almost no research is being done in Tunisia on the labor union, which, along with (inaudible) is one of the two biggest political institutions in the country. It's not just a labor union, it is a political institution, and that's understandable.

In the toxic greenhouse of authoritarianism, civil society organizations, self proclaimed human rights organizations, labor unions, they all look different because people aren't allowed to get out their anger through political parties, you know, so the labor union took on a political role, it

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definitely has political ideological goals on some level too.

We desperately need, I think, good, deep, ethnographic research on the labor union. I wish for every think tank analyst who came to Tunisia talking to me about radicalization and Salafism there was another person interested in the secular opposition or in UGTT because there's almost no understanding. What are UGTT's internal structures? How do they make decisions? How does their local base and their regional representation relate to the national leadership? There are all sorts of tensions between the national leadership, which was heavily co-opted by Ben Ali, and the local base.

The question over why there were so many strikes, thousands and thousands of strikes over the past couple of years, can't be answered unless you do that kind of research. What Natha (ph.) said is that they're a spoiler. They want this to fail, basically, that was the initial reaction from Natha but UGTT said is we are just defending the rights of workers. And

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then government came back and said, well, how can you defend the rights of workers if you're creating a situation where it's impossible to get foreign direct investment? Loads of investors are leaving. You're creating a nightmare for us. You're working against the workers.

Now, on the local level when you got to towns where UGTT is very strong, places like Jendouba, Siliana, Le Kef, et cetera, and you ask people, what is UGTT doing for you? They say, well, clearly they're defending us where others aren't. Others are talking about these abstract political debates in the capital, but they're right here having a protest for me, to raise my wages.

So, we need research on that.

Just the last question about can Tunisia have a real democracy? You're right, it's not just about elections, but consensus is a very simplistic word. Everyone wants consensus, but how do we get there? We need to look at the nitty gritty of the mechanisms to get there.

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Look at how political parties are making decisions right now, for example. This whole culture of democratic decision-making is building from the ground up. You have a party like Ennahda that says, we're different because we have operationally democratic internal structures, and then you have other people who say, yeah, but that's what the Ikhwan in Egypt said, and they had an open conversation, an open debate, but then the decision-making was closed, and you've got organizations like Nidaa Tounes that say, well, we don't vote on our decisions, we have consensus. But then you have to ask, what does consensus mean when you've got 60 different people on your executive committee, one of whom is Beji Caid Essebsi, who's a very dynamic figure, to say the least.

So, we need to look at how civil society organizations, labor unions, et cetera, are dealing with all these things. It's institutional and it's difficult.

MR. SHARGIEH: Thank you very much, Monica,
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and we end with you, Mr. Amer.

MR. AL-AREED: (Through translator.) Many questions, very briefly. First of all, as regards the commission or the truth and dignity, I think there are being formed now, there is 470 nominees. It should be made up of 15 members. I think it will come into operation in two months time and it is required to deal with the question of transitional justice for five continuous, uninterrupted years.

I agree with those who say that transitional justice was delayed, but this kind of systems of formal regimes, like security, economy, et cetera, they require reform. On top of that we should have the added element of transitional justice. We may disagree, definitely, but we should not blow things out of proportions.

When people say the troika government wanted to lay its hands on the media, this is not true. I think the media in Tunisia is having a field day when it comes to freedom. There's no limits. And we are very happy with that, so therefore we should not

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exaggerate things in any way.

The other question, which pertains to terrorism, terrorism, as a phenomena, as a trans-border phenomena, it's not linked to any religion in particular. In all religions, in all societies or civilizations, there are terrorist groups and groupings, and they have different complexions.

On the countries -- in the countries bordering has had many odd groups and the political assassinations, which took place inside Tunisia, were committed by arms and weapons which came from outside, the training was done outside Tunisia, yet we are optimistic and Nahava (ph.) has a very clear, uncompromising position vis-à-vis terrorism. These are small minority groups, which are violating the law. They should be dealt with according to the law and the full force of law should be brought upon them, and this terrorism phenomena should not be exploited for political point scoring.

Also, the relationship with the labor unions, I had the honor of taking part in all the

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sessions of national dialogue, bilateral, multilateral, (inaudible) open ones, it was an uninterrupted (inaudible) and (inaudible) was in charge and supervising this, but I was a full participant in that. I'll write this in my memoirs, by the way, maybe not now, but this is a very enriching experience, even at the personal level.

We rediscovered each other. Maybe we used to engage in dialogue from a distance, but over months and months of deep discussions, tensions, agreements, disagreements, we discovered that we are capable, after all, of finding some common ground, and we can together, despite all our differences, we can build something together.

The national dialogue was not a picnic. It was really a fully lived experience, and we built new relationships and the response to Mr. Ash Al I feel confident and optimistic for the future of democracy in Tunisia by the will of God. Consensus is not an alternative to elections. The ballot box is the source of legitimacy in the country we are building,

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but consensus supports that, gives rights to the minorities, and we in the constitution, we have additional rights for smaller groups and these will be given some certain powers because opposition and inverted comments is an essential component for political life and democratic life, whether we're talking about the media or civil society, we see that as something which is very important and essential, in fact.

My other comment, there are also -- there's also the -- we -- it's true that, as Mr. Al-Arabi said -- he asked what have we done. Maybe this evening is not the right opportunity to assess things, but we in Tunisia, we have managed to get rid of the attitude of coups and military coups. Of course, the military establishment in Tunis is depoliticized. This does not mean that there were no calls for military coup d'états, but it has been -- there's been some attempts at national dialogue through which we defeated the concept of military coups and also security breakdowns as seen in other countries.

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So, therefore, I can be optimistic, not totally and unreservedly, but I feel optimistic for the future of democracy of Tunisia, which we will build together. We pray to almighty God to grant us success and we thank everybody who's participating in this. We see there is difference now here in the panel, here, but also this experience in Tunisia, this example is really supported by all means of support, by the -- from the friends of Tunisia in the European Union, Turkey, Qatar, and Algeria, Morocco, all these countries, and civil society organizations in the West and in the Arab world are supporting this and we would like to support them all.

MR. GHALI: To reply to the question that I missed about funding of -- or transparency of civil society. Most of civil society, at least I can speak of the group I belong to, (inaudible) Kawakibi, is audited and audited by an official state auditor, all of our accounts. The question is to be asked to a lot of other actors of civil society, yes, you are right, but the question is also to be asked to a lot of

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political parties, even those in the Constituent Assembly right now who did not submit their accounting books -- I mean, party political books and election accounting books.

So, yes, all of us, since we are insisting on transparency, we should all start applying the rule we are insisting for.

MR. SHARQIEH: Thank you, Amine. Well, I will end with what I --

SPEAKER: We presented our -- this is not true what you said. You said members of the National Assembly, you have to make sure of what you're saying.

MR. GHALI: No, what I said, "some" parties, not all.

SPEAKER: Okay, maybe we'll accept that.

MR. SHARQIEH: This was a really great experience of Tunisia and really emphasizing the fact that, yes, there are challenges down the road. The model is not completed, but Tunisia and the Tunisians should be very proud of what they have accomplished and they continue to surprise the entire world of

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working together --

SPEAKER: (Inaudible.)

MR. SHARQIEH: -- how they're working together and how they're making progress and how they're building the future of Tunisia far away from the violence and the tension and all of that, and, again, what you're doing, you're not doing it only for Tunisia, you're doing it for the region.

We wish you the best of luck and we thank you for coming today and sharing with us your insights on this. And I would like to thank you, everyone here, for --

(Applause.)

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