


EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT



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Situation in Tunisia

P7_TA-PROV(2011)0038

B7-0078, 0079, 0080, 0081, 0087 and 0088/2011

► European Parliament resolution of 3 February 2011 on the situation in Tunisia

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the human rights situation in Tunisia, particularly those of 29 September 2005, 15 December 2005 and 15 June 2005,
- having regard to the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement of March 1998 establishing an association between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Tunisia, of the other part,
- having regard to Union policy on human rights and democratisation in third countries, as adopted by the Council in December 2005,
- having regard to its resolution on 16 February 2006 on the human rights and democracy clause in European Union agreements,
- having regard to the Commission's Communication of 4 December 2006 on strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy (**COM(2006)0726**),
- having regard to the Commission Communication entitled 'Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2009: progress report on Tunisia' (**COM(2010)0207** - SEC(2010)0513),
- having regard to the European Union-Tunisia Action Plan,
- having regard to its resolution of 14 May 2010 on EU policies in favour of human rights defenders,
- having regard to the European Union statement issued following the Eighth Meeting of the EU-Tunisia Association Council of 11 May 2010,
- having regard to the statements made by Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and Commissioner Stefan Füle on the situation in Tunisia on 13 and 17 January 2011 respectively,
- having regard to the statement made by Mr Buzek, President of the European Parliament, on the situation in Tunisia on 17 January 2011,
- having regard to Rule 110(4) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas the mass demonstrations which took place throughout Tunisia following the immolation of Mohammed Bouazizi on 17 December 2010 culminated in the departure from power of President Ben Ali on 14 January 2011, enabling the Tunisian people to regain their freedom and bring down the regime imposed by the ousted President since 1987,

B. whereas the peaceful protest movement was violently repressed by the forces of law and order, leaving over one hundred dead,

C. whereas the European Union has proved unable to develop a genuine foreign policy that is consistent and effective vis-à-vis its partners; particularly noting the weakness of the EU-Tunisia cooperation mechanisms and reiterating its call for human rights clauses in association agreements to be systematically backed up by a mechanism to implement those clauses; having regard in this context to the ongoing and necessary review of the neighbourhood policy,

D. having regard to the conclusions of the Association Council of 11 May 2010, which reminded Tunisia that reform of the justice system is fundamental to genuine rapprochement with the European Union, as are pluralism and participatory democracy, freedom of expression and association and the protection of human rights defenders; whereas the Tunisian authorities have not kept any of their undertakings in this respect,

E. whereas Tunisia and the EU were in the process of formulating the Action Plan for the period 2011-2016; whereas this process will require both partners to commit themselves to achieving greater progress on all the issues involved, in particular that of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

F. whereas the hope generated by the toppling of the authoritarian regime in Tunisia for a stable democracy could help other peoples to assert the same claims,

1. Expresses its solidarity with the Tunisian people, who, prompted by legitimate democratic aspirations and a desire for better social conditions and easier access to employment, have brought their country to a historic political watershed; in that connection, applauds their courage and determination during the demonstrations, extends its condolences to the families of the victims and expresses its solidarity with the injured;

2. Condemns the repressive measures and the disproportionate force employed by the security forces; applauds, in contrast, the actions of the armed forces, which refused to fire on the demonstrators; calls for an independent inquiry into the incidents leading to death and excessive use of violence during the past weeks and into corruption, and for those responsible to be brought to justice;

3. Emphasises how important it is that all political, social, civic and democratic forces in Tunisia should be represented in the interim government, as this is the only way to secure for that government the confidence of the people and endow it with the legitimacy it needs to prepare elections and the transition to democracy;

4. Gives its strong support to the democratic process; underlines the importance of creating the necessary conditions for the holding of elections, within a time frame which gives all opposition forces and all the media time to organise at national level, for a new parliamentary assembly with the task of drawing up a democratic constitution which strikes a proper balance between the powers of the executive and the legislature and the independence of the judiciary; hopes that all democratic forces which pledge to respect pluralism, freedom of conscience and arrangements for the democratic handover of power will be able to take part in that election; welcomes in this context the abolition of the Ministry of Information and the decision to guarantee freedom of speech;

5. Welcomes the bill to introduce a general amnesty, which is intended to permit the release of political prisoners, the return of opponents of the regime and recognition of all the opposition parties and make it possible for non-governmental organisations to register;

6. Calls for the immediate application by the EU of the decisions to freeze the ill-gotten assets of the Ben Ali family and their associates; welcomes the announcement by the authorities of their intention to return to the State the movable and immovable assets of the RCD party;

7. Welcomes the establishment of three committees, each chaired by an independent, respected eminent person, on reform of the institutions and of institutional laws, the fight against corruption and events since 17 December; underlines the fact that they must be able to act with complete independence and have genuine powers of inquiry; considers that, insofar as they so wish, these commissions must be able to benefit from the expertise and support of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and from pertinent mechanisms at the United Nations;

8. Calls on the High Representative to promote the establishment of a task force, involving Parliament, to meet Tunisia's needs in terms of assistance for its democratic transition process, as expressed by those seeking democratic change, in particular as regards the preparation of free and democratic elections, support for the formation of political parties and for the development of an independent media sector and the rebuilding of an open State apparatus independent of the executive and of a fair and independent judicial system;

9. Calls on the HR/VP to support the upcoming electoral process by sending an electoral observation mission to Tunisia;

10. Calls on the Council, the Commission and the High Representative of the EU, therefore, to be ready to redirect – and if necessary increase – funding under the various financial instruments for EU-Tunisia cooperation;

11. Calls on the Commission and the EIB to make provision for support for Tunisia in the form of loans with interest-rate subsidies in order to enable the Tunisian economy to diversify and offer young Tunisians the prospect of skilled jobs, as part of a genuine development contract to foster local and foreign productive investment;
12. Calls on the Commission to encourage, also financially, the provision by European civil society of support and assistance to Tunisian civil society, in particular human rights organisations and the social partners;
13. Urges the European Union to draw lessons from events in Tunisia and to revise its democracy and human rights support policy so as to create an implementation mechanism for the human rights clause in all agreements with third countries; insists that the review of the neighbourhood policy must prioritise criteria relating to the independence of the judiciary, respect for fundamental freedoms, pluralism and freedom of the press and the fight against corruption; calls for better coordination with the Union's other policies vis-à-vis those countries;
14. Considers that the fight against corruption and the strengthening of the rule of law in third countries are fundamental criteria to meet people's expectations as well as to attract external investment;
15. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the High Representative, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean and the interim Government and Parliament of Tunisia.

Last updated: 8 February 2011

Legal notice