A New Era?

Civil society and the Tunisian revolution

André Chiesa

Abstract

With the use of articles, reports and academic literature, I have analyzed the significant role civil society played during, and after, the Tunisian revolution in 2011. The purpose of this essay has been to understand the underlying social distress, under which Tunisians had lived in many years, and how this came to result in a contagious revolution that marked the start of the Arab Spring. The revolution came as a surprise to political analysts around the world when civil society movements made their stand against former president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and his regime. I have focused on *how* civil society movements came to change the political landscape in the country and on the ideas that inspired them to rise up against their oppressor. The civil society in Tunisia did not only come to overthrow their own government, but also helped movements abroad in their struggle for democracy. The far-reaching effects of the revolution are yet to be seen, but there is no doubt that the events of 2011 have brought vast change to the region, both socially and politically.

Table of contents

Introduction

With this essay I hope to provide some insight into the different kinds of civil society movements and what role they played in the Tunisian revolution and the time that followed. Although I will write about the movements' role before 2010, I will mainly focus on the period leading to the ousting of former president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. What has happened in the country since January 2011? What are the results of the revolution and the struggle for democratization and what role will civil society play in the future? I hope to provide satisfying answers to these questions.

In the first chapter, I will shortly explain my choice of scientific method (and why I excluded others) and what the essence of this method is. My second chapter will explore the theory of civil society, what role it can play in democracies and political transitions.

The third chapter will consist of a chronology to provide a general picture of the political situation under Ben Ali's rule in Tunisia before the revolution. This will be needed to provide context to the events that led up to the revolts that would ultimately result in a full-scale revolution and the overthrowing of a regime that had been in power for over 20 years.

The fourth and fifth chapter will be the central pieces of this essay. It will be about movements that played a major role in the political transition. I have chosen to focus on three different kinds of movements. First of all, I will write about maybe the most common one - The non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including human rights organizations. I will then write about a fairly new concept, internet activism. Bloggers and other internet activists (both domestic and international) played a big role during the fight for Tunisian democracy. Finally, I will write about movements that struggle for women's rights. Even though Tunisia had been relatively advanced regarding women's rights compared to other countries in the region (such as Libya and Egypt) there were, and still are, issues concerning the matter.

After my analysis of the different movements in Tunisia I will write about what impact they have had on the country's political development. Will civil society have a bigger role in the future, compared to the very limited role it played under the authoritarian rule that plagued the country for over two decades? What are the conclusions of this essay and what might happen next?

1 Methodology.

Even though I believe that the most effective way to approach this kind of research is using a qualitative method, I did not have the proper tools to conduct such research. Since observation is an important part of this method, this approach would not be possible considering I began this study two years after the revolution. Finding people to interview also proved to be a challenge. I've tried to get in contact with both bloggers, the Swedish consulate in Sousse and the Swedish department of foreign affairs. I was hoping that the two latter could assist me in getting contact with focus groups or other people to interview, but trying was to no avail. Since these two methods (among others) are central for qualitative research[1], this approach is something that I would not be able to proceed with.

Being unable to immerse myself in such research, I turned to what I think is the second best method; interpretive theory. In the sixth chapter of *Theory and methods in political science*, Bevir and Rhodes describes interpretive theory, saying that "the [...] premise is that people act on their beliefs and preferences"[2]. To some extent, this premise could be compared to the theory of rational choice. Rational choice theory builds on the premise that people, if they are given multiple choices, will make the choice that will most likely result in the best outcome (often on an individual level)[3]. I consider rational choice, originally an economic theory, to be too narrow. The focus on the analytical and strategic part of our actions, which *can* work well in economics, does not suit this kind of analysis. The events in Tunisia were not driven by rationality, and should not be simplified through a theory that, in its most basic form, deals with how to best spend nickels and dimes. I will also argue that acting on behalf of your beliefs might not always be rational. Altruism is a perfect example of this, since self-sacrifice hardly can be considered rational.

---

[1] Devine in "Theory and methods in political science", eds. Marsh; Stoker, 2002, p 197ff
[2] Bevir; Rhodes in "Theory and methods in political science", eds. Marsh; Stoker, 2002, p 132
[3] Hollis, The philosophy of social science, 1994, p 116f

Interpretive theory could also be likened to behavioralism in some aspects. Behavior is observed through our actions and without action, there can be no behavioral analysis. But I also feel this theory is better suited for other social sciences, psychology being the most obvious one. To ask why people do what they do is a far too general question that has as many answers as there are people being asked. The revolution could also be studied from a sociological perspective, which also would make behavioralism a reliable method. Since observable behavior is another essential part of this theory[4], it leaves me with the same lack of tools as the qualitative method.

Interpretive theory focuses on what I find to be the most essential part in understanding the actors behind the Tunisian revolution, namely the ideas that drove them. To understand their actions, focus needs to lie on *their* beliefs and experience, not our preconceptions of them. That being said, it is important to analyze the structures that drove them to their actions, both political and social. In general, I find that one single theory or method is rarely enough to provide satisfying answers. In contrast to natural sciences, theories in social sciences do not have any truths. There is no right or perfect method. All we can do is to find the most appropriate method for the work at hand. This is in part based on experience, but also on personal preference.

---

[4] Sanders in "Theory and methods in political science", eds. Marsh; Stoker, 2002, p 45

2 Civil society, democratization and grassroots movements - definitions.

In this essay, I have chosen to focus on civil society as described by Jean Grugel in her book *Democratization - A critical Introduction*. Her book provides a good, yet not too deep, view of what the term means and what role civil society plays. To complement Grugel's book, I will also use a chapter in Larry Diamond's book *Developing Democracy - Toward Consolidation*. Diamond, as well as Grugel, puts emphasis on the role of civil society in a democratic state - and during democratization. It should be noted though that there are many theories about civil society and it is a subject that has been discussed among political scientists for several years. I feel that a limited definition is enough to lay way for a comprehensible analysis. Especially since I am focusing on just a few, yet not small, types of movements. Also, many of the organizations that were active in Tunisia are already well-established and self-defined.

I will argue that, except for the definition and theory of civil society, the movements themselves give a more authentic picture of the role they are playing in society. And given my interpretive approach, I consider the movements (and their experiences) themselves the best source of understanding. Especially when it comes to a country such as Tunisia, where different types of civil society movements were the sole actors in the revolution. There was no coup, no civil war and no obvious signs of an imminent revolution. The regime had been the same for many years and politically there was nothing special about 2010. Intervention from the outside, like during the civil war in Libya, was also extremely unlikely. The revolution came from the bottom and my analysis needs to originate from there.

2.1 What is civil society?

Civil society refers to the public part of the social system in contrast to the political, economic and private sphere of the social system[5]. The term encompasses any movement or organization that is not part of the state (therefore the term *civil*). What most of them have in common is that they seek to spread information about, often specific, issues or ideas. It can be movements that seek to promote environmental consciousness, women's rights movements or even something as trivial as a local non-profit organization engaging in board games[6]. In secular countries, where religion is separated from the state, different religious movements are also part of civil society. NGOs are perhaps what best defines civil society and volunteering is an essential part of these organizations. No one can be forced to be a part of civil society. Due to this, companies should not be considered part of civil society, since they are not based on volunteering[7], at least not in a traditional sense. We may choose to go to work, but this "choice" could be seen more as a result of structural, socially acceptable, constraint, and not volunteering. In the same way, paying taxes should not be considered a form of charity. Of course, a socialist might argue such is the case. On the other hand, a libertarian would argue that tax is theft. So even though it might be open for *ideological* interpretation, the definition of civil society should not include companies, since volunteering is one of the most essential parts of civil society, while the economy is the more driving force of a company.

Grugel describes civil society as "the space between the state and the individual"[8]. Diamond describes it in a similar fashion. He says it is an "intermediary phenomenon, standing between the private sphere and the state"[9]. However, in some countries (Sweden for example) the state takes an interest in civil society, providing them with tax-financed grants. So, although civil society is not part of the state itself, it can very well be supported by it. However, even when that is the case, the financial support given by the state is indirectly paid for by the people. In a country with a tax-financed welfare system, civil society could be considered a part of this welfare.

---

[5] Lundqvist, Medborgardemokratin och eliterna, 2001, p 50
[6] Diamond, Developing Democracy - Toward Consolidation, 1999, p 222
[7] Hague & Harrop, Comperative Government and Politics - An Introduction, 2007, p 175
[8] Grugel, Democratization - A Critical Introduction, 2002, p 93
[9] Diamond, Developing Democracy - Toward Consolidation, 1999, p 221

2.1.1 Democracy and civil society.

Democratization is a fairly simple concept, though not as simple in practice. The most fundamental characteristic of a democracy is the right to vote in free elections and even if we have this minimalistic definition of democracy, many of the world's citizens still live in non-democratic countries. If we set a higher standard the number becomes even more staggering. Even if democracy is well established, it is not guaranteed to last. In some countries, there are anti-democratic parties struggling for political influence and power[10].

To be considered free, an election must fulfill certain requirements. First of all, the election can in no way be influenced by the state. Another crucial part is political competition. For change to be possible there needs to be a dynamic party system[11]. This system needs to reach all factions of society, young and old, rich and poor, men and women. Being part of civil society is a way to create a bridge between the people and the state[12]. This is one of many reasons civil society is a central part of any democracy. A well established and broad civil society is simply required for a democracy worthy of its name.

The establishment (if any) of civil society may look very different, depending on where in the world you choose to look. In the western world, a well established civil society is something we take for granted. It is part of our daily life and it is almost impossible to avoid (assuming you were to try). In many countries, civil society exists, but is very limited. It might need time to "brew" before it can play its part in a political transition (towards democracy). This was the case of Ukraine, when the people rose up against the regime, demanding more political and civil liberties. Non-governmental organization had never been de jure forbidden in Ukraine since their independence, but they had only existed in a very weak state ever since the fall of the Soviet Union. Some movements were even controlled, or at least monitored, by the state. This resulted in a certain governmental control over the civil society in the country, which hindered its development[13].

Countries with a virtually non-existent civil society, such as China, are for obvious reasons far from a political transition from authoritarian rule to democracy. Heavy censorship and political persecution have made it almost impossible to establish a civil society. The Tiananmen Square protests of 1989 is perhaps the most famous example of that civil society may had been able to prevail under different circumstances. But the protests were brutally struck down, and it's a part of history the Chinese regime would rather forget about.

---

[10] Lundqvist, Medborgardemokratin och eliterna, 2001, p 43
[11] Grugel, Democratization - A Critical Introduction, 2002, p 73
[12] Ibid. p 92
[13] Stepanenko, 2006, Civil Society in Post-Soviet Ukraine: Civil ethos in framework of corrupted sociality?, p 574ff

Even though China has been moving towards the west in regard to economic policy, a transition to democracy is nowhere in sight. Internationally, the Chinese regime often faces criticism, due to their domestic policies. However, as far as other governments go, the demand for change in China is limited. The world economy is too dependent on China, and other than pointing fingers, no legal action (with reference to international law) can be taken. Especially not through the U.N, given China's veto power in the Security Council. Under such conditions, the path to a dynamic civil society is very long.

There is a strong connection between democracy and civil society. It could be that democracy is developed through governmental initiative, which makes it possible for civil society to thrive. Also, and more likely, it can be something that is a result of public demand, and only possible if the grassroots can rise high enough to achieve democracy.

2.1.2 Grassroots

The term grassroots is defined by the Oxford dictionary as "the most basic level of an activity or organization"[14]. Grassroots are a fundamental, and probably the most important, part of civil society. If we were to imagine civil society as our nervous system, the grassroots would be the brain and the spinal cord. This analogy becomes even more fitting, considering that these central parts is what sets things in motion.

Grassroots are however *not* the most influential part of civil society. Even though they play a big role in civil society as a whole, this role is often on a regional level. It is, as the term implies, the seed of civil society. The higher they grow, the more global the organizations become. The phenomenon grows away from the roots, and creates something larger that can have more impact on society. If a national grassroots movement would be struggling for their civil rights, it might not have any impact on the regime. However, by acting through a bigger organization, they might get international attention, which can help further their cause. This is a quite common way for different movements to interact. Large organizations can be a medium through which the grassroots can act, making their contributions more prevailing. This means that there is a mutual dependence between small grassroots movements and large NGOs.

---

[14] http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/american_english/grass%2Broots?q=grassroots, accessed 2013-04-13

3   Why Tunisia?

I have chosen to focus on Tunisia for several reasons. One reason why I chose Tunisia is because it was where the Arab spring started. Only future may tell, but this might have been the spark that would be the starting point of a fourth wave of democratization, which is something that many have been waiting, and hoping, for. Another reason is that the revolution in Tunisia has not received the amount of media coverage that was to be expected, not to mention justified, thus giving me an option to explore something that I do not know as well as the revolutions in Egypt and Libya. International media coverage was more focused on those two countries, since they were of more strategic (especially political) interest. Just like in Tunisia, the people would rise up and overthrow their governments led by Hosni Mubarak (Egypt) and Muammar Gaddafi (Libya).

To understand this domino effect, it is important to analyze what made the first piece fall over. Even if Tunisia is not a superpower, the fall of the regime may come to have the same effect on the region as the fall of the Soviet Union had on Eastern Europe during the 1990s. Just as the end of the Soviet era resulted in a wave of democratization, the end of Ben Ali's rule might do the same. But it could also, in the long run, result in yet another authoritarian regime. After all, Ben Ali himself came to power through a coup after declaring the ruling president Habib Bourguiba, who had been in power for over 30 years, incompetent[15]. The same thing took place in Libya almost ten years earlier, when Gaddafi seized power through a coup. Both of these countries would come to develop an authoritarian rule plagued by oppression, censorship and persecution. You can see the same pattern in Middle Eastern countries like Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan. Revolutions do not by any means guarantee democratization. If democratic elections are held, there is still a possibility that the people will elect undemocratic leadership. And even if a country develops a more democratic society, the early years of this transition is still volatile, and a country can easily fall back into "old habits".

---

[15] "A coup is reported in Tunisia", New York Times, 1987

3.1 Before the uprisings of 2010.

In 2001, ten years before the removal of former president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, Tunisia was rated as "Not Free" by the U.S-based NGO Freedom House in their report on freedom in the world. On a scale from 1 to 7, 1 being the top score, Tunisia scored 5 in civil liberties and 6 in political rights, leaving the final score at 5.5[16]. Ben Ali, who had by this point been president for 24 years, was running a corrupt government, while the people were living in a society with almost no rights or civil liberties. In earlier elections, Ben Ali had been running unopposed, in part because of the imprisonment of other presidential candidates and banning of other political parties. In the 1999 presidential election, Ben Ali received 99,4 % of the votes, and his Democratic Constitutional Rally (RCD) ended up with 80 % of the seats in parliament, leaving six parties to share the other 20 % of the seats. This election was not considered to be democratic and received much criticism from around the globe[17].

During the following decade, there were no improvements in sight. Civil society in Tunisia was still lacking and the political oppression continued. Freedom of speech was practically non-existent and those who criticized the ruling regime could face criminal charges, be put on trail and sentenced to jail. The censorship reached from the streets to the radio and internet. Ben Ali's authoritarian rule was still characterized by corruption and nepotism. Like all other elections since the beginning of Ben Ali's presidency, the 2009 general election was firmly controlled by the current government, which led to yet another overwhelming victory, with Ben Ali receiving 90 % of the votes. The following year, the state wanted to revise the constitution, giving Ben Ali the chance to be elected for a sixth term in 2014[18]. However, the general election 2009 was going to be his last one.

Like in many other Arab states, creating political parties in Tunisia was something that required approval of the government, which made it impossible to challenge the incumbent president and his regime[19]. The same goes for human rights movements and other NGOs. These organizations had to be formally registered by the state and were often denied such registration[20]. So the problem was not only to fight for democratization in the country, but also to bring international attention (and interest) to the lack of civil rights in the country.

---

[16] Freedom House (3), accessed 2013-04-22
[17] Encyclopedia of the Nations
[18] Freedom House (4), accessed date 2013-04-22
[19] Gelvin, The Arab Uprisings - What everyone needs to know, 2012, p 5.
[20] Amnesty International (3), 2005, accessed 2013-04-26

3.2 The protests of 2010.

The beginning of 2010 did not differ from previous years. Ben Ali's oppression remained and there were no obvious signs of uprising until the end of the year. It wasn't until December 17 it would all start. Muhammad Bouazizi, a street vendor in the small town Sidi Bouzid, had been harassed by authorities for many years. On this particular day, the local police publicly humiliated Bouazizi and after he was wrestled to the ground by police officers, they stole his wares. Later that day, he went to the local municipality to complain, but without results. He went back once more, and set himself on fire in front of the building[21]. Protests began and ten days later, the outrage had reached the capital. President Ben Ali initially tried to calm the protesters, promising more jobs and new elections. But his efforts were in vain, and the protests continued[22].

3.3 Ben Ali's exile and a contagious revolution.

In January 2011, the protests had spread all over the country and on the 14th, Ben Ali was forced to leave the country. The protesters were met with little opposition, partly due to the fact that the military had refused to open fire against civilians. A little more than a week later, when protests had spread to Egypt, protesters were once again met by passive military forces[23]. These two revolutions were to abolish their oppressive regimes with minimal bloodshed, in contrast to the civil war in Libya that claimed thousands of lives. The Tunisian revolution showed the world what a strong actor the grassroots can be. The fall of Ben Ali's government was a victory for the people, by the people. Not only had the protesters succeeded in removing their own authoritarian regime, but they would also come to be the catalyst in the Arab spring. Egypt and Libya are the most well-known countries to follow, but protests would also spread to countries like Algeria and Yemen. Tunisia is also an excellent example of how people can rise from a virtually non-existent civil society and succeed in a bottom-up revolution. The fact that Ben Ali stood alone, without military (and to a great extent political) support, suggest that there was not just a question of mistreated civilians, but rather a mentality shared by all parts of society. This widespread self-awareness and need for change is most likely what resulted in minimal military and political resistance.

---

[21] Ryan, "The tragic life of a street vendor", Al Jazeera, 2011, accessed 2013-05-01
[22] Gelvin, The Arab Uprisings - What everyone needs to know, 2012, p 27
[23] Ibid.

4 The stride towards change - The people behind the revolution

Before I begin this chapter I would like to point out that this part (as well as the next chapter) of the essay will rely mainly on news articles and reports, and not academic literature. This is because the development in Tunisia is still in a fairly early state, and that the main source of information has been media and different NGO's. And even if there are plenty of these kinds of sources, it is nowhere near what can be found about the revolutions in Egypt and Libya. The reliance on this type of sources has both its upsides and downsides to this kind of analysis. On the positive side, much will be first- and second hand sources from people who have actually seen the revolution in its making, or even been a part of it. However, this also means that there is a short supply of comparative research on the subject. Although it is important to be original, there is always value in comparing other peoples work with your own approach. But even if that is the case, this is an analysis focusing on recent and current events, which makes the lack of academic literature less problematic. If I were to write a comparative analysis about (for example) the democratization of eastern Europe in the 1990s, academic research would be essential, and there would be a good amount of literature to rely on. But the democratization in post-communist states is something that had much more impact on the world than the revolution in Tunisia.

Another downside is journalistic bias. In a state of political turmoil and constant protests, facts can easily become distorted. This is more obvious in some cases than others. State owned media is obviously biased in a country like Tunisia, but less obvious bias can be found anywhere. For example, NGO's have a tendency to favor the citizens. It might be a bias that many will find more acceptable, but bias nonetheless. The lack of medial interest could also be interpreted as a sort of bias. The bias is generally not political, but rather a natural reaction. After all, newspapers and other forms of media are like any other business. The main purpose is to make money, and this is best done if there is public interest. A relatively peaceful revolution in a country that isn't of any particular geopolitical interest, especially not to us in the Western world, does not generate many readers, and therefore not much money. However, some journalists and NGO reporters have been unwavering in their support of human rights activists in the country, even though their presence puts them in great risk. They also need to take into account that many of those people who are affiliated with these organizations (witnesses, activists, ex-prisoners, etc) risks arrest and incarceration (see 3.1 and 3.2).

4.1 NGO's and human rights organizations

Human rights movements are a fairly new phenomenon, although the idea of human (universal) rights dates back to the French revolution in the late 18th century. The universal declaration of human rights came about 150 years later (1948), through the United Nations. International human rights organizations started to appear in the 1960s and 70s. Amnesty International was founded 1961, and is the oldest human rights organization in the world. 17 years later, Human Rights Watch (HRW) was founded. Both of these organizations (and many others) have taken interest in Tunisia and the country's problems regarding human rights.

The Arab League (this includes Tunisia) ratified their own "declarations" of human rights in 2004. This ratification came after an assemblage of over 50 NGO's (many of them human rights organizations) demanded more rights for the people. This included freedom of assembly, freedom from torture and equality before the law[24]. Despite this, the human rights violations continued on a broad scale and in retrospect, the affirmation of these rights cannot be interpreted as something other than a farce.

For Amnesty and HRW, much focus has been on criticizing the Tunisian regime for the imprisonment of political activists. There have been countless reports regarding these issues and reports are still, as of April 2013, coming in. In a report from 2009, HRW summarizes different human rights violations occurring in Tunisia. Researchers talked to several former political prisoners from around the country. Some had left incarceration in 1997 and others as late as 2009. Many of the prisoners had been imprisoned in the early 1990s, because of their involvement with the banned political party Ennahda. During HRW's presence in the country, they were subject to heavy surveillance, and many of those interviewed were taken in for questioning after their contact with HRW[25]. Even after release, the ex-prisoners had to report to the authorities on a regular basis, and many were denied passports. This is not only a violation of international law, but also the Tunisian constitution.

Furthermore, the authorities systematically denied them their prison medical files, making it next to impossible to get the health care they needed[26]. In general, those who had been in prison would have a hard time being part of society after being released. Being released from jail was practically not a release at all. You did not become a free citizen, not even with Tunisian standards. The authorities often kept a watching eye on those who had engaged in activities "harmful" to the state.

---

[24] Gelvin, The Arab Uprisings - What everyone needs to know, 2012, p 29
[25] Human Rights Watch, 2010, Repression of Former Political Prisoners in Tunisia, p 5, accessed 2013-05-01
[26] Ibid. p 34f

In November 2009, 68 prisoners were released due to a presidential pardon from president Ben Ali. Some of those who had been arrested were, according to Amnesty, imprisoned only for participating in peaceful protests. The authorities, on the other hand, claimed they had been participating in "forming a criminal group with the aim of destroying public and private property", as well as "armed rebellion and assaults on officials during the exercise of their duties"[27].

There has also been much criticism towards the regime's use of torture and other forms of excessive force against its citizens. In March 2008, Amnesty released a report, which contained information regarding the torture of detainees in the country. The subjects of torture were not only suspects of "regular" crimes (assault, theft, etc), but also political prisoners and suspects. In article 7 in the report, the nature of the torture is described in more detail, saying:

> "The most commonly reported methods of torture used against detainees are beatings on the body and especially the soles of the feet (*falaka*); suspension by the ankles or in contorted positions (such as the *poulet rôti*, in which the victim is trussed up and tied to a horizontal pole by hands and feet bound in front, *avion* , in which hands and feet are bound behind, and which is often accompanied by beating, and *baño*, in which the victim is suspended on a pulley by the ankles and has their head plunged into a bucket of dirty water); electric shocks, and burning with cigarettes. There are also reports of sexual abuse, including the insertion of bottles or sticks into the rectum of the victim, and threats, both of such abuse and of the sexual abuse of female relatives, and mock executions.[28]"

This treatment of suspects often resulted in coerced confessions, making it easy for the state to prosecute the detainees, no matter if they were guilty of any crime or not. Even if suspects withdrew their confessions, courts failed (or more likely, chose not to) investigate allegations of torture, making conviction based on confessions alone a regular sight in Tunisian courts[29]. The torture conducted by the police and the courts failure to follow up these cases are only a few examples of how corrupt the Tunisian justice system came to be under the authoritarian rule.

The surveillance of citizens in the country was extreme. Not only was the military monitoring the people, but Ben Ali himself had a personal security force of over which he had complete control[30]. This made it next to impossible for NGO's to conduct their research without being watched by the Tunisian state. This also made it hard for activists and witnesses to help NGO's, and doing so could result in their arrest. Even with these risks, many sought to help international movements that were present in the country, providing them with crucial information about the infringement of the civil rights in Tunisia.

---

[27] Amnesty International (5), 2009, accessed 2013-05-02
[28] Amnesty International (1), 2008, p 6, accessed 2013-05-04
[29] Ibid. p 7
[30] Gelvin, The Arab Uprisings - What everyone needs to know, 2012, p 39

4.2   Cyber activism

In 2004, the Tunisian government initiated a nationwide campaign to increase the internet access among the people. Several steps were taken to ensure this, partly by setting a national price ceiling for hardware and lending money at low interest, so families could afford to buy a computer. However, this wasn't enough. Internet subscriptions were too high for most people to afford. In 2008, according to the Tunisian Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies, 9.6 % of the population owned a computer, but less than a third of these had internet subscriptions[31]. The lack of internet access, along with countless restrictions, prohibiting internet users from accessing certain sites and using some software, made it hard to spread information about the oppressive regime. Those who did manage to do so, through blogging and other social media, could have their web sites shut down by the government. Online censorship reached many popular sites, such as YouTube, Twitter and Facebook. Web sites containing discussions about the human rights violations in the country, including many NGO sites, were heavily restricted through directives given by the government to the internet service providers[32].

In June 2008, the Tunisian military had entered the cities of Gafsa and Redeyef, which resulted in the killing of two protestors. This sparked an online campaign, in which people spread information about the incidents. In response, the government shut down Facebook about two months later (August 18th), claiming it was for national security reasons. After an international campaign on Facebook, the site was unblocked again only two weeks later[33].

Online journalists and bloggers ran a constant risk of being threatened, assaulted and arrested by the authorities. There are numerous examples of this. *Kalima*, an online news site ran by Sihem Bensedrine, had been blocked since 1999. Bensedrine himself was constantly being harassed, both through intimidation and smear campaigns. In 2009, blogger and journalist Abdallah Zouari was arrested, in part because of a report that had been posted on the website TunisiaNews, a site that was banned in the country. He was also questioned about his involvement with human rights groups. This was not Zuoari's first encounter with the authorities. He had been released from jail 2002, after serving an 11-year sentence. And even after his release, he was forced to live under constant surveillance, being denied internet access[34].

---

[31] http://www.mincom.tn/index.php?id=361&L=2, accessed 2013-05-08
[32] Freedom House (1), accessed 2013-05-08
[33] Chomiak, "The Making of a Revolution in Tunisia", Middle East Law and Governance 3, 2011, p 73
[34] Ben Gharbia, "Tunisia: Journalist and blogger Abdallah Zouari rearrested", Global Voices Online, 2009, accessed 2013-05-09

Internet was not only a place where people could criticize the government in front of a wider audience, but also a tool for many citizens to organize protests. One example of this is an event called *Tunisie en Blanc* (Tunisia in White), which was initiated by six internet activists in May 2010. Through Facebook and Twitter, the activists tried to rally as many as possible for their cause. The purpose of the event was to organize a peaceful demonstration against the internet censorship in the country. The protest was in part directed at the Ministry of Technology, but the main event was to get as many supporters as possible to dress in white and visit one of the many cafés in downtown Tunis. Even though the Facebook group only existed for six days, it managed to bring the political debate to a new level. The protests themselves might not have been as successful as some had hoped, but the initiative was a success in regards of social impact, and those involved played a major role in events during the revolution[35].

Some argue that social media is an important tool in cases such as Tunisia, where mainstream media is controlled by the state. Criticism against the regime would never reach national television or newspapers and internet can therefore play an important role, that is not filled by any other public stage. Internet activists also have a wider audience. It can stretch from the neighborhood, and across the country's borders. It can reach thousands of people within minutes, and when the wheel starts turning, it can be hard to stop, even with censorship. Others claim that the role of internet activism is exaggerated, at least in countries where internet access is relatively scarce. Even if one would have internet access, very few might be visiting political websites. This strongly limits the impact, and the result of online petitions (or the like) might not even induce enough social action to be noticeable to the public[36].

The case of *Tunisie en Blanc* can be used as an example for both sides. On one hand, the initiative did in fact result in a more extensive political discussion. The discussion might have been mostly online, with debates among many "keyboard warriors". Even so, these discussions might spread. One could participate in an online debate and later take the discussion to the dinner table. Other family members could in their turn bring up a topic in the workplace and so on. On the other hand, the public impact was close to minimal. Living in a country as Tunisia, where oppression is part of everyday life, will put people in a state of fear. Participating in demonstrations is something people *know* can get them arrested, and even jailed. Knowing that could be demoralizing enough to hamper the will to act.

So even though it might not be as easy to achieve public attention via internet activism in authoritarian countries as in democracies, it can undoubtedly result in increased political awareness.

---

[35] Chomiak, "The Making of a Revolution in Tunisia", Middle East Law and Governance 3, 2011, p 73f
[36] Gelvin, The Arab Uprisings - What everyone needs to know, 2012, p 50f

4.3   Women's rights movements

Even though the lack of civil liberties has left Tunisia with a bad reputation overseas their record on women's rights stands out from the rest of the region. Discussion about women's rights arose in the 1920s (making this topic almost 30 years older than the declaration of human rights), and the debate became more prominent in the 30s. The book *Our Women Law and Society*, by author Tahar al-Haddad, was subject to widespread criticism because of his (then considered) radical ideas. The book was by some considered an "attack against Islam", and religious scholars wanted the book banned. In his book, he called for social reform, claiming Tunisian women were systematically debased and that they, in some respect, should be treated in the same way as men. He also argued that the seclusion of women hampered their psychological and intellectual development. His ideas were in some aspects very pragmatic. It wasn't just the ideal behind women's rights that drove his ideas, but also his belief that a well educated (and respected) woman would be a better citizen, mother and wife[37]. So the ideas themselves might have been more noble than his actual intentions.

After the independence from France in 1956, Tunisia reformed its laws, taking steps away from Islamic law and some privileges reserved only for men were abolished. Polygamy was outlawed, meaning men could no longer take up to two wives. Neither could they, as they did before, get a divorce without going to court and the women now had the same possibility to file for divorce as men. The reform also improved the women's custody rights. All in all, the reform effected virtually every aspect of family life[38]. What made this even more surprising is that these reforms were a result of government initiative, and not women's movements or public demand. The incumbent president Bourguiba stated in an interview that "... there was no feminist movement demanding the promulgation of a Code of Personal Status or the abolition of polygamy". It should be noted though, that the legislation was still putting emphasis on the man as the head of the household. This also came with responsibility, and the husband was to provide for his wife and their children[39]. So even if the new laws did push women forward, some aspects of the reforms were not as progressive as others.

---

[37] Charrad, The State and Women's Rights - The making of postcolonial Tunisia, Algeria and Marocco, 2001, p 216f
[38] Ibid, p 1ff
[39] Ibid. p 219ff

Another outstanding event took place 1973, when Tunisia legalized abortion[40], something that was extremely controversial. Considering that the debate around this issue is still ablaze in democracies like the Unites States, it becomes even more remarkable.

This means that the initial success of the ideas on women's rights did not come from the grassroots. Unlike the uprisings of 2010 and 2011, these changes came from the top, without any protesting masses against the president. In contrast, post-colonial Algeria did have grassroots movements struggling for women's rights, but had no reformation of family law like Tunisia[41]. Tunisia was also one of the first countries to sign the UN's Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The convention was signed in July 1980 and ratified five years later[42]*. There were, however, some reservations. Some of the articles were simply not recognized, due to conflicts with the Tunisian constitution.

Under the rule of Ben Ali, women's rights continued to be prominent, compared to the overall civil rights record of the country. The policies of Bourguiba remained and the president's wife, Leila Ben Ali, was president of the Arab Women Organization, which pushed for women's rights in the Arab world. Ironically, the oppression of Ben Ali made it next to impossible for women to organize. Also, female activists were often verbally assaulted by the state media[43]. So perhaps it would be more correct to talk about equal oppression, instead of equal rights. Even if society took one step forward regarding women's rights, it was two steps back in general (human rights) policy.

There also seem to be a causality between secularism and women's rights in Tunisia. The regime had under many years oppressed Islamic movements, especially those with political ambitions. These movements often had a more conservative view on the family, and the woman's role in society. It was a policy in the spirit of oppressing the (alleged) oppressors. There is no doubt these policies did improve the conditions for women in the country, but the actions of the post-colonial government might backfire. Pushing someone down can (which the revolution itself proves) lead to a riposte from those who drew the short straw. Islamic traditionalism might come to play a bigger role in the years to come. But it could also result in a more modern and liberal development. After all, men and women alike stood against the regime and there is no reason they could not all be winners.

---

[40] Freedom House (5), accessed 2013-05-13

[41] Charrad, The State and Women's Rights - The making of postcolonial Tunisia, Algeria and Marocco, 2001, p 237

[42] United Nations, Treaty series, 1990, p 14-23   *The signature of Fathia Mzali can be found on page 115

[43] Black, "Amnesty International censures Tunisia over human rights", The Guardian, 2010, accessed 2013-05-13

5   What has happened since January 2011?

After the self-immolation by Muhammad Bouazizi, the events that were to come were many, and powerful. As early as the day after Bouazizi's suicide workers, youths and different activists stood side by side outside the very same building where he (Bouazizi) had decided to set himself on fire. Videos of the protests were filmed and spread across social media, and even after the government cut internet connection, people still managed to spread the word through their cell phones.

The 13th of January 2011, the protests had reached its culmination and Tunisia was now the centre of a revolution. The military, once again, refused to open fire and by this point, Ben Ali had to leave the country. The Western world now turned its heads to Tunisia. The use of social media during the uprisings made the revolution earn the nicknames "Twitter Revolution" and "Facebook Revolution"[44].

Six months after Ben Ali fled the country, there were still many uncertainties regarding the country's future. How would the new government handle those from the old regime that had not left the country? Ben Ali himself, and his wife Leila, were both tried in absentia and sentenced to 35 years in prison, as well as being fined 66 million dollars[45]. This sentence will, most likely, never come to fruition. Poverty and a faulty educational system was also a concern. The new regime to come had no easy task in front of them, addressing these problems. And at this time (early 2011), no one knew who would be entrusted with establishing a new government. Before the election in late 2011, the previously banned moderate Islamic party Ennahda (Arabic: *Ḥarakat an-Nahḍah*), was the most prominent party in the country. Where would the country go from this? What would be the result of the first free election in decades?

---

[44] Gelvin, The Arab Uprisings - What everyone needs to know, 2012, p 42ff
[45] Redessi, "The Revolution Is Not Over Yet", New York Times, 2011, accessed 2013-05-17

5.1 Human rights and civil liberties

As many predicted, Ennahda won the election, gaining about 40 % of the votes. Ennahda promised democratic reforms, leaving the oppressive policies behind. But even today, two and a half years after the ousting of Ben Ali, the people of Tunisia struggles to improve their civil rights. Some laws implemented by the former government, and the infringement of civil rights that came with them, are still in place.

The government has also taken their own steps to restrict both free movement and free speech. Representatives of the ruling party, Ennahda, have been proposing laws that will make it illegal to harm what is "sacred". Some are criticizing this idea, seeing huge potential for abuse. Such a law would be arbitrary, since what is "sacred" would not be definitely defined by the law. Because of this, the law could be used to limit freedom of speech in the country[46]. If such a law would be passed, it could be used in the very same way as Ben Ali used his, equally arbitrary, laws.

An example of this type of legislation was seen in August 2012 when two journalists, Sofiene Chourabi and Mehdi Jlassi, were charged with being drunk in public and "harming public morals". Even though the first charge could be legitimate the arrests of the two journalists might not have taken place if it wasn't for the fact that Chourabi the day before called for a protest against the government, which he claimed was taking steps to restrict civil liberties in the country. This was not the first time the new government used the law to infringe the civil rights in the country. During 2012 there were several cases where people were arrested for "violating sacred values". A crime that could result in up to five years in jail[47], in accordance with article 121 of the Penal Code.

The regime has also received criticism regarding use of excessive force against protesters. In April 2012, just a little over a year after the uprisings, a demonstration was held in Tunis, in remembrance of those who died and were wounded during the revolution. The Minister of Interior had banned protests in the area almost two weeks earlier, which led to a clash between protesters and security forces. Those who had gathered were exposed to the same violence that characterized the former regime. Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui, Deputy Director of Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa Programme, criticized the ban, calling it a "flagrant breach of international law". He further stated that...

---

[46] Goldstein, Human Rights and Culture Wars in the New Tunisia, Human Rights Watch, 2012, accessed 2013-05-18

[47] Amnesty International (4), 2012, accessed 2013-05-18

> "... As long as laws from Ben Ali's era exist, such violations of the right to peaceful assembly will continue unabated. It is beyond belief to see the new Tunisian government not only relying on such draconian laws, but also banning protests on the very same street that became a symbol of the uprising.[48]"

It should be noted that the protests were not completely peaceful. Several members of the security forces were injured, which could either mean that protesters initiated violence or violently resisted arrest. Even though both would be a criminal act (as in most countries, including modern democracies), the latter could be considered more understandable. The frustration with not being able to protest can invoke strong emotions, especially since the right to assembly had been practically non-existent for decades.

The regime has a often failed to investigate cases where authorities have been accused of using excessive force. One year after the incident in Tunis, Amnesty released another report, urging the Tunisian government to take action, regarding the use of excessive force against the protesters. According to Amnesty...

> "... reports emerged of security forces using excessive and unnecessary force to disperse the protests, firing tear gas, chasing demonstrators and journalists down side streets and beating them, resulting in dozens of casualties."

The report continues, demanding accountability for the treatment of the protesters. Even though the authorities had formed a commission (9 April commission) to investigate the incidents, results are yet to be presented[49].

Torture is another problem inherited from the former government, even though it is not as extensive as before. Both domestic and international NGOs have been concerned about this issue. Even though laws against torture have been implemented it still occurs and the government has shown little interest in investigating these cases[50].

---

[48] "Tunisia urged to investigate police violence against protesters", Amnesty International, 2012, accessed 2013-05-18

[49] Amnesty International, "Tunisia: One year on, no accountability for repressed protest", accessed 2013-05-19

[50] Amnesty International (2), 2012, p 22, accessed 2013-05-18

5.2 Media- and internet freedom

During the uprisings and after Ben Ali's exile, there were some internet activists that stood out from the rest. One of them is blogger and Nobel peace prize nominee, Lina Ben Mhenni, who started to report (and share her experiences) about the events following the ousting of president Ben Ali, whom she describes as a "nightmare". In her short book *Tunisian Girl*, Ben Mhenni provides a very clear and engaging description of what role internet activists played during and after the uprisings.

Ben Mhenni gives an example of how the use of social media improved after the revolution. She claims that there were 1 125 000 Tunisian Facebook members in 2010 and that this number had gone up to 2,4 million Facebook members by January 2011[51]. Should be noted though that Ben Mhenni does not present any source of this information, so this number is not definite. It is not unlikely, however, since the use of social media exploded during the turmoil. Also, the censoring of social media might have resulted a Streisand effect*, leading to an increased use of such media.

The perhaps most notable development in Tunisian politics is the improvements regarding internet freedom. In their report about *"Freedom on the Net"*, Freedom House presents several points on which these freedoms have improved. The points (and scores) are the following[52]:

	2011	2012
Internet Freedom Status	Not Free	Partly Free
Obstacles to Access (0-25)	21	14
Limits in Content (0-35)	28	12
Violations of User Rights (0-40)	32	20
Total (0-100)	81	46

*0 = most free, 100 = least free

As we can see the numbers are still far from perfect but the current numbers (numbers for 2013 have not yet been released) are, compared to the numbers from the previous year, quite remarkable.

---

* The *Streisand effect* is a phenomenon where the attempt of hiding information backfires, resulting in even wider publication of the topic in question.
[51] Ben Mhenni, Tunisian Girl - En bloggares berättelse om den arabiska våren, 2012 (E-book), p 50
[52] Freedom House (1), p 1, accessed 2013-05-18

Another positive development regarding internet usage is that the number of internet subscriptions in the country increased by about 80 % between 2010 and 2012. The number of websites have also increased, from 10,079 in 2009, to 12,830 in 2012[53]. This increase has been almost constant, and not at all as radical as the increase in internet subscriptions. Even though there is nothing exceptional with the increase per se, it could very well be that a substantial part of this increase is due to an increased creation of political blogs and other websites.

However, article 121 of the Penal Code (mentioned in chapter 5.1) have been used to limit freedom of expression on the internet. In March 2012, two men, Ghazi Beji and Jabeur Mejri, were brought in for questioning, and later prosecuted, for posting articles on and drawings of the Muslim prophet Mohammed. Beji managed to flee the country, but Mejri was sentenced to seven and a half years in jail. Throughout 2012, several people faced criminal charges, with reference to this article[54]. With these arbitrary laws, the Tunisian government has practically criminalized criticism against Islam and other beliefs that the state deem "sacred".

Two years after the uprisings, cyber based civil society is playing an important role when it comes to sharing information and ideas. According to cyber-activist Yamen Bousrih, the bloggers should fill the role of, what he calls, citizen-journalism. Several bloggers and journalists share this idea. Bousrih is a member of a movement called OpenGov, which focuses on making government related data (such as budgets and statistics) available to the public. The project has not been as successful as he had hoped for and Bousrih stated that "... transparency seems to be new to our culture… I am disappointed open data has not become successful nationwide still, since the revolution.[55]" Undoubtedly, transparency is something that never existed in Tunisia prior to the revolution. The state had complete control over the media, and alternative media (such as blogs) was inaccessible to most of the public. The new "internet era" is still in its early state, and people need to adapt to it.

Also, since laws from the Ben Ali era is still in place, the government can still take steps to restrict internet freedoms again. The government can still censor and block websites they deem "obscene". With this in mind, freedom on the internet is in no way guaranteed. There are still reasons for bloggers and online journalists to take precautions, if they want to avoid criminal charges. The fear of this could lead to a more closed political debate, and this would be a big step back for civil society movements in the country. Especially since internet activism is the best, most far reaching, way to share information.

---

[53] http://www.mincom.tn/index.php?id=305&L=2, accessed 2013-05-17
[54] Amnesty International (2), 2012, p 26, accessed 2013-05-18
[55] Samti, "Tunisian Bloggers Discuss Open Data Two Years After the Revolution, Tunisia Live, 2012, accessed 2013-05-19

5.3   Women's rights

After the election in October 24th, when Ennahda emerged as the big winner, the result could not only be considered a success for Muslims in the country, but it could also be a step forward for women in the country. Not only did Ennahda have most women running in the election[56], but the party has also vowed to continue the tradition of progressive women's rights policies[57].

Oppositional parties did however have their reservations about Ennahda, claiming that they were actually seeking to establish an Islamic state, and bring the country in to a more conservative era, where women will be excluded from public life. The critics also claims Ennahda is not being open about their (alleged) true intentions, but rather creates a public image of themselves as a modernist party[58]. Since the opposition is quite significant, negotiations with Ennahda could get problematic, which could hamper the development regarding women's rights. Some Islamists in the government want to limit women's rights in the country, while the more secular parties in the opposition want to expand these rights.

Women in the country are having concerns regarding the future of their rights. The progressive laws, implemented by the former regime, concerning women's rights are still in place[59], but the future of these laws is uncertain. As Salifists (a group of ultraconservative Islamists) voices are raised, the women could be the ones to suffer from increased Salifist influence. This increased influence could very well be a reaction to the former ban of Islamic parties and movements. There is no doubt Islamic movements will play a bigger role in the future, and it is not unlikely this could have negative consequences for the women in Tunisia. But if Ennahda would keep their word, and preserve the tradition of equal rights between men and women, the most fundamental Islamic way of life will most likely stay in the private sphere. Of course, this would still be a problem for women, but it would not be condoned by the constitution.

 In March 2013, feminist and activist Amina Tyler posted naked images on herself on Facebook. She could be seen with the text "My body belongs to me" (in Arabic) across her chest, which resulted in heavy criticism from Islamic conservatives. A Salifist preacher, Adel Almi, compared Tyler with someone who had a contagious illness and said that she should be stoned to death for her actions[60].

[56] Fair, "The Election of Ennahda and the Future of Tunisian Democracy", Stanford Journal of International Relations, 2011, accessed 2013-05-18

[57] "Final Tunisian election results announced", Aljazeera, 2011, accessed 2013-05-18

[58] Chomiak, "The Making of a Revolution in Tunisia", Middle East Law and Governance 3, 2011, p 81

[59] Alami, "Women Face Fight to Keep Their Rights in Tunisia", New York Times, 2013, accessed 2013-05-19

[60] Jay, " 'Stone her to death': Tunisian preacher demands protester, 19, is executed for posting topless pictures on Facebook", Daily Mail, 2012, accessed 2013-05-19

This extreme reactions caused a counter-reaction in several countries. In Brussels, five women engaged in a topless protest outside an Islamic cultural centre, as well as outside a mosque. One of these activists commented on the initiative, saying that...

"... It is an action in support of Amina who is locked up and under medication by her family because she had the courage to get naked, to advocate her rights to have her own body and to use her own body as she pleases, as she wishes; the situation of women in a lot of countries is unbearable but we will not let this go.[61]"

In addition to these protests, over 10,000 people signed a petition, demanding that those who have threatened (or would threat) Amina's life to be put on trial[62].

Just as there have been international support of women's rights in Tunisia, there are those abroad who seek to impose a more conservative approach towards women in the Tunisian society. Saudi Arabian Islamists are supporting such policies and some countries are even offering financial support to those who lives in the more poor parts of Tunisia. Conservative views have always been more common in the suburbs of Tunisia, and Islamist forces seek to maintain these values. Several Gulf countries have been offering money to women who will leave their jobs and stay at home[63]. Even though this financial support is aimed to those who will change their personal way of life, this would undoubtedly have consequences for women's movements in the country. To keep the women at home, thus isolating them from the rest of society, would hamper their ability to play a part in civil society.

Thus, the fight for women's rights will be fought on both a national and international level, with women's movements (and NGOs advocating broad democratic reform, which includes women's rights) on one side, and conservative Islamic forces on the other. The Ennahda government has not shown much interest in supporting those who wish to advance women's rights in the country, and their lack of political action is something that benefits the Salifists more than the women. Ennahda's passive approach towards this issue could be interpreted as acquiescence which, in combination with several arbitrary laws regarding "morality" and "indecency", could have dire consequences for Tunisian women.

---

[61] "Femen bares its breasts in support of Tunisian woman", Euronews, 2013, accessed 2013-05-20
[62] Jay, " 'Stone her to death': Tunisian preacher demands protester, 19, is executed for posting topless pictures on Facebook", Mail Online, 2012, accessed 2013-05-19
[63] Sgrena, "Islamic Force Rises in Tunisia", Global Issues, 2011, accessed 2013-05-20

6   Conclusions

There is no doubt Tunisia has entered a new era. Democratic elections have been held and the political system is now more pluralistic. Today, there are over a hundred political parties, many of them previously banned under the rule of Ben Ali. Even though Ennahda is the most dominant party, there is a plethora of political opposition. The post-revolution government is still young, and there is much work to be done if Tunisia is to have a fully democratic transition. New laws are currently being drafted and reforms of the constitution are still in the making. However, the government is still implementing old arbitrary laws to prosecute Tunisian citizens, including bloggers and other activists.

There are also concerns regarding women's rights. With Wahhabi movements glancing towards Tunisia, the future holds no guarantees when it comes to the progressive policies that distinguished Tunisia from the rest of the region for many years. If ultraconservatives were to increase their influence in the poor regions of the country, it might lead to a more closed society, where women would be kept from public life, and thus civil society.

The role of the media have also undergone a drastic change. Where there previously was only state owned media, there are now several private radio- and television stations. Even though censorship still occurs there is no doubt that journalists, and those engaging in political discussions via social media, can operate more freely. Online communities, and the activists involved in them, are now leading the way to a more open debate. Not only have grassroots in Tunisia taken back some of their own liberties, but they are also participating in an international initiative, seeking to share their success with other countries that have been suffering under authoritarian rule. Tunisian activists were unwavering in their support to those who rose up to Mubarak in Egypt. Tunisian activists also seem to be motivated to redefine Tunisian society. They have fought for their rights, and they wish to keep the fight going, for themselves and for others. There are still things to struggle for, and Tunisian civil society will no doubt evolve to something much bigger. With about 20,000 civil society organizations, the starting point for a more open society is much more favorable compared to the situation back in 2010.

The steps towards a more open society could also improve the conditions under which international NGOs can operate. They no longer run the same risk of being monitored by the state, which will also make it easier for those who want to provide these NGOs with information to do so, without risking arrest. In the long run, however, this could very well result in yet another authoritarian rule. There are strong and influential groups that seek to limit freedom of expression, often in the name of religion. Examples of this have already been seen. These conservative groups have been oppressed for many years, and this is an opportunity for them to play a more prominent role in post-revolution Tunisia. Even though Islamic extremists have been absent from the public room as a whole, their views have still been influential in the private sphere (more specifically, family life).

If the movements that flourished during the revolution can make their mark on society more permanent, the way to democracy could lie in their hands. But as long as the new government choose to act in accordance with laws inherited from the former regime, freedom is all but guaranteed. The years to come will be of vital importance, and the struggle between progressive groups and those who seek to establish a more conservative society is just beginning.

7 References

Alami, Aida, New York Times, 2013, "Women Face Fight to Keep Their Rights in Tunisia", 2013-02-20 through http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/21/world/middleeast/women-face-fight-to-keep-their-rights-in-tunisia.html?_r=1&. Accessed 2013-05-19

Amnesty International (1), Tunisia -Briefing to the Human Rights Committee, 2008-03-01 through http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE30/002/2008/en/c22ba23a-15eb-11dd-8586-f5a00c540031/mde300022008eng.pdf. Accessed date 2013-05-04

Amnesty International (2), "One step forward, two steps back?", 2012, through http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE30/010/2012/en/e44dcc01-ef8d-4255-935b-4d2931b9ce08/mde300102012en.pdf. Accessed 2013-05-18

Amnesty International (3), "Restrictions on Tunisian Human Rights Defenders", 2005-12-19 through http://amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE30/028/2005/en/fc809ebe-d476-11dd-8743-d305bea2b2c7/mde300282005en.pdf. Accessed date 2013-04-26

Amnesty International (4), "Tunisian journalists face 'public morals' charge after criticizing government", 2012-08-08 through http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/tunisian-journalist-faces-public-morals-charge-after-criticizing-government-2012-08-07. Accessed 2013-05-18

Amnesty International (5), "Tunisia release prisoners held over Gafsa protests", 2009-11-06 through http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/good-news/tunisia-releases-prisoners-held-over-gafsa-protests-20091106. Accessed date 2013-05-02

Ben Gharbia, Sami, Global Voices Online, 2009, "Tunisia: Journalist and blogger Abdallah Zouari rearrested", 2009-09-17 through http://advocacy.globalvoicesonline.org/2009/09/17/tunisia-journalist-and-bloggger-abdallah-zouari-rearrested/. Accessed date 2013-05-09

Ben Mhenni, Lina, 2012 (E-book), *Tunisian Girl - En bloggares berättelse om den arabiska våren*, Sekwa förlag

Bevire, Mark & R.A.W Rhodes, 2002, "Interpretive Theory" in David Marsh & Gerry Stoker (eds.) *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, second edition, Palgrave MacMillan, p 131-152.

Black, Ian, The Guardian, 2010, "Amnesty International censures Tunisia over human rights", 2010-07-13 through http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jul/13/amnesty-criticises-tunisia-human-rights. Accessed date 2013-05-13

Charrad, Mounira M. 2001, *States and Women's Rights - The Making of Postcolonial Tunisia, Algeria and Marocco*, University of California Press

Chomiak, Laryssa, 2011, "The Making of a Revolution in Tunisia", *Middle East Law and Governance 3 (2001)*, p 68-83

Devine, Fiona, 2002, "Qualitative Methods" in David Marsh & Gerry Stoker (eds.) *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, second edition, Palgrave MacMillan, p 197-215.

Diamond, Larry, 1999, *Developing Democracy - Toward Consolidation*, The Johns Hopkins University Press

Euronews, 2013, "Femen bares its breasts in support of Tunisian woman", 2013-04-04 through http://www.euronews.com/2013/04/04/femen-targets-islam-in-bare-breast-brussels-protest/. Accessed 2013-05-20

Freedom House (1), Freedom on the net 2011 - Tunisia, through http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2011/tunisia. Accessed date 2013-05-08

Freedom House (2), "Freedom on the Net 2012" through http://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/Tunisia%202012.pdf. Accessed date 2013-06-18

Freedom House (3), Tunisia 2001, through http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2001/tunisia. Accessed date 2013-04-22

Freedom House (4), Tunisia 2011, through http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2011/tunisia. Accessed date 2013-04-22

Freedom House (5), Tunisia 2013, through http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2013/tunisia. accessed 2013-05-18

Gelvin, James L. 2012, *The Arab Uprisings - What everyone needs to know*, Oxford University Press

Grugel, Jean, 2002, *Democratization - A Critical Introduction*, Palgrave MacMillan

Hollis, Martin, 1994, *The philosophy of social science - an introduction*, Cambridge University Press

Human Rights Watch, Repression of Former Political Prisoners in Tunisia, 2010-02-24 through http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/tunisia0310webwcover_0.pdf. Accessed 2013-05-01

Jay, Martin, Euronews, 2013, " 'Stone her to death': Tunisian preacher demands protester, 19, is executed for posting topless pictures on Facebook", 2013-03-24 through http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2300008/Naked-female-activists-topless-revolution-Tunisia-preacher-demands-nude-protester-19-stoned-death-epidemic.html. Accessed 2013-05-19

Lundqvist, Lennart, 2001, *Medborgardemokratin och eliterna*, Lennart Lundqvist och Studentlitteratur

Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies, http://www.mincom.tn/index.php?id=361&L=2. Accessed date 2013-05-08

New York Times, 1987, "A coup is reported in Tunisia". 1987-11-07 through http://www.nytimes.com/1987/11/07/world/a-coup-is-reported-in-tunisia.html?pagewanted=1. Accessed date 2013-04-21

Ryan, Yasmine, Aljazeera, 2011, "The tragic life of a street vendor". 2011-01-20 through http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2011/01/201111684242518839.html. Accessed date 2013-05-01

Samti, Farah, Tunisia Live, 2012, "Tunisian Bloggers Discuss Open Data Two Years After the Tunisian Revolution". 2012-12-24 through http://www.tunisia-live.net/2012/12/24/tunisian-bloggers-address-challenges-of-open-data-two-years-on/. Accessed date 2013-05-19

Sanders, David, 2002, "Behaviouralism" in David Marsh & Gerry Stoker (eds.) *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, second edition, Palgrave MacMillan, p 45-64.

Sgrena, Guiliana, Global Issues, 2011, "Islamic Force Rises in Tunisia", 2011-07-31 through http://www.globalissues.org/news/2011/07/31/10691. Accessed 2013-05-20

Stepenenko, Victor, 2006. "Civil Society in Post-Soviet Ukraine: Civic Ethos in the Framework of Corrupted Sociality?", *East European Politics and Societies*, vol. 20, nr. 4, p 571-597.

United Nations, "Treaty series - Treaties and international agreements registered or filed and recorded with the Secretariat of the United Nations", vol. 1249, p 14-23 and 115