



Tunisia

Last update:	11 January 2012
Author:	
Population:	10,629,186 (July 2011 est.)
Prime minister:	Hamadi Jebali
President:	Moncef Marzouki
Governemental type:	Republic
Ruling coalition:	Ennahda, Congrès Pour la République (CPR), Forum Démocratique pour le Travail et les Libertés (FDTL)/Ettakatol
Last election:	Legislative, October 23, 2011
Next election:	-
Sister parties:	Forum Démocratique pour le Travail et les Libertés (FDTL) (observer)



In December 2010 protests erupted in Tunisia after a man in Sidi Bouzid set himself afire out of discontent over the inability to get a job while holding a university degree and over frustration of frequent police humiliation. Wider protests over the high unemployment rate, living conditions, the economic situation and dissatisfaction with the ruling elite erupted around Tunisia. As a result President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali fled the country on 14 January 2011 after being in power for 23 years. This inspired uprisings across the region that became known as the Arab Spring.

On 23 October 2011 the first free elections for the National Constituent Assembly (NCA) were held. The formerly forbidden moderate Islamist party Ennahda won the elections with 89 seats out of 217. The NCA is given the task to write a new constitution within approximately one year and to govern the country.

INTRODUCTION

After the elections for the Constituent Assembly the winning Islamist party Ennahda formed a coalition with the centre-left secular party Congress for the Republic (CPR) and the social-democratic Democratic Forum for Labour and Liberties (FDTL)/ Ettakatol. The coalition holds a comfortable 138 seats. Moncef Marzouki who lived in France after his party the CPR was banned by Ben Ali's ruling Constitutional Democratic Rally (RCD), returned to Tunisia after the ouster of Ben Ali and was elected interim President on 12 December 2011.

ELECTIONS AND POLITICAL SITUATION

Tunisian revolution

Political unrest troubled Tunisia in the first half of 2011 after a young man set himself on fire in Sidi Bouzid on 17 December 2010. The frustration of the man concerning the high unemployment rate, living conditions, the economic situation and annoyance with the ruling elite was shared by many Tunisians. Demonstrations occurred around the country for weeks and resulted in the ouster of President Ben Ali on 14 January 2011. Fouad Mebezaa, the speaker of the Tunisian parliament, was sworn in as the country's interim president on January 15th. On the 17th of January a new government was formed by Prime Minister Mohammed Ghannouchi. A day later three ministers stepped down denouncing the new administration as a betrayal, since the government included several ministers from the former ruling party, the RCD. It is said that over 78 people were killed since the start of the



Tunisian uprising.

On the 27th of March Prime Minister Ghannouchi announced his resignation on national television after a renewed outbreak of street violence. Ghannouchi was a long-time ally of ousted President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, and had pledged to lead Tunisia until the elections. Ghannouchi's successor was Beji Caid Essebsi (84) the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Defence under the first President of Tunisia, Habib Bourguiba, who has ruled the country from 1957 to 1987. Caid Essebsi's formed a new government that included no members of the old regime but retained most of the key ministers from the previous interim administration. Continuing demonstrations eventually resulted in a court decision on the 9th of March to dissolve Ben Ali's party, the CDR.

National Constituent Assembly elections 2011

On 23 October 2011 Tunisia held free elections for the National Constituent Assembly (NCA) for the first time in history. The task of the 217-seat NCA is to write a new constitution for the country and to form an interim government. International observers noted that the elections were free and fair, although some minor problems have arisen, especially in relation to the unexpectedly high voter turnout. This led to long lines outside polling stations and the late publication of results.

Over 80 parties participated in the elections, with many more independent candidates. The two most important issues in the campaign were the questions of the place of religion within the new constitution and how to deal with the remaining old RCD regime representatives. The biggest surprise of the elections was the electoral defeat of the progressive centre-left Progressive Democratic Party (PDP). They had been consistently polling as the second largest party of the country and were seen as the main rivals to Ennahda.

The PDM, that also competed, was formed in May 2011 by the fusion of four political parties: of which the Ettajdid is the biggest, the Leftist Socialist Party (Le Parti Socialiste de Gauche), the Republican Party (Le Parti Républicain), and the Centrist Way (la Voie du Centre) and five citizen initiatives. The PDM was the only coalition in the elections to present an election list of which half was headed by female candidates. It proposed the separation of religion and politics and has voiced support for the abolition of the death penalty. PDM has won 5 of the 217 seats and 4.91% of the votes in the elections.

U.S. President Barack Obama congratulated the "millions of Tunisians who voted in the first democratic elections to take place in the country." He also reaffirmed the United States' "commitment to the Tunisian people as they move toward a democratic future." EU leaders also praised the first free elections in Tunisia and added that the EU "will bring support to the new authorities in their efforts of democratisation and sustainable economic development." UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon called the elections "a key step" in the country's transformation to a democracy.

Official election results

Party	votes	seats
Ennahda	1.500.649	89
CPR	341.549	29
Popular Petition/ Aridha Chaabia	252.025	26
FDTL/Attakol	248.686	20
PDP/Progressive Democratic Party	111.067	16
AI	97.489	5



Moubadara/ The initiative		
Ettajdid/PDM	49.186	5
Afek Tounes	29.336	4
PCOT	11.891	3
Other	120.977	20

1.290.293 votes were cast for parties or lists that did not receive enough votes to gain seats in their given district. In total, the constituent assembly will be composed of 217 seats, approximately one representative per 60.000 Tunisians. Turnout among registered voters was around 70%, but unregistered voters were also allowed to vote. Total turnout is estimated to have been around 85%. With over 10% of Tunisians living abroad, 18 seats were reserved for the Tunisian diaspora. Senior party members of the disbanded former ruling party RCD, were banned from standing in the election if they were in politics within the last ten years.

Political system after elections

On 21 November 2011 a coalition of Ennahda, CPR and FDTL/Ettakotal was formed holding a majority of 138 seats in the assembly. They agreed to share the three highest posts in the Assembly. Therefore Ettakotal/FDTL leader Mustapha Ben Jaafar was elected President of the Assembly and Meherzia Labidi (Ennahda) and Larbi Abid (CPR) were elected vice presidents. The Assembly will also perform normal parliamentary functions in this year, such as government oversight and the drafting of new legislation.

On 10 December the National Constituent Assembly adopted a provisional constitution that laid out a framework for the nation to appoint a new government. Articles VIII and IX, which contain some of the most controversial subject matter in the provisional constitution, deal with the requisite preconditions candidates must meet to be considered eligible for the Tunisian presidency the conditions being: the president must be exclusively Tunisian, a Muslim, a child of Tunisian parents, and at least 35 years old. These qualifications caused some controversy, specifically concerning the terms “exclusively Tunisian” since many dissidents adopted new nationalities and “Muslim” as some call it discriminatory.

Moncef Marzouki, leader of the CPR, was elected interim President of Tunisia by the Assembly on 12 December 2011 and Hamadi Jebali, the secretary general of Ennahda, was elected Prime Minister on 24 December 2011. The president holds limited powers compared to the position before the Tunisian revolution. He sets Tunisia's foreign policy in consultation with the prime minister. He is also commander-in-chief of the armed forces but can only appoint or fire senior officers in consultation with the prime minister. The prime minister is the head of government.

Gender representation in politics

On 11 April 2011 the Constituent Assembly of Tunisia passed a gender equity bill, declaring that men and women must feature in equal numbers as candidates on the electoral list. Close to 4,000 women ran for the first time for one of the 217 seats in the Constituent Assembly elections in October 2011. In spite of the list and the recent gender equity law, women's actual representation in the new assembly will not reflect their proportion of the national population. Fifty-seven seats were allocated to women in the National Constituent Assembly which equals 26.3%. Women headed only 7% of more than 1,500 candidate lists and only one woman was given the chance to lead a political party (Maya Jribi-PDP Party). The election resulted in a majority vote for the An-Nahda party that has pledged to uphold women's rights. Despite the role women played during the protests, the transitional government only has two female ministers.

Women have played a key role in Tunisian society according to statistics from 2011, representing 26% of the working population, 50% of students, 29% of magistrates and 24% of the Tunisian diplomatic. Still, while women have been integrated into the most consultative structures, their proportions remain less than their ambitions both at the central and regional level.

Previous political system

The executive branch of the government consists of the chief of state – the President, currently Moncef Marzouki;



the head of government – Prime Minister, currently Hamadi Jebali; and a cabinet (Council of Ministers). Under Ben Ali's rule the president used to be elected by a popular vote for a five-year term with no term limits. The Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers are then nominated by the President and approved by the parliament. The President used to be the head of state as well as the head of the Executive Branch of the government. He was also the Commander-in-Chief of the Tunisian armed forces and was in a position to make military and civil appointments. The President had powers on two decision-making levels: implementation of decrees and complementary decrees (there are also autonomous decrees, i.e. decrees with no basis in any specific law). The Prime Minister's task still is to coordinate government action.

The legislative branch consisted of the National Assembly or Parliament, which entailed the Chamber of Deputies, or Majlis al-Nuwaab, and the Chamber of Advisors. The former had 189 seats and members were elected by a popular vote for a five-year term. The latter had 126 seats of which 85 members were elected by municipal councillors, deputies, mayors, professional associations and trade unions, and 41 were presidential appointees; members served six-year terms. The role of the Chamber of Advisors was to complement the Chamber of Deputies in its legislative role: all laws were passed by an absolute parliamentary majority (i.e. of both the Chamber of Deputies and the Chamber of Advisors). Thus, the Assembly and the President initiated laws in agreement with each other and both had equal rights to propose bills. However, those proposed by the President got a priority. In the National Assembly, 20% of seats were given to the opposition by the Constitution. This also was what they got as the Assembly has traditionally been dominated by the ruling party RCD.

The role of political parties used to be defined by the Constitution as follows: "political parties help to educate citizens so as to organise their participation in political life". In addition it provides that parties must be created on a democratic basis and parties based on sex, language, race or region are prohibited.

Presidential elections 2009

The last Presidential elections and the elections of the Chamber of Deputies were held on 25 October 2009. President Ben Ali proclaimed that his government had "endeavoured to provide for these elections all the guarantees of transparency and honesty." But tailor-made laws prevented the candidates from some of the stronger opposition parties from running and severe constraints on freedoms of expression, the press, and assembly deprived challengers from making their case to the public. It was therefore inevitable that Ben Ali and his party the RCD would win another term. Opposition groups said there was no genuine freedom of choice during the election.

Two of the most influential official opposition parties, the Progressive Democratic Party (PDP) and the Democratic Forum for Labour and Liberties (FTDL), were boycotted in the election. The Ettajdid movement participated in the elections, despite considerable restrictions.

Official election results

Candidate	Votes	%
Zine El Abidine Ben Ali – Democratic Constitutional Rally (RCD)	4,238,711	89.6
Mohamed Bouchiha – Party of People's Unity (PUP)	236,955	5.0



Ahmed Inoubli-Unionist Democratic Union (UDU)	176,726	3.8
Ahmed Ibrahim - Ettajdid Movement	74,257	1.6
Invalid Votes	7,718	
Total Votes	4,729,649	
Total Turnout (91.5%)	4,737,367	10

Parliamentary elections 2009

Ben Ali's RCD got a majority of 84,6% of the votes in Parliament during the 2009 Parliamentary elections, with the second party only receiving 4,6% of the votes.

Election results

Parties	Votes	%	Seats
Democratic Constitutional Rally (RCD)	3,754,559	84.6	161
Movement of Social-Democrats	205,374	4.6	16
Party of People's Unity	150,639	3.4	12
Unionist Democratic Union	113,773	2.6	9
Liberal Social Party	99,468	2.2	8
Green	74,185	1.7	6



Party for Progress			
Ettajdid Movement	22,206	0.5	2
Independent lists	11,552	0.3	0
Democratic Forum for Labour and Liberties	5,329	0.1	0
Progressist Democratic Party	1,412	0.0	0
Invalid Votes	8,891		
Total Votes	4,438,497		
Total Turnout	4,447,388		214

LEFTIST PARTIES

Forum Démocratique pour le Travail et les Libertés (FDTL) / Ettakatol
(Democratic Forum for Labour and Liberties)
Leader: Dr Mustapha Ben Jaafar
Observer status in the SI

Established in 1994, just a month before the country's legislative elections, the FDTL is a centre-left secularist party. Its establishment was the result of a call by 200 democrats, academics and defenders of human rights who in 1993 called for the unification of democratic forces. The party that was established by its current Secretary-General Mustapha Ben Jafar was only legalised in 2002. However, it failed to obtain government positions or seats in the parliament in the 2004 elections.

In the Constituent Assembly elections in October 2011 FDTL won 20 seats and took part in the coalition that consists of Ennahda and the CPR. Its stated core values are transparency and openness. Its leader Ben Jafar was elected President of the Constituent Assembly in November 2011.

Congrès Pour la République (CPR) (Rally for the Republic Party)
Chairman: Dr. Moncef Marzouki

The CPR is a centre-left secular political party which was established by Moncef Marzouki in 2001. As the party was banned in 2002, Marzouki moved to France and ran the party from there. The CPR's main objectives include transparent and free elections, independence of state institutions and the judiciary, to guarantee public liberties and defend human rights and to affirm the Arab Muslim identity within the framework of respect for universal humanitarian values as they are stipulated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The party has been labelled Islamist, but rejects the label and after the elections in October 2011 is seen as a counterweight to the moderate Islamist party which became the country's dominant political force in the elections.



The CPR won 29 seats in the 2011 NCA elections, becoming second after the Ennahda. Party leader Marzouki was elected interim President of Tunisia by the Constituent Assembly and the CPR formed a coalition with Ennahda and the social-democratic Ettakatol/FDTL. Together they hold 138 seats in the Assembly.

Parti Démocratique Progressiste (PDP) (Progressive Democratic Party)

Party leader: Ahmed Néjib Chebbi

Secretary-General: Maya Jribi

The party was established on 13 December 1983 as the Rassemblement Socialiste Progressiste by Marxist groups and pro-democracy activists, but was renamed in 2001 to broaden its ideological basis. Under Ben Ali's rule the party suffered great restrictions and it was made impossible for them to take part in the government. After unsuccessfully participating in the elections in 1989 and 1999 the PDP decided not to take part in the elections in 2004 and 2009. Secretary General Chebbi was excluded from the 2004 presidential elections by the electoral law. However the Ben Ali regime did not prohibit the PDP, making it one of the few opposition parties that could operate in public.

The PDP is a secular party known for being fiercely opposed to Ennahda. After Ben Ali fled the country party leader Najib Chebbi was named Regional Development Minister in the interim government. In the aftermath of the October 2011 elections, it appeared that the PDP's emphasis of its anti-Islamist stance drove away regular Tunisians, the majority of which are practicing Muslims, after they consistently had been polled as the second largest party of the country. The PDP gained 16 seats in the NCA.

Ettajdid Movement (a.k.a. al-Tajdid)

Leader: Ahmed Ibrahim

The 'Movement of Renewal', is the successor of the Tunisian Communist Party (PCT) that was banned between 1963 and 1981. In 1981, Bourguiba legalized the PCT in order to offset the growing influence of the Islamist movement, and in 1988 the party signed Ben Ali's National Pact. In 1993 the PCT was transformed into the Mouvement Ettajdid, abandoned communism and defined itself as centre-left. Ettajdid's influence remained marginal, and the party has never succeeded to obtain more than 4 seats in the parliament. This for a great part has to do with considerable governmental restrictions.

After the fall of Ben Ali the leader of the Ettajdid, Ahmed Ibrahim, gained the post of Minister of Higher Education by the then Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi until 7 March 2011. For the October 2011 elections, the party formed a secularist alliance with three smaller secular left-wing parties and five independent initiatives called the Democratic Modernist Pol (PDM). They won 5 seats in the parliament. The PDM sees a strict division between state and religion as a fundamental basis for the new constitution and rejects cooperation with Islamist parties.

Mouvement des Démocrates Socialistes (Movement of Social Democrats)

Secretary-general: Ismail Boulahya

The party was founded in 1978 by Ahmed Mestiri and associates, liberal dissidents from the then ruling Parti Socialiste Destourien (PSD), the predecessor of the RCD. He was replaced by Mohamed Mouadda. After some internal strife over the leadership of the party Ismail Boulahya, the last founding member of the party still in function officially became the leader in 2002.

The party successfully participated in the 2004 legislative elections, obtaining 14 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, making it the largest (opposition) party in the Chamber under the domination of the RCD. The number of seats grew to 16 seats at the 2009 election. The Movement of Social-Democrats offers almost the same program as the RCD,



apart from being more Arab nationalist and socialist. The party obtained 2 seats in the latest NCA elections in October 2011 elections.

OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES

Ennahda Movement, Renaissance Party, Hizb al-Nahda
Leader: Rached Al-Ghannouchi
Secretary General: Hamadi Jebali

Initially established as Mouvement de la Tendance Islamique (MTI) in 1981. The party is theoretically shaped by the Egyptian Islamic Brotherhood and its key intellectual in the 1950s and 60s Sayyid Qutb. The party began as a rather radical one, but started to be described as moderate Islamist in the 1980s and changed its name to the current one in 1988 after Ben Ali's National Pact that sought to separate religion from politics. They advocate democracy and a Tunisian form of Islamism also described as political pluralism.

In elections held in 1989, Ennahda came in second place to the RCD. Shortly afterwards, Ennahda was banned, and its leader Rachid Ghannouchi fled the country for the UK as he and other Ennahda members were prosecuted for "membership in an illegal organization." After the collapse of the Ben Ali regime the Tunisian interim government granted the group permission to form a political party. The Ennahda party became the biggest and best organised party and won 89 seats in the 2011 Constituent Assembly elections.

Ennahda sees itself as an advocate of Islamic democracy, like Turkey's ruling Justice and Development (AKP) party. The party can be seen as a centre-right party that is sympathetic towards economic liberalism. Ennahda's leadership has stressed that it supports equal rights for men and women, although only two women are at first position for the NCA election. Nevertheless, secularists remain wary of Ennahda, whose party's strongest support comes from Tunisia's rural interior.

Popular Petition

The People's Petition for Freedom, Justice and Development party, short Popular Petition or Aridha Chaabia party was created after the Tunisian Revolution by the political writer and media entrepreneur, Mohamed Hechmi Hamdi on March 17, 2011. The People's Petition party included three broad popular ideas during the campaign ahead of the NCA elections in 2011: the formation of a democratic constitution, the adoption of a system of free health care and the dispensation of grants to the unemployed. Hamdi was alleged to have close ties with the ousted President Ben Ali, but claimed those allegations to be false. To the surprise of everyone the party obtained 26 seats in the National assembly during the elections, but did not manage to form a cooperation within a coalition.

Several parties have emerged out of Ben Ali's Constitutional Democratic Rally (RCD) party. These parties include al-Waten (The Nation), founded by RCD members who had previously served as Minister of Trade and Tourism and Minister of the Interior; al-Moubedra (The Initiative); the Justice and Liberty party; and The Independence for Liberty party.

The Initiative

The biggest party is the Initiative which was formed on 1 April 2011, led by Kamel Morjane, former Defence and Foreign Minister under Ben Ali. The Initiative party is a centrist party that assertively supports the representation of former RCD members in post-revolutionary politics. It has 5 seats in the NCA.

Tunisian Workers Communist Party (PCOT)

Leader: Hama Hammami



The Marxist–Leninist PCOT, was founded in 1986, but banned until the Tunisian revolution. PCOT is well–organized, and is particularly popular with Tunisia’s student population as it has a youth wing called the Union of Communist Youth of Tunisia (UJCT). The party is led by Hamma Hammami, who has been jailed several times since the 1970s for his political activities. His most recent stint in jail was this past January, for speaking to journalists about the demonstrations roiling Tunisia at the time. The party has 3 seats in the NCA.

Afek Tounes
Leader: Emna Mnif

The party was formed after the revolution and grew famous thanks to its political ads and the perceived modernity of its doctrines. The party could be ideologically classified in the spectrum of centre to liberal and they advocate secularism and emphasize the urge to strengthen the civil liberties while most Tunisians seem to be overwhelmed by other causes related to corruption, unemployment and security. They are being accused to have links to the former dominant party the RCD, however this has been denied by the party itself. Many Tunisians claim that this party is targeted to the upper and wealthy classes and is frequently called bourgeois. Since its establishment, the party has been prone to systematic sabotage; its meetings were disrupted frequently during the last months with the infamous french word ‘dégage’ which means leave. They gained 4 seats in the NCA elections in 2011.

Constitutional Democratic Rally (RCD)

The RCD dominated all governmental institutions since Tunisia's independence in 1956 until the fall of former President Ben Ali on 14 January 2011, though elections, the latest being in 2009, were subject to widespread claims of fraud. The party was founded by Habib Bourguiba and others in 1934 as the Neo–Destour. They broke away from the Destour (Constitution) Party, established by Abd al–Aziz Thaalbi in 1920. Bourguiba’s group felt that the Destour had become too elitist and sought to build a grassroots party that could appeal to the rural and small–town folk that the Destour failed to represent. Under the leadership of Bourguiba’s Neo–Destour party Tunisia's independence from France in 1956 ended a protectorate established in 1881. In 1964 the party changed its name to Socialist Destour Party (Parti Socialist Destourien; PSD). The party's final name change occurred in 1988, when the party congress adopted the name Constitutional Democratic Rally. This expressed the new direction of the government party following a coup that replaced Bourguiba with Zayn al–Abidine Ben Ali. On 6 February 2011 the ministry of interior banned all meetings and activities of the party and requested the courts to dissolve it, which they did on 9 March 2011.

BIOGRAPHIES

Moncef Marzouki
Interim President of Tunisia
Leader of the Congress for the Republic (CPR)

Moncef Marzouki (1945) studied medicine in France. He was inspired by Mahatma Gandhi’s peaceful resistance and travelled to South Africa to study its transition from Apartheid. After he returned to France he joined the Tunisian League of Human Rights and became an active human rights campaigner. He is widely respected for his opposition to former president Ben Ali which led to several arrests during his lifetime. In 2001 he founded the Congress for the Republic, which was banned in 2002. Still, Marzouki moved to France and continued running it. He only returned home after Mr Ben Ali was toppled.

Members of the Constituent Assembly, the interim parliament, voted to elect Mr Marzouki as president on 12 December 2011, the second most powerful role after the prime minister. He was elected as part of a power–sharing deal between the moderate Islamist Ennahda party and its two smaller secularist coalition partners, Ettakatol and Marzouki's Congress for the Republic. The deal gives the president limited powers. He sets Tunisia’s foreign policy



in consultation with the prime minister. He is also commander-in-chief of the armed forces but can only appoint or fire senior officers in consultation with the prime minister.

Hamadi Jebali
Prime Minister of Tunisia
Secretary-General of the Ennahda Movement

Hamadi Jebali (1949) studied engineering in Tunis and went to France for his masters after which he started his own enterprise. His name first surfaced in Tunisian politics in 1981, when the senior leaders of the Islamic Tendency Movement, as Ennahda was then called, were jailed. He can be credited with enabling the movement to become more politically engaged during that period. When the movement's leaders were arrested again in 1987, Jebali returned to the leading position of the movement. Jebali established a newspaper to speak on behalf of the Islamists called al-Fajr (The Dawn). Until 1992 he was the director and editor-in-chief, when he was arrested and sentenced to 17 years in prison by a military court. He spent ten of those in solitary confinement.

Jebali emerged from jail in 2006 with a new approach that blended traditional Islamist political thought with a contemporary philosophy of pragmatism. After the Tunisian revolution Jebali was presented to the public as Ennahda's Secretary-General. On 14 December 2011 Hamadi Jebali was appointed Prime Minister of Tunisia. He presented his government on 20 December 2011 and officially took office on 24 December 2011.

Mustapha Ben Jafar
President of the NCA
Leader FDTL

Mustapha Ben Jafar (1940) is the leader and founder of the FDTL. He studied medicine in France and worked as a radiologist after his return to Tunisia in 1970. In 1976 he founded a weekly opinion magazine together with others as well as an organization that evolved into the Tunisian League of Human Rights (LTDH). In 1978 he co-founded the Movement of Socialist Democrats (MDS), which became the largest opposition party. However, Ben Jafar resigned when the party in his opinion had achieved little while cooperated with the ruling party and receiving government subsidy.

In 1994 Ben Jafar founded the Democratic Forum for Labour and Liberties (FDTL) party, which was only legally recognized in 2002. Ben Jafar ran for president in the 2009 elections, but was disqualified and did not stand a chance against incumbent president Ben Ali.

After the protests drove President Ben Ali out of Tunisia in January 2011 Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi included Ben Jafar as Minister of Health in an interim government on 17 January 2011. Along with other minority party members, Ben Jafar resigned within days as public protests continued against the dominance of the RCD party in government. The FDTL became the fourth biggest party in the NCA elections on 23 October 2011 and Ben Jafar was elected to the post of President of the Constituent Assembly on 22 November 2011 receiving 145 votes against 68 for opposition candidate Maya Jribi.

Rached Ghannouchi
Leader Ennahda

Rached Kheriji, known as Rached Ghannouchi (1941) is one of the most prominent politicians in Tunisia as he is the leader of the largest party in Tunisia. He co-founded the Ennahda Movement and is seen as its intellectual leader.

Ghannouchi graduated from Zaytuna University in Tunis in 1962 before he attended Cairo University (Egypt), to study agriculture. After he was expelled from Egypt due to a row between former presidents Bourguiba and Abdel



Nasser, Ghannouchi went to University of Damascus (Syria) where he majored in philosophy, and graduated in 1968. Ghannouchi started forming his political orientations as a university student. Despite the fact that he initially joined a socialist party, his views gradually tended towards religious ideology.. Ghannouchi then attended the University of Paris, Sorbonne. After studying there for a year, he returned to Tunisia and founded an organization to initiate reforms in the country. Based on his Islamic convictions, he among others initiated the Islamic Tendency Movement in 1981 to fight political pluralism and call for economic reconstruction.

Ghannouchi along with his followers was sentenced to 11 years in prison in 1981 where he was tortured. Many Tunisians of the whole political spectrum protested against their torture. Ghannouchi was released in 1984. After being sent back to prison in 1987 with a life sentence, he was released again in 1988. Eventually Ghannouchi was exiled to Algeria, and from there he moved to England in 1991, where he lived for over twenty years. During his exile, Ghannouchi was a tireless critic of the political regime in Tunisia. On 30 January 2011 Ghannouchi returned to Tunis for the first time in two decades.

His party the Ennahda, won 89 of the 217 seats in the Constituent Assembly's elections in October 2011, the second party gaining at a much lower rate of 29 seats. In spite of his leadership role in the Ennahda Movement, Ghannouchi has refused to run for any posts in the interim government so far.

Ghannouchi has written a total of 13 books. Some of his important titles include, *Women Between the Qur'an and the Reality of Muslims*, *On the Islamic Movement's Experience in Tunisia* and *Civil Rights in the Islamic State*.

Ahmed Ibrahim
First Secretary Ettajdid
Leader Democratic Modernist Pole

Ahmed Ibrahim (1946) is a retired professor of French at the University of Tunis, his area of study being comparative linguistics. He has been a critic of the previous government's human rights record and has called for political reform. He was the main challenger in the October 2009 presidential polls, in which President Ben Ali gained a fifth term in office. After the fall of Ben Ali, he was appointed by the new government as the Minister of Higher Education and left the post again on 7 March.

Ibrahim advocates a "democratic modern and secular state" not connected with Islamists. According to Ibrahim, this would require a reform of the electoral system and a large scale independent press. Ahmed Ibrahim is the leader of the former communist Ettajdid party. The party formed a secularist alliance called the Democratic Modernist Pole (PDM) with three smaller secular left-wing parties and five independent initiatives. A strict division between state and religion is one of their core values for the new constitution.

Mohamed Hechmi Hamdi
Leader Popular Petition

Hechmi Hamdi created the People's petition for Freedom, Justice and Development Party after the fall of former president Ben Ali on March 17, 2011. He received his BA in Arabic Language and Literature in Tunis in 1985 and completed his postgraduate studies at the Faculty of Oriental and African Studies in London, and earned his PhD there as well in 1996. He subsequently founded the weekly *Al-Mustakilla* (The Independent) in 1993, the Quarterly Magazine "the Diplomat" in 1996, the Independent TV Channel (1999) and the Democratic Channel (2005) in London. During the eighties Hechmi Hamdi used to be a member of the Ennahda movement until his resignation in 1992.

His party surprisingly won 26 seats in the NCA during the October 2011 elections, most probably due to the promotion of his party through his TV Channels. In November 2011 an anti-corruption commission published a letter that Hechmi Hamdi wrote in December 2009 to then President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, in which he offered to produce a week of programmes to highlight so-called "democratic developments" in Tunisia. He admits that his



channel got a lot of advertising income from Ben Ali's regime.

Zine el Abidine Ben Ali

Former President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali (1936), was president of Tunisia from 7 November 1987 until 14 January 2011. He replaced the previous president, Habib Bourguiba, in a bloodless coup after doctors declared Bourguiba unfit for presidency by reason of senility.

Ben Ali never finished secondary school, but did completed various military studies in France and the USA and then returned to Tunisia. In 1980 he became the Tunisian Ambassador to Warsaw in Poland, and in 1986 he was appointed Interior Minister. In 1987 Ben Ali became Prime Minister and in the same year followed up Bourguiba as President. Ben Ali was re-elected president five times until the last Presidential elections in 2009 when he obtained 89.62% of the votes which was the lowest figure ever. It was clear that the campaign and election process favoured the ruling party to a great extent, with unequal campaigning opportunities for opposition parties.

After continuing protests and violence that occurred during protests that started in December 2010 Ben Ali stated he would not run for President again in 2014. When mass rallies continued Ben Ali was forced to flee to Saudi Arabia together with his wife Leila Trabelsi and three children on 14 January 2011.

On 20 June Ben Ali and his wife were sentenced to 35 years in jail after being found guilty of theft in absentia by a Tunisian court. They were also accused of unlawful possession of large sums of foreign currency, jewellery, archaeological artefacts, drugs and weapons. In addition to the lengthy sentences, the court ordered that the former president and his wife pay fines totalling 91m Tunisian dinars (£41m).

Popular during his regime was his Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi, who took over Ben Ali's position as President for one day after his fall.