Houston Area Model United Nations
Crisis Committee

Arab Spring



Crisis Director | Toluwanimi Esther Ojifinni
Houston Area Model United Nations 52
February 4 & 5, 2027

Note to Delegates

Howdy Delegates,

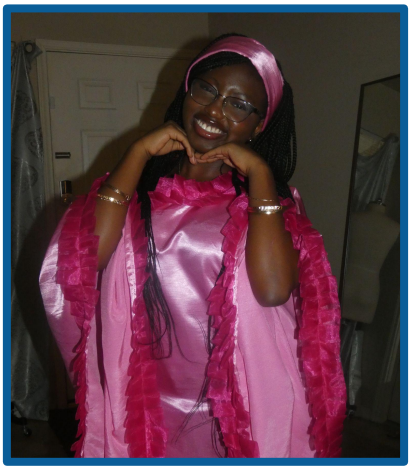
Welcome to HAMUN 52, Arab Spring! I am so excited to see what you all have in store for this wonderful and exciting committee. There are so many opportunities for you to make your mark and re-write history.

I, along with the rest of your chairs and crisis staff, have put so much time and effort into making Arab Spring a committee to remember. Please take time and care while researching, so you can come into committee prepared. I've taken time to list some helpful resources and links that are great places to start your research.

At the beginning of conference, you will be given an advantage/resource that will be available for you to use every cycle. These resources will pertain to your character and their involvement within the rebellion. Feel free to message me with any questions you may have! No question is dumb or silly!

I can't wait to see where you will take this committee! Thanks, good luck, and gig 'em!

Toluwanimi Esther Ojifinni
Crisis Director of Arab Spring
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Background

French Colonization (1859-1956)

In 1859, Tunisia was ruled by the Bey Muhammad III, and the Prime Minister, Mustapha Khaznadar. Khaznadar was an avid champion of reformist policies that promoted economic development, especially in improving infrastructure, communication and armed forces. However, the Tunisian economy and central administration was weak.

Tax was collected by tax-farmers, and only ⅛ th of the country's tax-revenue ever made it to the national treasury. In an attempt to modernize administration and increase revenue, Khaznadar doubled taxes. This did not have his intended effect of increasing revenue, but led to great hardship for the general population.

The country's attempts to secure money failed, plunging the country



into bankruptcy. Attempts from France, Italy, and Britain to help assist with Tunisia's economic issues and protect Western interests provided partial reprieve from the country's economic crisis. However, due to Khaznadar's continuous attempts and failures at reform led to the country's weakness.

This weakness allowed for France to militarily intervene in Tunisia and seize control of the country. The Bey remained as head of state however; France controlled Tunisia's foreign affairs, finances, and the right to station French troops within Tunisian's territory. Despite this, France had many ways to influence the internal workings of Tunisia. From local government, judicial systems, and education, France controlled much of Tunisia.

Tunisian independence from France (1907-1956)

The movement for Tunisian independence from France began with the formation of the Young Tunisian Party in 1907. However, the movement didn't pick up until the Neo Destour was formed in 1934.

They were a group of young nationalists striving for independence, led by Habib Bourguiba.

Threatened by the independence movement, the French banned Neo Destour and sent Bourguiba to France, in which he was imprisoned for 20 years. Following World War II, Bourguiba was finally released from prison. Upon his release, he proposed the concept of gradual independence from Tunisia.

To encourage the French to leave, the Neo Destour carried out attacks on colonial facilities. This resulted in Bourguiba's second imprisonment. Despite this, the violence didn't stop, it simply worsened.

In June 1954, the new French Prime Minister, Pierre Mendès France, came to power and put in place a withdrawal policy from Tunisia in an attempt to lessen the violent backlashes.

In November of 1955, France granted Morocco independence, and this helped pave the way for Tunisia's independence. Following 6 months of negotiation, the autonomy accords were signed on June 3, 1955, granting Tunisia full self-governance.



However, this did not fully grant Tunisia sovereignty. France remained in control over the country's foreign affairs, national defense, and security.

It wasn't until March 20, 1956 that the French Foreign Minister Christian Pineau signed an accord with Habib Bourguiba, recognizing the full independence of the Kingdom of Tunisia.

Effects of Colonialism

France, after claiming Tunisia as a colony for 75 years, left a large effect on the country and its people. It's effects on the long term wellbeing of Tunisia are extremely relevant to the events of the Arab Spring.

The influence of French culture, many scholars claim, had the most immediate impact on Tunisia. When France took control of Tunisia, French was an essential language for anyone hoping to do business with Europe. With time, proficiency in French began to be associated with elites—as French was considered superior to the native Arabic.

Because of the languages' differences, Tunisian President Habib Bourguiba's attempts to return to the use of Arabic in government were unsuccessful. The language was difficult to translate for use in government and education sectors. This forced President Bourguiba to use french. Despite this, he did not allow for the usage of the colonial language to hold negative connotations—instead he used the language to reaffirm positive ties to the West through multiculturalism.

This use of French tied into education and business sectors, but did not have the same effect at home. A national identity of code-switching began to form, in which children would use French in education and formal settings, but Arabic at home and in relaxed settings.

Such code-switching divided Tunisian society between the elite and educated bilingual Francophones, and the less educated, working-class Arabophones.

Aside from language, French colonization also had a huge impact on the economy. Colonialism had weakened many institutions such as trade unions and cooperatives. At first, the government in an attempt to strengthen what colonialism had weakened, tried to centralize the economy through state organizations.

Cooperatives began to be used for control rather than development, upsetting workers who then went on strike to receive more autonomy. These strikes led to a success, and economic ties with France. President Bourguiba encouraged economic collaboration with France and the European Union (EU). Their collaboration gave France an ally with a low-cost workforce, and France helped Tunisia access money from the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and EU.

France's colonization of Tunisia also affected the country politically. After President Bourguiba took control of France, he began to set up his government and unite most of the population behind him. His rule allowed Tunisia to recover and function without the threat of war. However, Bourguiba's government was an authoritarian regime. He utilized many of the French structures and statues in his rule—setting the stage for oppression that enabled Ben Ali to become a corrupt dictator, leading to the events of this committee.

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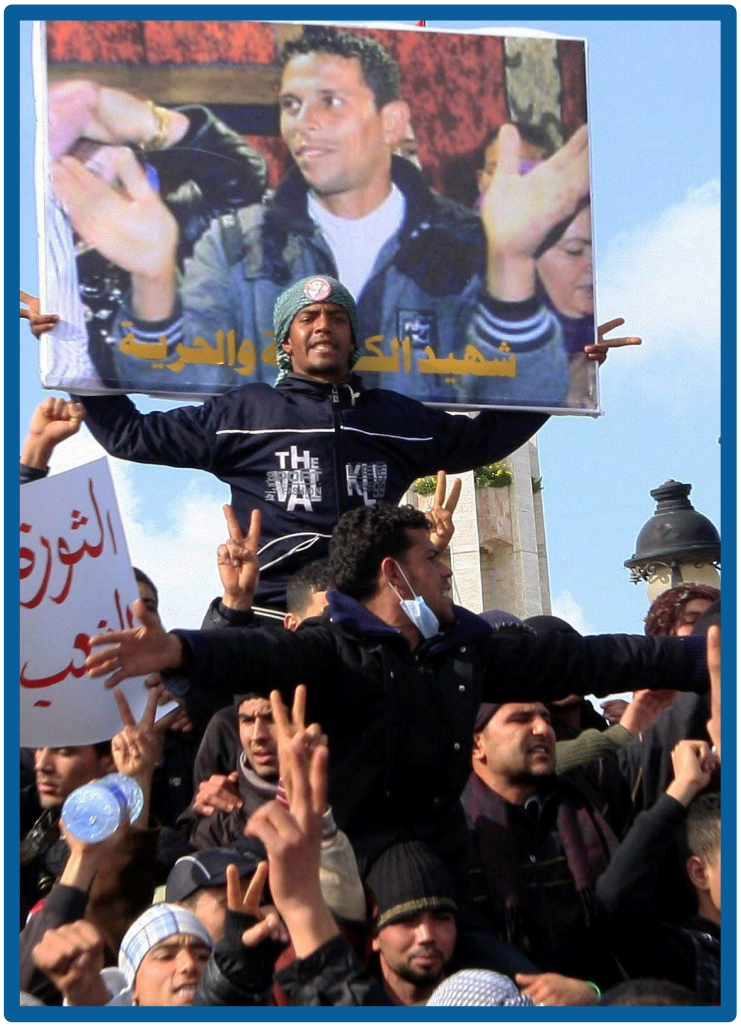
Tunisia Under Zine Abidine Ben Ali

In 1987, former security chief to former president Habib Bourguiba; Zine Abidine Ben Ali assumed the presidency. Promising a democratic regime, some of Ben Ali's first actions included loosening restrictions on the press and limiting the presidency to 3 5-year terms. However Ben Ali and much of the ruling elite began to show their corruption. The president's wife, Leila Ben Ali, used taxpayer funds to take the state airplane to make unofficial trips to Europe for shopping.

As time passed, many of Ben Ali's more democratic allowances gave way to much more restrictive policies. The press, who'd previously had a degree of freedom, became restricted. Any articles, magazines, and newspapers were reviewed by the Interior Ministry before publication. Despite these, the economy thrived, increasingly better than other countries in the region. The population growth rate fell, allowing for a GDP increase. However the success of the economy began to reveal the growing regional inequality. President Ben Ali continuously directed unds to the northern coast, leaving the south and west struggling.

Economic crises in 2007 and 2008 worsened the growing economic crisis in the south and west of Tunisia.

Unemployment was at an extreme high at 13.05% in total and 29.57% for youth aged 15-14. Food inflation and poor living conditions worsened their struggle. Corruption was rampant in government, all of which tightened the string of tension within the country.



The Catalyst

It all came to a head on December 17, 2010, when a man named Mohamed Bouazizi became the catalyst to what would be one of the biggest rebellions in recent history. Bouazizi was a young street vendor, selling fruits to support his family. While selling, local officials harassed him, demanding bribes and confiscating his merchandise. Furious, he brought his complaint to local authorities. They refused to hear Bouazizi out, and in the midst of his anger and struggle, he doused himself in gasoline and set himself on fire. His actions went viral, resonating with many Tunisians who'd been victims to injustice and economic hardship under the Ben Ali Regime. Within a few days, Mohamed Bouazizi went from a humble street vendor to a martyr and a symbol for the rebellion.

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Committee Brief

Welcome to Arab Spring! The events in this committee will take place between 2010-2011.

The Arab Spring was a wave of pro-democracy protests and uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa, challenging some of the region's most authoritarian regimes.

Within this committee, you are an essential group of individuals that had the most impact on political change during the events of the Arab Spring.

With the rebellion sparking in Tunisia, it is up to all of you to bring peace. Whether that peace comes after intense crackdowns on protests, or after the overthrowing of the current regime and the rise of a new one; peace is your ultimate goal.

Your Goals

Following the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, Tunisia is in chaos. The fire of rebellion is catching throughout the country. Demonstrations and protests are rising, each one bigger than the last. The people of Tunisia are tired of the corruption in government and the economic challenges they've faced.

Delegates, it is up to you to restore peace in Tunisia.

Will the current regime remain in power? Will they crackdown on protests, forcing the rebellion to submission? Will they offer reform, resolving many of the issues that plague citizens?

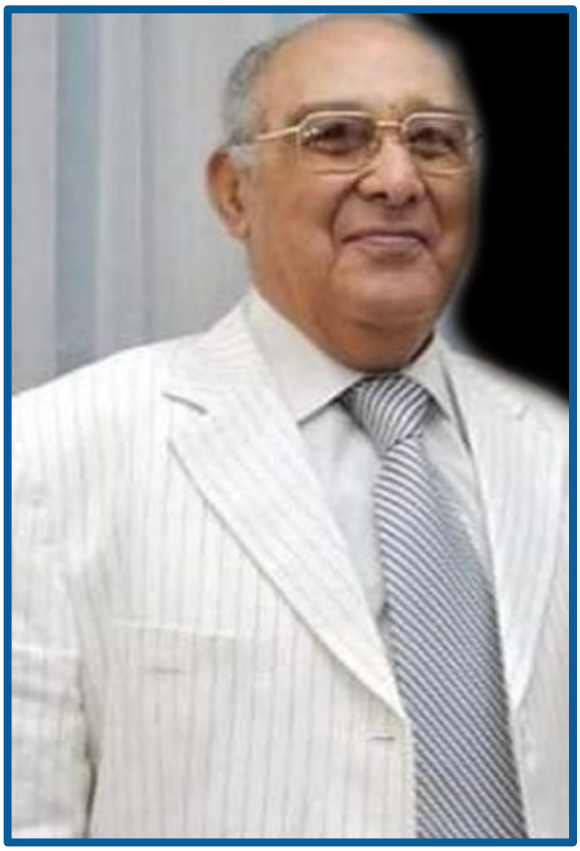
Or, will the current government be removed, and a new one in its place?



Map of Tunisia



Characters



Abdessalem Jrad

Abdessalem Jrad is the Secretary-General of the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT) and close friend of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. He, along with the central executive board, are beneficiaries to privileges such as money, land grants, and employment for their children from Ben Ali's Regime. A supporter of Ben Ali, however Abdessalem Jrad must handle the internal conflict within the UGTT. Whilst he supports the regime, many of the other branches and lower members are supporters of the rebellion. Jrad must resolve this conflict to keep himself in power and maintain his legitimacy.



Lina Ben Mhenni

Lina Ben Mhenni is a blogger and Internet Activist. In her posts on her blog, A Tunisian Girl; her Facebook account; and her twitter account, she protests government media suppression. Her uncensored videos, photos, and posts shows the world the truth about the rebellion. Outside of her internet journalism, Lina Ben Mhenni participates and organizes protests. It is extremely important to her that she offers the Tunisian people real, uncensored facts about the rebellion and the government's corruption.

Characters



Abderrazak Kilani

Abderrazak Kilani is an influential Politician and Lawyer, and serves as the chairman of the National Bar of Lawyers (TBA). With a history of human rights activism, Abderrazak Kilani has deeply resonated with the rebellion. Kilani, along with lawyers from the TBA are powerful legal protection for demonstrators and sources of political dissent. The TBA with Abderazak Kilani at its head, is an influential organization that is essential to the rebellion's success and survival.



Abdelwahab Abdallah

Abdelwahab Abdallah is diplomat and politician serving as the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tunisia. He is one of Ben-Ali's close advisors and the regime's chief media strategist. With so much of the rebellion fueled by social media and news coverage, Abdelwahab Abdallah is hard-pressed to stop the spread of the outrage across Tunisia, and minimize international awareness.

Characters



Sami Ben Gharbia

Sami Ben Gharbia is a human rights blogger and writer. He co-founded an activist blog named Nawaat. His blog offers a platform for activists, human rights defenders, and bloggers to share information about the rebellion uncensored. For the sake of committee, Sami Ben Gharbia is based in Tunisia for the duration of the events of the Arab spring.



Radhia Nasraoui

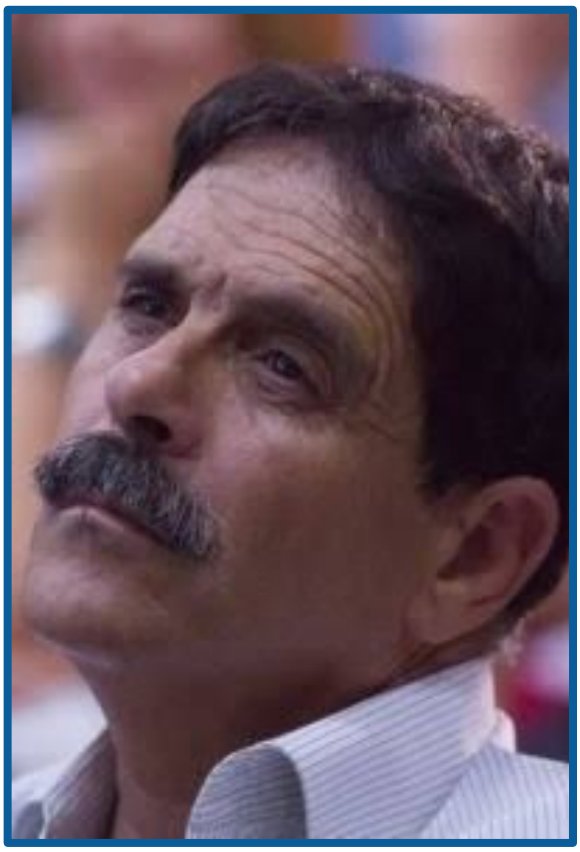
Radhia Nasraoui is a Tunisian human rights lawyer. She is known for her work against torture, founding the Association de lutte contre la torture en Tunisie (Association Against Torture in Tunisia/ALTT). As a lawer and activist, she is one of the most important figures on the front line of the rebellion.

Characters



Sonia Dahmani

Sonia Dahmani is an influential journalist, lawyer, and advocate of human rights. A member of the Tunisian Bar Association, Sonia Dahmani is an outspoken critic of many of the rights violations and unfair treatment induced by the current government. She unapologetically supports the growing rebellion, and is determined to help restore the rights and freedoms of Tunisians.



Ayachi Hammami

Ayachi Hammami is a lawyer and human rights defender. An avid activist and skilled legal professional, Ayachi Hammami is not shy or new to speaking up against current leadership. His history of his avid defense of political prisoners, trade unionists, and victims of civil rights violations have motivated him to take an active role within the rebellion.

Characters



Zied El Hani

Zied El Hani is a prominent Tunisian journalist and political commentator. He is an outspoken critic, expressing his feelings on the government in his influential blog. His criticisms—especially of the Ben Ali family—have faced plenty of pushback, however it has made him a respected voice within Tunisian political commentary.



Leila Bouazizi

Leila Bouazizi is the younger sister of Mohamed Bouazizi. In the wake of her brother's death, Leila Bouazizi has watched as her brother became a symbol of the struggles that Tunisia's youth face. She is determined to honor her brother's memory by sharing his story internationally, along with assisting the rebellion and advocating for political equality.

Characters



Maya Jribi

Maya Jribi is a Tunisian politician and the leader of the Progressive Democratic Party (PDP). The first woman to lead a political party in Tunisia, she vehemently opposed Ben-Ali and his government. With a history of participating in protests against the governments' rights violations, she is a full supporter of the rebellion. She supports the idea of a more democratic government taking the place of the current regime, and is willing to work hard to achieve it.



Naziha Réjiba

Naziha Réjiba is a Tunisian journalist. Through her online journal, Kalima, she writes unabashedly about the government and it's happenings. Her outspokenness has previously led to backlash and harassment from the government and others, but their actions have not dettered her. She is prepared to fiercely advocate for civil liberties, democracy, independence, and resistance in the wake of the rebellion.

Characters



Mehrezia Labidi

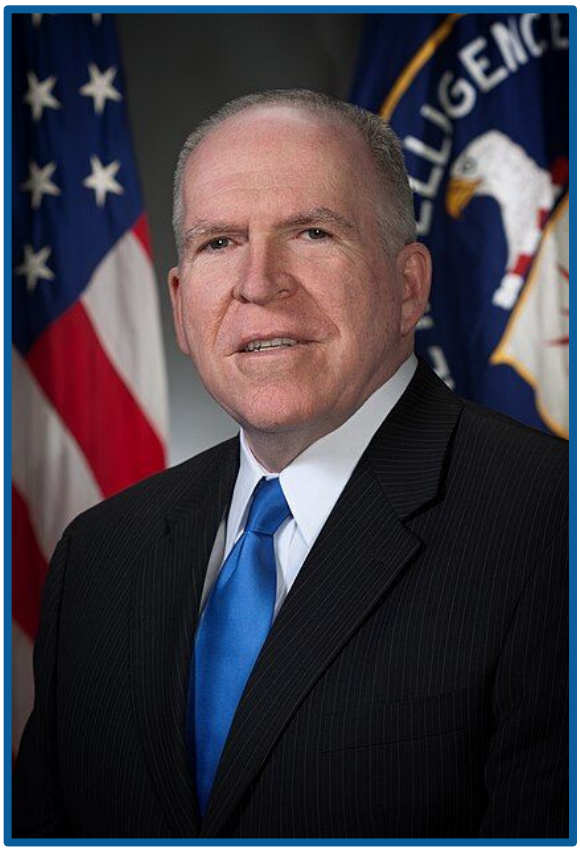
Mehrezia Labidi is a Tunisian politician and professional translator. Highly educated, she is chair of the Global Women of Faith Network and a Member of the European Council of Religious Leaders. An outspoken feminist and supporter of democracy, Mehrezia Labidi has interests in utilizing the revolution as a chance to enact change regarding women's rights.



Sana Ben Achour

Sana Ben Achour is a Tunisian lawyer, feminist, and activist. She has done extensive research in law, especially the status of women, democracy, and civil liberties. She is an activist, frequently using her education and influence to defend the rights of others. As a supporter of the rebellion, she hopes to bring change to Tunisia on democracy, women's rights, and civil liberties.

Characters



John Brennan

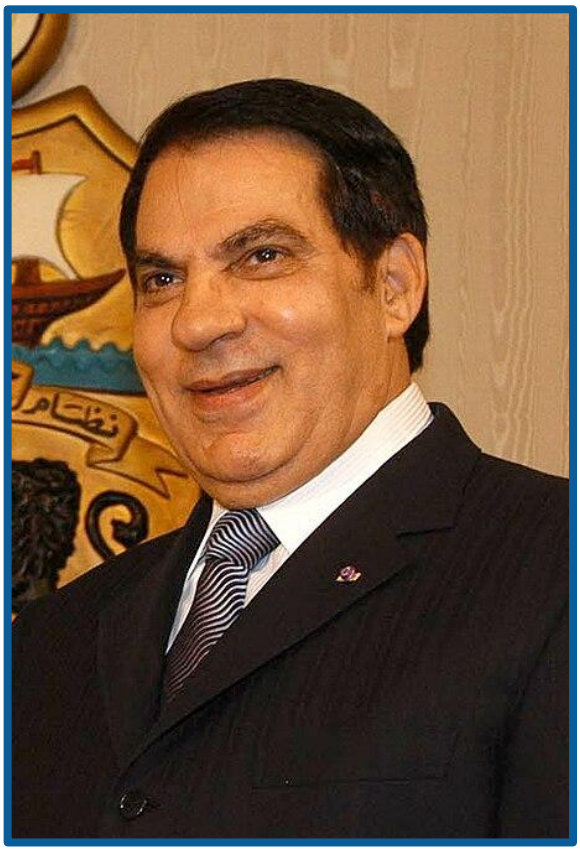
John Brennan is the White House counter-terrorism chief. As an American, his goal is to ensure regional stability. The US is intent on preventing regional chaos that could be exploited by violent extremist networks. The collapsing of a current government could lead to dangerous extremist groups establishing a dangerous foothold on power.



Bochra Belhaj Hmida

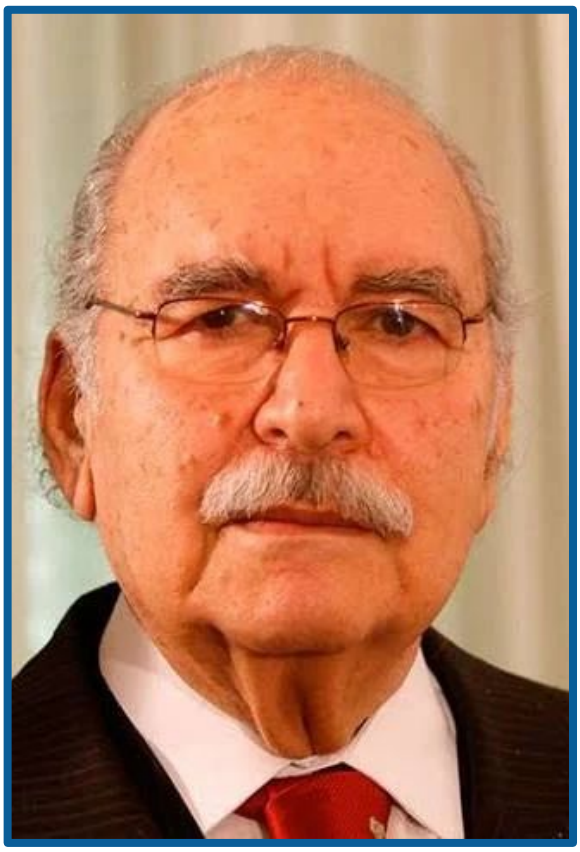
Bochra Belhaj Hmida is a Tunisian lawyer, politician and activist. She is the co-founder of the Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates (Tunisian Association of Democratic Women, or ATFD). Within the rebellion and the fight for change, she seeks to ensure that a new democratic government would include more rights for women and civil liberties for all.

Characters



Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali

Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali is a politician, military officer, and the current president of Tunisa. Ever since he assumed presidency in 1987, he has worked hard to ensure that him, along with his political party, remained in power. With the rise of the rebellion, Ben Ali is determined to squash it before it can take hold.



Fouad Mebazza

Fouad Mebazaa is a Tunisian politician and the current Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies. In his youth, he was a member of the Aix-Marseille unit of the Neo Destour political party, a group that had a major role in gaining independence from France. He hopes to bring stability back to Tunisia.

Characters



Gordon Gray

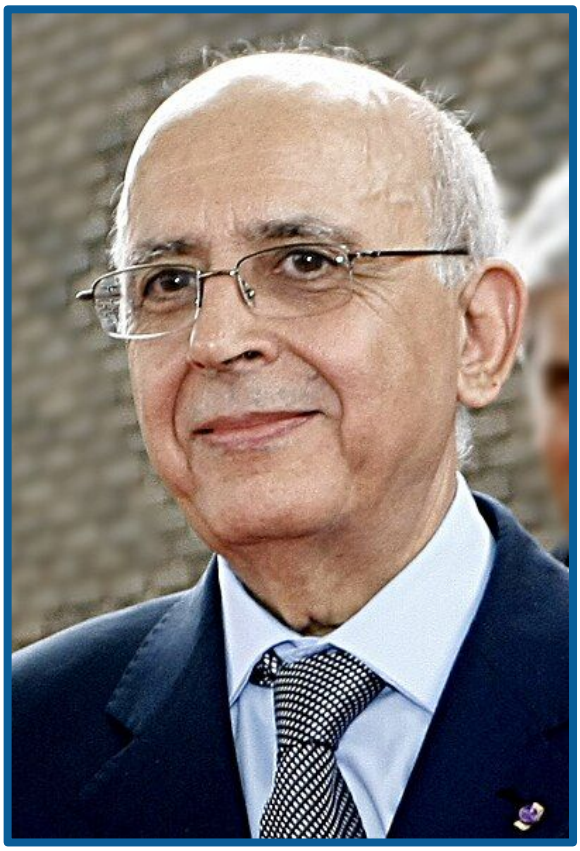
Gordon Gray is the United States Ambassador to Tunisia. As one of the main connections between the United States and Tunisia, he seeks to restabilize the country. Whether that means the continuation of President Ben-Ali and the RCD in power, or the establishment of a new government, Gordon Gray's job is to direct the US response to the rebellion.



Jeffrey Feltman

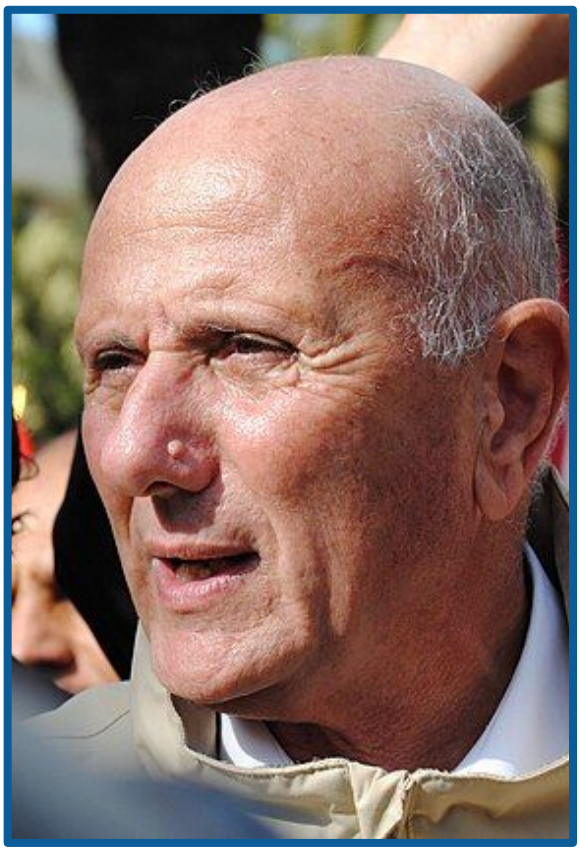
Jeffrey Feltman is a diplomat and current Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs. He has a history of working in the Middle East and Northern Africa. He also previously worked as the chief of the political and economic section at the US Embassy in Tunisia. He is a supporter of the rebellion, and hopes that it will lead to a stable, democratic government.

Characters



Mohammed Ghannouchi

Mohammed Ghannouchi is a Tunisian politician and current Prime Minister of Tunisia. He is a close friend and confidant to President Ben Ali. He is viewed better by the public than Ben Ali. In support of his president and friend, he is against the rebellion, however he may be in support of new reforms regarding social and civil liberties.



Ahmed Najib Chebbi

Ahmed Najib Chebbi is a Tunisian attorney and politician. Experienced in political activism, he founded an opposition party: the Democratic Progressive Party. In the midst of the economic struggle and hardship, Chebbi finds that he understands the fustrations behind th rebellion. He intends to use his resources and influential status to help resolve the issues plaguing the country.

Characters



Pierre Ménat

Pierre Ménat is a political scientist, lawyer, and the current French ambassador to Tunisia. As one of the key links between France and it's ex-colony, Ménat is highly interested in ensuring that the region is brought back to peace. He wishes to stop the rebellion before it can escalate and destabilize the current regime.



Michèle Alliot-Marie

Michèle Alliot-Marie is a French politician, former member of the European Parliament, and the current Minister of Foreign and European Affairs. She is focused on restoring order to Tunisia and keeping the current regime in power, whether it be peacefully or by force.

Characters



Kamel Morjane

Kamel Morjane is a Tunisian politician, diplomat, lawyer, and the Tunisian Minister of Foreign Affairs. As a part of the current government, he is highly interested in quelling the rebellion whilst keeping President Ben Ali in power.



Rachid Ammar

Rachid Ammar is the chief of staff of the Tunisian Armed Forces. Whilst he is highly motivated to restore order back to Tunisia, he understands the plight of citizens. He sympathizes with the cause, and refuses to use any type of violence against protesters in order to crush the rebellion.

Characters



Leïla Trabelsi

Leïla Trabelsi is the president of the Arab Women Organization, head of the BASMA Association for the Promotion of Employment of the Disabled, and the First Lady of Tunisia. She is highly against the protests, and hopes to quickly crush the rebellion before it could escalate. Despite this, she may be sympathetic to some reforms or concessions in order to help with the economic and employment crisis.



Ridha Grira

Ridha Grira is a Tunisian politician, lawyer, and the Tunisian Minister of Defense. He is against the protests, but doesn't think they are very serious. He will be slow to take action to crush them, out of hopes that they will peter out on their own.

Characters



Zouheir M'dhaffer

Zouheir M'dhaffer is a Tunisian politician, lawyer, the current Minister Delegate in charge of the Civil Service and Administrative development. He is also a high ranking member of the Constitutional Democracy Rally (RCD). His main goal is ensuring that the RCD remains in power, regardless of who is at the helm.



Rafik Belhaj Kacem

Rafik Belhaj Kacem is the Minister of the Interior. He is watching the rising protests carefully, understanding that immediately they escalate, it is him the government will turn to in order to squash the rebellion. He is prepared to use any form of force necessary to stop the unrest.

Helpful Links

Not sure where to start your research? Start Here!

https://www.britannica.com/event/Arab-Spring

https://www.britannica.com/event/Jasmine-Revolution

https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1006&context=gsis_studentconference

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