



A Guide to

TUNISIA'S 2019 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

October 2019

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ABOUT THE PROJECT ON MIDDLE EAST DEMOCRACY (POMED)

The Project on Middle East Democracy is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to examining how genuine democracies can develop in the Middle East and how the United States can best support that process. Through research, dialogue, and advocacy, we aim to strengthen the constituency for U.S. policies that peacefully support democratic reform in the Middle East.

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INTRODUCTION

On October 6, Tunisian voters will head to the polls to choose the 217 members of the Assembly of the Representatives of the People (ARP). These will be the country's second free and pluralistic parliamentary elections since the January 2011 revolution that overthrew the dictatorship of Zine el Abidine Ben Ali. The October 6 vote comes less than three months following the death in office of 92-year-old president Beji Caïd Essebsi, three weeks after the first round of the presidential election on September 15, and one week before the presidential runoff scheduled for October 13.

This crowded electoral season represents an inflection point for the Tunisian democratic transition, at which a shift is occurring away from the actors who dominated the initial post-revolution period and into a new, still undefined, phase. In the September presidential vote, two political outsiders—populist media mogul Nabil Karoui and constitutional law professor Kais Saïed—beat numerous more experienced figures, including the current prime minister and two former prime ministers, to make it into the runoff.

The fact that Karoui remains imprisoned on tax evasion and money laundering charges—he was arrested in August but was not disqualified from candidacy—has added yet more uncertainty to this fall's electoral process. Karoui has said that if Saïed wins the runoff, he will contest the results on grounds of lack of equal opportunity. Such a development could throw the democratic process into turmoil.¹

The results of the September presidential vote, along with the relatively low turnout (45 percent), affirmed long-standing signals that many Tunisians, facing difficult socioeconomic conditions, have soured on the political class that has been ruling the country since 2011. The October 6 ARP vote may continue this trend of disaffection, leading to

another rejection of the governing elite and an increase in independent parliamentarians and lawmakers from new, especially populist, parties. As Laryssa Chomiak of Chatham House recently wrote, the present conditions in Tunisia “are ripe for the rise of candidates and political entrepreneurs who represent... a shift away from the status quo.”² Alternatively, Tunisian voters could decide to choose for the ARP more well-known candidates from established parties, in order to create a check on an incoming head of state—whether Karoui or Saïed—who lacks governing experience.

The stakes for the ARP elections are also high because of the enhanced role given to the parliament in the post-revolution political system. The 2014 constitution created a mixed presidential/parliamentary system that establishes a balance across the branches of government and gives the parliament real power and clout. This replaced the system under the dictatorship, in which overwhelming power was concentrated in the president; the parliament had a rubber-stamp role and the prime minister was effectively a figurehead. In the new governing structure, the president (formally called the head of state) shares executive powers with the head of government (widely, and in this report, referred to as “prime minister”). The prime minister is chosen from within the party or electoral coalition that wins the largest number of seats, and is then appointed by the president upon gaining the confidence of the parliament. The ARP holds legislative power with the ability to pass both ordinary laws and organic laws (those relating to the central principles of the system of government). Members of the ARP are seated for five-year terms, with no limit on the number of terms they may serve.

As mentioned above, the ARP elections are taking place against a backdrop of widespread economic discontent and voter disaffection. Nearly nine years after the Jasmine

1. Wejded Jelassi, “Nabil Karoui: « Je déposerai un recours, en cas de victoire de Kaïes Saïd »” [FR], *Réalités*, October 1, 2019, <https://www.realites.com.tn/2019/10/nabil-karoui-je-deposerai-un-recours-en-cas-de-victoire-de-kaies-said/>

2. Laryssa Chomiak, “Tunisian Politics Splinters as Presidential Election Approaches,” Chatham House, August 20, 2019, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/expert/comment/tunisian-politics-splinters-presidential-election-approaches>

“THE ARP ELECTIONS ARE TAKING PLACE AGAINST A BACKDROP OF WIDESPREAD ECONOMIC DISCONTENT AND VOTER DISAFFECTION.”

Revolution, the economy remains mired in stagnation. The International Monetary Fund (IMF)-mandated austerity measures imposed in recent years were intended to stabilize Tunisia's macroeconomic outlook, but have instead placed additional pressure on Tunisians' standard of living. Unemployment currently sits at an official 15 percent, with youth unemployment reportedly at 34 percent.³ Inflation has nearly doubled, from 3 to 4 percent pre-revolution to more than 7 percent in late 2018.⁴ As the Brookings Institution's Sharan Grewal has noted, "eight years into democracy, Tunisians have become frustrated with [the government's] failure to deliver economically."⁵

Partly because of this economic malaise, Tunisians' support for some aspects of the

country's new democratic system appears to have eroded in recent years. According to a 2019 survey by the International Republican Institute, 70 percent of Tunisians distrust political parties and 59 percent somewhat or greatly distrust the ARP.⁶ Such polling results reflect popular disillusionment with what is perceived as frequent political gridlock and a fragmented legislature unable to address important economic and social problems that affect average Tunisians. This has created an opening for politicians who pledge to upend the post-revolution order. Notably, Karoui has advocated enhancing presidential powers by centralizing executive power at the expense of the rest of the members of the government. For his part, Saïed has proposed replacing the direct election of the parliament with an indirect election of legislators from a pool of elected local and regional councils.⁷

To complement POMED's Guide to Tunisia's 2019 Presidential Elections released in September,⁸ we are publishing this Backgrounder on the October 6 ARP contest. It describes the electoral process, the voting system, other aspects of the elections, and some of the most prominent parties competing for seats in parliament.

3. "Unemployment rate down 0.1% to 15.3% in Q1 2019 (INS)," Tunis Afrique Presse, May 15, 2019, <https://www.tap.info.tn/en/Portal-Society/11451211-unemployment-rate>

4. Sharan Grewal, "Tunisian Democracy at a Crossroads," Brookings Institution, February 2019, https://www.brookings.edu/wpcontent/uploads/2019/02/FP_20190226_tunisia_grewal.pdf

5. Grewal, "Tunisian Democracy at a Crossroads."

6. "Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Tunisia," International Republican Institute's Center for Insights on Survey Research, March 28, 2019, https://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/final_-_012019_iri_tunisia_poll.pdf

7. "Élection présidentielle: Kais Saïed veut changer la façon d'exercer le pouvoir législatif," Huffpost Maghreb, September 5, 2019, https://www.huffpostmaghreb.com/entry/election-presidentielle-kais-saied-veut-changer-lexercice-du-pouvoir-legislatif_mg_5d70e9bce4b0c0dfe057b404f; "Kais Saïed pour la suppression des législatives," Mosaïque FM, June 11, 2019, <https://www.mosaïquefm.net/fr/actualite-politique-tunisie/559201/kais-saied-pour-la-suppression-des-legislatives>

8. "A Guide to Tunisia's 2019 Parliamentary Election," Project on Middle East Democracy, September 2019, <https://pomed.org/2019-tunisia-presidential-election-guide/>

THE ELECTORAL FRAMEWORK

CONSTITUENCIES

Tunisian citizens vote in one of 33 electoral constituencies (districts): 27 in Tunisia and six for Tunisians living abroad. Twenty-one of Tunisia's 24 governorates serve as one electoral district each, while the governorates of Nabeul, Tunis, and Sfax are divided into two districts each. Districts abroad are: France 1, France 2, Germany, Italy, North America and the rest of Europe, and the Arab world.

The number of seats for each district inside Tunisia ranges from four to ten, for a total of 199 seats. The number of seats for each district abroad ranges from one to five, for a total of 18 seats. An electoral district can have a maximum of 10 seats; if a governorate would have more than 10 seats, it is divided into multiple districts.

In terms of how many seats in the ARP each district is to elect:

- Each governorate is allocated one seat for every 60,000 inhabitants. For example, a governorate with 300,000 people has five seats in the ARP.
- If a governorate's population cannot be neatly divided into increments of 60,000 (such as if its population is 109,000), it will receive one more seat should the remainder exceed 30,000 people (in the above example, the remainder would be 49,000 or 109,000 minus 60,000).
- Governorates with fewer than 270,000 people are granted an extra two seats, while those with a population between 270,000 and 500,000 are granted one extra seat.

ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Tunisia has adopted a closed-list electoral system for parliamentary elections, which means that voters cast one vote for only one list in their district; they do not get to express a preference for individual candidates on a list. Lists can be

formed by parties, by coalitions of parties, or by individuals who join to create a combined list. Candidates cannot run for a seat on their own; they must belong to a list. The candidates on a list do not necessarily have to share an electoral platform as a party or a coalition.

Tunisia uses a proportional representation system in which a variation of the largest remainder method (the Hare quota) is employed to translate votes into seats. Although there is a threshold of 3 percent for municipal elections, there is no electoral threshold for parliamentary elections. The process of translating votes into seats has multiple stages:

- First, to determine the number of votes required to win a seat in each district—what is known as the electoral quota—election officials divide the total number of valid votes cast by the number of seats the district has in the ARP.⁹ For example, if 160,000 total valid votes were cast in Sidi Bouzid, which has eight seats, the quota there would be 20,000.
- Next, lists are allocated seats based on how many quotas they have won. For example, if Party A won 70,000 valid votes in Sidi Bouzid, it would initially receive three seats (quota of 20,000 times three). The first three candidates on Party A's list therefore would win seats in parliament.
- After the initial assignment of seats, some seats are usually left unallocated (also called the "remainder"). When this happens, unallocated seats are assigned to lists on the basis of the largest remainder of votes in descending order. For example, Party A would have a remainder of 10,000 (70,000 valid votes received minus 60,000, which is the product of the 20,000 quota, times three). If there is one unallocated seat and Party A's remainder of 10,000 is the largest in the Sidi Bouzid district, Party A will receive one extra seat. If there is more than one unallocated seat, then the parties with the largest remainders each receive one seat, and this method is fol-

9. Valid votes are those properly marked on ballots (that is, marked for one list only and not spoiled or left blank).

FIGURE 1. ELECTORAL MAP OF TUNISIA

DISTRICT	SEATS
Ariana	8
Béja	6
Ben Arous	10
Bizerte	9
Gabès	7
Gafsa	7
Jendouba	8
Kairouan	9
Kasserine	8
Kebili	5
El Kef	6
Mahdia	8
Mandouba	7
Medenine	9
Monastir	9
Nabeul 1	7
Nabeul 2	6
Sfax 1	7
Sfax 2	9
Sidi Bouzid	8
Siliana	6
Sousse	10
Tatouine	4
Tozeur	4
Tunis 1	9
Tunis 2	8
Zaghouan	5
Arab World	2
America	2
France 1	5
France 2	5
Germany	1
Italy	3
TOTAL	217



lowed until all seats have been assigned. This method of seat allocation is considered one of the most generous in allocating seats to smaller parties.¹⁰

- In the event that there is only one unallocated seat and two parties are tied for the largest remainder (e.g., Party B and Party C have remainders of exactly 8,000), the seat is awarded to the youngest candidate in the relevant spot on his or her list.¹¹

ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

The Independent High Authority for Elections (ISIE), an independent electoral commission established after the revolution, organizes and oversees all elections and referenda. The creation of the ISIE in April 2011 was a crucial step to build Tunisians' confidence in fair election management, since under the dictatorship the Ministry of Interior, which was controlled by the president, heavily manipulated elections in favor of the ruling party. The ISIE is led by nine commissioners elected by the ARP for six-year terms. Commissioners must be politically independent and have professional experience relevant to their ISIE duties and portfolios. They are supported by a permanent secretariat and by 33 regional bodies, called the Independent Regional Authorities for the Elections (IRIEs), which manage electoral operations locally. Each IRIE has four members, who are selected by the ISIE commissioners for their political neutrality and professional competence.

The ISIE has earned a good reputation for professional and impartial election management since 2011, although it has experienced some turbulence in recent years. In 2017 and

2018, two successive ISIE presidents and several other commissioners resigned, reportedly due to concerns over mismanagement and alleged political interference in the commission's work, and the ARP moved slowly to fill these and other staff vacancies.¹² Despite these challenges and the organizational strains of the extremely busy electoral calendar this fall, however, Tunisians appear generally to retain confidence in ISIE's integrity. In the first round of the presidential election, domestic and international observers commented favorably on the ISIE's conduct of the process overall.¹³

VOTERS

In order to cast their ballots, Tunisians must be listed on the voter registry in the polling station where they wish to vote and must present to election officials either their national identification card or a valid passport. Following the revolution, the ISIE created a new voter registry, due to the lack of public trust in the integrity of the voter rolls under the dictatorship. The new voter registration system is active, meaning that citizens must register themselves; they are not universally or automatically added. To register, Tunisians must be 18 years old by election day, be free of any criminal sentence that explicitly prohibits them from voting, and not be under legal guardianship for mental incapacity. Members of the military and security forces are allowed to vote in municipal elections, but not in legislative or presidential elections.

The ISIE conducted voter registration for the 2019 ARP elections from April 10 through June 15. During this period, Tunisians were invited to visit local ISIE offices or mobile centers to register for the first time, or to update their existing information such as their elec-

10. John M. Carey, "Electoral Formula and the Tunisian Constituent Assembly," Dartmouth College, May 9, 2013, <https://cpb-us-e1.wpmucdn.com/sites.dartmouth.edu/dist/2/109/files/2013/02/Tunisia-Electoral-Formula-Carey-May-2013-reduced.pdf>

11. Article 110 of Organic Law n° 2014-16 dated May 26, 2014 relating to elections and referenda (1), available in French at <http://www.isie.tn/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Loi-n-16-version-consolidee-.pdf>

12. Yassine Bellamine, "Le président Chafik Sarsar et plusieurs membres démissionnent de l'Instance Supérieure Indépendante pour les Élections," Huffpost Maghreb, May 9, 2017, https://www.huffpostmaghreb.com/2017/05/09/chafik-sarsar-demission_n_16505098.html

13. See "Preliminary Statement of the IRI-NDI International Election Observation Mission to Tunisia's September 15, 2019 Presidential Election," National Democratic Institute, September 16, 2019, <https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/IRI%20NDI%20EOM%20Tunisia%20Presidential%202019%20PS%20FINAL.pdf>; "Carter Center Pre-election Statement on Tunisia's 2019 Electoral Process," The Carter Center, September 9, 2019, https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/news/peace_publications/election_reports/tunisia-pre-election-statement-eng-090919.pdf; and "Preliminary Declaration," European Union Electoral Observation Mission, September 17, 2019, https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/declaration_preliminaire_moe_ue_tunisie_17_09_2019.pdf

total district or name. Tunisians living abroad could register through the ISIE website or at 64 offices set up in diplomatic missions. According to the ISIE, the 2019 registration period added nearly 1.5 million Tunisians to the voter rolls, bringing the total number of registered voters to 7,074,565, out of an estimated 8 million eligible voters.¹⁴ (6.7 million voters are registered inside Tunisia, while the rest are registered abroad.)¹⁵

Although the number of registered voters has been rising steadily since 2011, turnout of those voters has fluctuated. In the October 2011 vote for the National Constituent Assembly (NCA), the post-revolution constitution drafting body, turnout was an estimated 48 percent. In the October 2014 parliamentary elections, turnout jumped to 68 percent of registered voters. The first round of the 2014 presidential election, in November of that year, saw a reported 63 percent of registered voters cast their ballots, and the runoff in December 2014 runoff saw 60 percent go to the polls. In the May 2018 local elections, turnout barely reached 34 percent. And in the first round of the 2019 presidential election, 45 percent of registered voters took part.¹⁶ However, as the preliminary statement from the National Democratic Institute-International Republican Institute international observer delegation noted, “with approximately 1.5 million more voters registered in 2019 than in 2014, the total number of people voting remained about the same” as in the November 2014 election.¹⁷ Still, it is clear that voter disaffection is a genuine issue for Tunisia.

ELECTORAL LAW

The post-revolution law governing elections and referenda was passed in 2014, and amendments relating to parliamentary elections were

made in 2017. These amendments:

- Prohibit candidates from running on more than one electoral list and in more than one electoral district;
- Require that the number of candidates on each list is equal to the number of seats in the ARP for that district;
- Disallow parties or coalitions from running multiple lists in the same district
- Prohibit candidates from receiving any foreign funding;
- Stipulate that candidates who obtain at least 3 percent of the vote are entitled to a public subsidy (in the form of a campaign reimbursement following the election);¹⁸ and
- Require candidate lists, candidates, and parties to publish their financial statements in one of the Tunisian daily newspapers within two months after the final results are announced.¹⁹

CANDIDATES

According to the electoral law, anyone who has been a Tunisian citizen for the past ten years, is at least 23 years old, and is not prohibited under any other provision in the constitution is eligible to run for a seat in parliament.²⁰ As noted above, candidates must run as part of a list. Judges, heads of diplomatic and consular missions, governors, secretaries general of governorates, and mayors must resign from their positions before they can join a list, and also must wait at least one year before running in the district in which they most recently served.²¹

14. The Carter Center, “Pre-election Statement.” Official data on the number of eligible voters was not available to POMED at the time of publication.

15. “The National Constituent Assembly Elections in Tunisia,” The Carter Center, May 24, 2012, https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/news/peace_publications/election_reports/tunisia-final-Oct2011.pdf

16. “Taux de participation final au 1er tour des Présidentielles 2019,” Mosaïque FM, September 15, 2019, <https://www.mosaiquefm.net/fr/presidentielles/606764/taux-de-participation-final-au-1er-tour-des-presidentielles-2019>

17. National Democratic Institute, “Preliminary Statement.”

18. Article 78 of Organic Law n° 2017-7, February 14, 2017, amending and completing Organic Law n° 2014-16, available in French at <http://www.legislation.tn/sites/default/files/fraction-journal-officiel/2017/2017G/014/Tg201771.pdf>

19. Article 87 of Organic Law n° 2017-7.

20. Article 19 of Organic Law n° 2014-16.

21. Article 20 of Organic Law n° 2014-16.

ELECTORAL CALENDAR

The campaign period for the 2019 ARP election began on Sep. 14. Campaigning is permitted for roughly three weeks. On Oct. 4, campaigning must end; on Oct. 5 there is a “day of silence,” in which no campaign events whatsoever are permitted. The ISIE is required to announce preliminary results by Oct. 10. Following an appeals period, the ISIE is obligated to release the final results by Nov. 13. (Some of the dates differ for elections abroad, as indicated below.)

Apr 10	• Voter registration process begins
Jun 15	— Voter registration for parliamentary elections closes (registration for presidential elections lasted until Jul. 4)
Jul 16	— Electoral period begins
Jul 22	— ISIE begins receiving candidate applications (electoral lists)
Jul 29	— Open period for candidates to submit applications to ISIE ends
Aug 6	— ISIE releases preliminary list of accepted candidate/list applications, followed by an appeals period
Aug 29	— Deadline for candidates to withdraw from parliamentary elections (deadline for candidates outside Tunisia is Aug. 27)
Aug 30	— ISIE announces final lists accepted for candidacy
Sep 12	— Electoral campaign begins in districts abroad
Sep 14	— Electoral campaign begins in Tunisia
Oct 2	— Electoral campaign abroad ends
Oct 3	— Day of silence for parliamentary elections abroad
Oct 4	— Electoral campaign ends in Tunisia/ voting for Tunisians abroad begins and lasts through Oct. 6
Oct 5	— Day of silence for parliamentary elections in Tunisia
Oct 6	— Election day in Tunisia
Oct 10	— Deadline for ISIE to announce preliminary results; an appeals period of a maximum of 32 days follows
Nov 11	— Appeals period ends; ISIE must release the final results within 48 hours
Nov 13	— Deadline for ISIE to announce final results

On July 22, 2019, the ISIE began accepting list applications for the ARP elections. Applications require valid signatures of all list members and other documentation. In addition, in accordance with the 2014 constitution’s stipulation that there should be “equal representation for women and men in elected institutions based on parity,” lists must have alternating female and male candidates, although there is no requirement that female candidates head lists.

On August 30, following a review and appeals process, the ISIE announced that it had approved 1,506 lists (1,341 in Tunisia and 165 abroad). Of these:

- 668 are party lists;
- 514 are independent lists; and
- 324 are coalition lists.²²

The ISIE rejected lists for reasons such as applications not having required documentation, lacking sufficient candidates to fill the available seats, or failing to follow the gender parity rule.²³

Women are heading 208 electoral lists, or nearly 14 percent of the total.²⁴ (This is a slight increase from the 2014 ARP elections, when 12 percent of lists were headed by women, but a notable decrease from the 2018 municipal elections, in which 30 percent of lists were headed by women.²⁵)

- The France 1 district has the highest percentage of female heads of lists, at 33 percent, followed by Sfax 2, with 26 percent;
- Tataouine is the only district with no female-headed lists; and

22. These numbers were calculated by POMED using the final lists of candidates as reported by the ISIE, see link here: <https://bit.ly/2meaGzI>

23. For example, see “The Parliamentary Elections: Rejection of Four Independent Lists in Manouba,” Shems FM, August 6, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2mfbG6F>

24. “Tunisie : Pourquoi tient-on à ce qu’il y ait plus de femmes têtes de liste?” Web Manager Center, August 30, 2019, <https://www.webmanagercenter.com/2019/08/30/438240/tunisie-pourquoi-tient-on-a-ce-quil-y-ait-plus-de-emmes-tetes-de-liste/>; “Mansri: Only 14 percent of women are electoral list leaders,” [AR], Mosaïque FM, August 28, 2019, <https://tn24.ween.tn/ar/article/mnsry-14-fkt-ns-r-ys-t-k-m-t-ntkh-by-oakly-lahz-b-lm-ttghy-r-172466?>

25. Web Manager Center, “Tunisie: Pourquoi tient-on?”

- The Afek Tounes party has the largest number of women-headed lists, with 11, followed by Nabil Karoui's Qalb Tounes party, with eight.²⁶

Women won 34 percent of the seats in the 2014 ARP elections.

MEDIA RULES

Tunisia's electoral regulations stipulate that private and public media outlets must provide equal coverage of all electoral lists and candidates to ensure neutrality.²⁷ The rules also state that media outlets are not allowed to publish electoral opinion polls once the electoral period (which began on July 16) is underway, on the day of silence, and during the appeals period. The ISIE is tasked with monitoring the print media for violations and acting on any violations. The Independent High Broadcasting Authority (HAICA), a constitutional body created after the revolution, monitors the audio-visual media sphere and electoral violations in that realm.²⁸ Violations, whether by candidates, media outlets, or polling firms, may result in fines of up to 50,000 Tunisian Dinars.²⁹

In the September 15 presidential contest, observers pointed to alleged violations of media rules including the unauthorized release of polling information and some outlets' lack of neutrality.³⁰ Observers also noted the need for greater transparency in the monitoring process, and recommended that the HAICA and ISIE release detailed information on the violations found and penalties imposed.³¹

CAMPAIGN FINANCE RULES

Campaign finance rules are outlined in the electoral law and monitored by the ISIE in collaboration with the Tunisian Central Bank, the Court of Accounts, and the Ministry of Finance. Campaigns may be self-funded, privately funded, or publicly funded. Parties or candidates may accept private donations only from individuals who are Tunisian nationals; corporations are barred from making campaign contributions. The limit on self-funding and private funding for parliamentary elections is 20 times the minimum wage in non-agricultural sectors (it is 30 times the minimum wage for presidential elections). Candidates also are entitled to receive public grants for their campaigns as long as they adhere to the spending rules. Any portion of the grant that the Court of Accounts discovers has been spent on something other than the campaign must be refunded to the state, and any unspent funds are returned to the state. The ISIE determines the overall limits for campaign spending based on criteria including the number of voters, the size of the electoral district, and the cost of living. For the first round of the presidential election, in September, the ISIE dispatched some 1,500 monitors to oversee and assess the cost of campaign activities.³² If spending exceeds the ceiling, the Court of Accounts has the authority to impose a financial penalty. The ISIE has the power to annul electoral results if it determines that campaign financing violations "affected the election results in a decisive manner."³³

In their preliminary statements on the September 15 vote, international observers noted likely violations of campaign finance laws including with respect to funding for social media advertising.³⁴

26. These numbers were calculated by POMED by reviewing the information on lists as reported on the ISIE website, available here <https://bit.ly/2meaGzI>; see also "The Percentage of Female Heads of Lists for the 2019 Parliamentary Elections (33 Districts)," The League of Tunisian Female Voters, 2019, Facebook, August 27, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/LigueDesElectricitesTunisiennes/photos/a.372734222796000/2404526999616702/?type=3&theater>

27. "Manual of Electoral Campaign Rules and Procedures for the 2019 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections," ISIE, August 2019, <https://bit.ly/2lGo0gu>

28. "Joint decree from the ISIE and HAICA on rules concerning media and audiovisual coverage of the presidential and legislative election campaigns" [AR], August 21, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2nfaOzC>

29. Article 156 of Organic Law n° 2014-16.

30. The Carter Center, "Preliminary Statement."

31. National Democratic Institute, "Preliminary Statement," 9.

32. National Democratic Institute, "Preliminary Statement," 5.

33. National Democratic Institute, "Preliminary Statement," 6.

34. National Democratic Institute, "Preliminary Statement," 5-6.

THE PARTIES

The following section details 13 of the most prominent Tunisian political parties and coalitions that are fielding lists in the October 6 elections. As mentioned above, there are also a number of independent lists competing for seats in the ARP. Independent lists won just three seats in the 2014 parliamentary elections, but given the Tunisian public's growing disenchantment with the country's political parties it seems likely that independents will perform better this time around. Indeed, independent lists won 32 percent of seats in the May 2018 municipal elections and an independent candidate, Kais Saïed, won the most votes in the first round of the presidential election.

'ICH TOUNSI



PAST PERFORMANCE (SEATS WON)

2011: **Did Not Enter**
2014: **Did Not Enter**

NO. OF CONSTITUENCIES CONTESTING

33

POLLING

4.6-7.0%

NOTABLE CANDIDATES

Selim Ben Hassan (Tunis 1), party president; Olfa Terres Rambourg (Bizerte), party founder

OTHER INFORMATION

The party appears to have a following in Bizerte, Rambourg's hometown, and Tunis

'Ich Tounsi, or "Live Tunisian," was founded as a "citizen movement" in April 2018 by Olfa Terras Rambourg, a wealthy Tunisian-French philanthropist whose husband is known to be close to French President Emmanuel Macron.³⁵ While the source of its funding is opaque, 'Ich Tounsi is well-financed, making a big splash with a series of expensive "mega events," surveys, and television and internet advertisements.³⁶ The party appears to revolve around the personality of Rambourg and has no clear ideology, relying instead on vaguely populist slogans that appeal to the many Tunisians who believe the post-revolution governments have failed them.³⁷ Its 12-point program, the result of a national survey of 450,000 Tunisians, features nebulous pledges, such as abolishing the privileges of the political class, fighting price increases, enhancing government transparency, and fighting corruption.³⁸ 'Ich Tounsi is led by Selim Ben Hassan, a 39-year old businessman and distant relative of Tunisia's first president Habib Bourguiba, who appears to be channeling much of the party's finances through his personal bank accounts.³⁹ With its considerable resources and ability to tap into growing Tunisian frustration with regular politics, 'Ich Tounsi may have the potential to perform well in the October election.

35. Malek Lakhal, "Enquête: 3ich Tounsi, un «mouvement citoyen» aux ambitions politiques," Nawaat [Fr], September 4, 2018, <https://nawaat.org/portail/2018/09/04/enquete-3ich-tounsi-un-mouvement-citoyen-aux-ambitions-politiques/>

36. Lakhal, "Enquête: 3ich Tounsi"

37. Lakhal, "Enquête: 3ich Tounsi."

38. Frida Dahmani, "Tunisie : l'association 3ich tounsi, poil à gratter de la pré-campagne électorale," *Jeune Afrique* [Fr], June 5, 2019, <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/mag/782412/politique/tunisie-3ich-tounsi-le-poil-a-gratter-de-la-pre-campagne-electorale/>

39. Lakhal, "Enquête: 3ich Tounsi."

AFEK TOUNES



PAST PERFORMANCE (SEATS WON)	2011: 4	NO. OF CONSTITUENCIES CONTESTING	33	POLLING	Unavailable
	2014: 8				

NOTABLE CANDIDATES

Rim Mahjoub (Ariana), former head of the Afek Tounes parliamentary bloc

Afek Tounes, or “Tunian Horizons,” is a liberal, center-right secular party founded in 2011 and led by engineer, entrepreneur, and former minister Yassine Brahim. After a lackluster performance in the 2011 NCA elections, garnering only four seats, the party briefly joined with other small parties to form the Republican Party in 2012; two years later, Brahim reestablished Afek Tounes as a separate party to run its own list.⁴⁰ The move was successful and in the 2014 elections Afek Tounes earned eight seats in parliament and entered the ruling coalition with Nidaa Tounes, Ennahda, and the Free Patriotic Union as the fifth largest party in the ARP.⁴¹ In 2018, all eight elected members of Afek Tounes joined the pro-Chahed National Coalition bloc, effectively terminating their party membership.⁴² Nevertheless, Afek Tounes is participating in all 33 districts in October’s contest and has the highest percentage of female candidates heading its lists of any party, at 27 percent. The party platform is pro-business and centered around creating new economic and social policies that will drive business growth and competitiveness to provide more employment opportunities.⁴³ Brahim has said the party’s goal is to win 20 seats in the 2019 parliamentary election. Afek Tounes endorsed Abdelkrim Zbidi in the presidential elections rather than fielding its own candidate.

AL BADIL AL TOUNSI



PAST PERFORMANCE (SEATS WON)	2011: Did Not Enter	NO. OF CONSTITUENCIES CONTESTING	33	POLLING	1.0-1.4%
	2014: Did Not Enter				

NOTABLE CANDIDATES

Faouzia Ben Fodha (Manouba), ARP member from the Free Patriotic Union (UPL) party; Hafedh Zouari (Sousse), parliamentary member from Afek Tounes

40. “Tunisia,” European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity, December 12, 2018, <https://www.europeanforum.net/countries/tunisia>


41. Zeineb Ben Yahmed and Sarah Yerkes, “Tunisia’s Political System: From Stagnation to Competition,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 2019, https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Yerkes_Yahmed_Tunisia_Stalemate_final.pdf

42. “Plusieurs dissidents de Afek Tounes rejoignent le parti de Y.Chahed,” MosaiqueFM [Fr], January 26, 2019, <https://www.mosaiquefm.net/fr/actualite-politique-tunisie/486096/plusieurs-dissidents-de-afek-tounes-rejoignent-le-parti-de-y-chahed>

43. “Notre vision,” Afek Tounes Parti Politique [Fr], accessed September 27, 2019, http://www.afek-tounes.org/Fr/notre-vision_11_210#?

Al Badil Al Tounsi, or “The Tunisian Alternative,” was established by former Prime Minister Mehdi Jomaa in 2017. Originally a think tank and political program, the big tent party focuses on “uniting Tunisians” and, Jomaa has said, shrinking the gap between the political class and the electorate.⁴⁴ The party aims to rebuild confidence in government institutions and has tried to position itself as anti-establishment and “non-ideological,” expressing frustration with the coalition government’s perceived lack of action.⁴⁵ The party leadership is largely made up of former government ministers and technocrats, including former economic officials.⁴⁶ In accordance with its “non-ideological” party line, Al Badil has also incorporated former members of other parties, such as Nidaa Tounes and the Free Destourian Party, into its political bureau.⁴⁷ Given that the party is running candidates that have defected from other parties, including some who are currently in parliament, it stands a chance of securing some seats in parliament this October.⁴⁸ However, it will most likely fall short of Jomaa’s ambitions of being the principal opposition to the establishment powers. In the 2019 presidential election, Jomaa received only 1.8 percent of the vote.

ATTAYAR



PAST PERFORMANCE (SEATS WON)	2011: Did Not Enter 2014: 3	NO. OF CONSTITUENCIES CONTESTING	33	POLLING	1.2-3.2%
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NOTABLE CANDIDATES
Samia Abbou (Tunis 1), MP and wife of party leader; **Farhat Rajhi** (Bizerte), former interim minister of interior

Founded in May 2013 after a split within Moncef Marzouki’s Congress for the Republic, Attayar Addimuqrati, or “the Democratic Current,” is a social-democratic party with a nationalist coloring.⁴⁹ Led by Mohamed Abbou, an established human rights lawyer, minister in the Troika government, and the party’s candidate in the 2019 presidential election, it is running on fighting corruption, improving living standards, and protecting the achievements of the 2011 revolution, including the 2014 constitution that reduced the powers of the presidency.⁵⁰ Attayar has sought to appeal to disaffected Tunisians in its campaign, arguing that “the problem [in Tunisia] is at the level of the political class.”⁵¹ Abbou’s wife, Samia, an activist in her own right and a current

44. Guillaume Lafargue, “Al Badil Ettounsi, la troisième voie tunisienne,” Mediapart [Fr], October 30, 2018, <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/guillaume-lafargue/blog/301018/al-badil-ettounsi-la-troisieme-voie-tunisienne>

45. Yassine Bellamine, “Al Badil, sa vision, les municipales, ses regrets: Mehdi Jomaa se livre au HuffPost Tunisie,” HuffPost Maghreb [Fr], January 23, 2018, https://www.huffpostmaghreb.com/entry/mehdi-jomaa-0_mg_19062402

46. Tarek Amara and Aidan Lewis, “Tunisian former PM Jomaa launches ‘Non-Ideological’ political party,” Reuters, March 29, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-tunisia-politics-idUSKBN170291>

47. “Aziza Htira rejoint Al Badil Ettounsi,” Business News [Fr], June 10, 2019, <https://www.businessnews.com.tn/aziza-htira-rejoint-al-badil-ettounsi,520,88439,3>

48. “Élections législatives: Les têtes de liste d’Al Badil Ettounsi,” HuffPost Maghreb [Fr], August 1, 2019, https://www.huffpostmaghreb.com/entry/elections-legislatives-les-tetes-de-liste-dal-badil-ettounsi_mg_5d42dcaee4b0ca604e2ddd00

49. Jules Crétois, “Tunisie: Hama Hammami et Mohamed Abbou, un marxiste et un nationaliste, deux visions de la gauche,” *Jeune Afrique* [Fr], April 5, 2019, <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/mag/756116/politique/tunisie-hama-hammami-et-mohamed-abbou-un-marxiste-et-un-nationaliste-deux-visions-de-la-gauche/>

50. “Mohamed Abbou, candidat du Courant Démocrate (Attayar) à la présidentielle,” Huffpost Maghreb [Fr], April 22, 2019, https://www.huffpostmaghreb.com/entry/mohamed-abbou-candidat-du-courant-democrate-attayar-a-la-presidentielle_mg_5cbd8161e4b068d795ce7728

51. HuffPost Maghreb, “Mohamed Abbou.”

member of the ARP, is a prominent member of the party.⁵² Traditionally stronger among the urban middle class, Attayar won seats in smaller working class cities during the 2018 municipal elections.⁵³ If the party can replicate its success in such areas in October, it could outpace its performance in the 2014 parliamentary elections, but Abbou's disappointing showing in the presidential election (3.6 percent) may not augur well for Attayar.⁵⁴

ENNAHDA



PAST PERFORMANCE (SEATS WON)	2011: 89 2014: 69	NO. OF CONSTITUENCIES CONTESTING	33	POLLING	6.9-24.7%
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NOTABLE CANDIDATES

Rachid Ghannouchi (Tunis 1), party president; **Ameur Laarayedh** (Medinine), member of the party's executive board and brother of former PM; **Zied Ladhari** (Sousse), minister of development, investment, and international cooperation

OTHER INFORMATION

Ennahda has historically been strong in the south; in regions of the north, including Bizerte; in Kairouan; and in Tunis

Ennahda, or "Renaissance," was formed as the Islamic Group in the late 1960's as a preaching organization, but did not turn to politics until the late 1970's, leading to its being banned in 1989 by President Ben Ali after a successful showing in that year's election. Following Ben Ali's ouster in 2011, Ennahda emerged as one of the predominant political parties in the country, winning the most seats (89) in the country's first post-revolution parliamentary elections and the second most seats (69) in the 2014 election. In 2016, the party formally renounced its Islamist orientation, describing itself instead as a party of "Muslim democrats" that would focus exclusively on politics as opposed to cultural and religious activities.⁵⁵ In practice, this has resulted in a party that has sought to portray itself as less ideological and to normalize its image among social and economic elites, the middle-class, and the international community.⁵⁶ Ennahda has supported the IMF's austerity measures and a "somewhat free-market approach to economics," despite not being in the short-term interests of its conservative, working-class base.⁵⁷ And by participating in nearly every government since the 2011 revolution, Ennahda has lost its outsider appeal and credibility to call for anti-corruption accountability.⁵⁸ For the first time, party co-founder and longtime leader, Rached Ghannouchi, 78, is running for elected office, heading the party's list in Tunis 1, an indication he would like a more formal role in the government, possibly as prime minister or speaker of parliament. Although the party's presidential candidate, Abdelfattah Mourou, finished

52. Yassine Essid, "Portrait croisé: Mohamed et Samia Abbou ou les deux font la paire," *Kapitalis* [Fr], March 3, 2019, <http://kapitalis.com/tunisie/2019/03/03/portrait-croise-mohamed-et-samia-abbou-ou-les-deux-font-la-paire/>

53. Crétois, "Tunisie: Hamma Hammami."

54. "Early presidential polls: Kais Said and Nabil Karoui reach runoff election [Upd 2]," *Tunis Afrique Presse*, September 17, 2019, <https://www.tap.info.tn/en/Portal-Politics/11832050-early-presidential>

55. Rached Ghannouchi, "From Political Islam to Muslim Democracy," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/tunisia/political-islam-muslim-democracy>

56. Hamza Meddeb, "Ennahda's Uneasy Exit From Political Islam," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, September 5, 2019, https://carnegieendowment.org/files/WP_Meddeb_Ennahda1.pdf

57. Anthony Dworkin, "Tunisia's unpredictable elections," *European Council on Foreign Relations*, September 12, 2019, https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_tunisia_unpredictable_elections

58. Meddeb, "Ennahda's Uneasy Exit."

third (13 percent) in the September 15 election, Ennahda remains the most well-organized political party with a significant base of support, and will likely perform well in the upcoming parliamentary elections.

FREE DESTOURIAN PARTY



PAST PERFORMANCE (SEATS WON)	2011: Did Not Enter	NO. OF CONSTITUENCIES CONTESTING	33	POLLING	3.8-14.7%
	2014: 0				

NOTABLE CANDIDATES

Abir Moussi (Tunis 2), party leader and 2019 presidential candidate; **Mohamed Karim Krifa** (elected to the NCA in 2011 for al-Mubadara/National Destourian Initiative)

The Free Destourian Party was founded as the Destourian Movement in 2013 by Hamed Karoui, a former prime minister under Ben Ali.⁵⁹ The party leadership consists largely of former regime officials and Ben Ali sympathizers, and is explicitly opposed to the 2011 revolution and its achievements. After failing to secure any seats in the 2014 parliamentary elections, the party changed its name to the Free Destourian Party⁶⁰ and elected Abir Moussi, a lawyer and former deputy secretary-general in the RCD, as president.⁶¹ Since taking over the party's leadership, she has tried to identify the party more with the country's more popular first president, Habib Bourguiba, than with Ben Ali. Moussi has publicly designated three enemies of her party: Ennahda, participants in the 2011 revolution, and anyone who might challenge the principles of the Personal Status Codes, which she formulates conservatively as "protecting the Tunisian family" (she opposes equal inheritance and rights for LGBTQ people).⁶² The Free Destourians have proposed banning Islamist parties, including Ennahda, increasing the powers of the executive branch, and enhancing state security and surveillance capacities.⁶³ Its economic program focuses on reducing the country's debt and liberalizing the economy.⁶⁴ Support for the party seems to reflect a frustration with the post-2011 governing coalition's failure to remedy Tunisia's increasing economic challenges. Moussi's controversial rhetoric, however, including her virulent anti-Islamism and praise for Ben Ali, leaves the party's popularity and ultimate parliamentary success very much up in the air.⁶⁵ After receiving 4 percent of the vote in the 2019 presidential election, Moussi also is running in the parliamentary elections.

59. "«Le Mouvement Destourien» fondé par Hamed Karoui légalisé," Leaders [Fr], September 23, 2013, <https://www.leaders.com.tn/article/12295-le-mouvement-destourien-fonde-par-hamed-karoui-legalise>

60. "Le Mouvement Destourien rebaptisé le Parti Destourien Libre," Shems FM [Fr], August 16, 2016, https://www.shemsfm.net/fr/actualites_tunisie_news_news-nationales/147706/le-mouvement-destourien-rebaptise-le-parti-destourien-libre-147706

61. "Abir Moussi nouvelle présidente du Mouvement destourien," Business News [Fr], August 13, 2016, <https://www.business-news.com.tn/abir-moussi-nouvelle-presidente-du-mouvement-destourien,520,66349,3>

62. Brahim Oueslati and Fawzia Zouari, "Tunisie: Abir Moussi, portrait d'une Benaliste convaincue," *Jeune Afrique* [Fr], March 19, 2019, <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/mag/749576/politique/tunisie-abir-moussi-portrait-dune-benaliste-convaincue/>

63. Oueslati and Zouari, "Tunisie: Abir Moussi."

64. Lamine Ghanmi and Iman Zayat, "Abir Moussi emerges in Tunisia's opinion polls as she breaks with political order," *The Arab Weekly*, May 12, 2019, <https://theArabweekly.com/abir-moussi-emerges-tunisia-opinion-polls-she-breaks-political-order>

65. "Tunisia fears return to pre-revolution tyranny," Middle East Monitor, March 16, 2019, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20190316-tunisia-fears-return-to-pre-revolution-tyranny/>

MACHROU TOUNES



PAST PERFORMANCE (SEATS WON)	2011: Did Not Enter	NO. OF CONSTITUENCIES CONTESTING	28	POLLING	Unavailable
	2014: Did Not Enter				

NOTABLE CANDIDATES

Nesrine Laamari (Le Kef), the youngest member of parliament; **Mohamed Fadhel Mahfoudh** (Sfax 2), lawyer and one of the leaders of the Nobel Prize-receiving organizations forming the National Dialogue Quartet

The center-left secular party Machrou Tounes, or “Project Tunisia,” was founded in 2016 by Mohsen Marzouk, activist and 2014 campaign manager for Beji Caïd Essebsi, as a breakaway faction of Nidaa Tounes after a dispute over the role of Essebsi’s son, Hafedh, in party leadership and the party’s cooperation with Ennahda.⁶⁶ In early August 2018, the party splintered over the nomination of Hichem Fourati to the minister of interior post. While the party officially opposed the nomination, the resigning members believed that Fourati was a “competent and credible” choice for the post.⁶⁷ The five parliamentarians who resigned from Machrou Tounes also felt the party was realigning itself too much with Nidaa Tounes, whom they saw as ineffective at addressing pressing economic issues.⁶⁸ Machrou Tounes briefly sought cooperation with those Nidaa Tounes members who also opposed Hafedh but ultimately decided to remain in the party. Prior to the election, Marzouk suspended his candidacy for president in favor of Abdelkarim Zbidi, the candidate also backed by Nidaa and Afek Tounes, citing concern over the country falling into the hands of radical and populist forces.⁶⁹ This remains consistent with the party’s focus on the legislative elections, where it will run under a platform of increased security measures against terrorism, and implementing reforms to improve socio-economic conditions.⁷⁰

NIDAA TOUNES



PAST PERFORMANCE (SEATS WON)	2011: Did Not Enter	NO. OF CONSTITUENCIES CONTESTING	33	POLLING	4.7-20.0%
	2014: 86				

66. “Les dissidents de Nida Tounes lancent le parti du ‘Projet de la Tunisie,’” Babnet Tunisie [Fr], March 20, 2016, <https://www.babnet.net/cadredetail-122434.asp>

67. FK, “Leila Chettaoui dévoile les raisons de son départ du bloc parlementaire d’Al-Horra,” Réalités [Fr], August 6, 2018, <https://www.realites.com.tn/2018/08/leila-chettaoui-devoile-les-raisons-de-son-depart-du-bloc-parlementaire-dal-horra/>

68. “Démission de 5 députés de Machrouô Tounes: Sahbi ben Fredj révèle les raisons,” Shems FM [Fr], August 7, 2018, https://www.shemsfm.net/fr/actualites_tunisie-news_news-nationales/202417/demission-de-5-deputes-de-machrouo-tounes-sahbi-ben-fredj-revele-les-raisons

69. “Tunisie: désistement des candidats à la présidentielle,” L’Economiste [Fr], September 14, 2019, <https://leconomiste.com/flash-infos/tunisie-desistement-des-candidats-la-presidentielle>

70. Yahmed and Yerkes, “Tunisia’s Political System.”

NOTABLE CANDIDATES

Ridha Belhaj (Nabeul 1), who served in the Ghannouchi government and in Essebsi's cabinet office; **Khaled Shawkat** (Sidi Bouzid), former minister for relations with the Assembly of Representatives of the People in the Essid government; **Ons Hattab** (Kairouan), who was spokesperson of the anti-Hafedh Caïd Essebsi Nidaa Tounes faction

OTHER INFORMATION

Nidaa Tounes has performed well along the northern coast, the eastern coast (the Sahel), and in Tunis

Nidaa Tounes, or “Call for Tunisia,” is the party of former President Beji Caïd Essebsi that was founded in 2012 as a secular and “modern” alternative to the Islamist Ennahda party.⁷¹ The big tent party sought to unify a diverse coalition of political trends, including leftists, trade unionists, and former members of Ben Ali’s ruling party, which did not share a coherent ideology apart from opposition to Islamism.⁷² Although Nidaa Tounes won the largest number of seats (86) in the 2014 parliamentary election, the party almost immediately began to fracture, owing both to its lack of a shared vision and its leadership’s controversial decision to forge a coalition government with Ennahda.⁷³ These tensions were exacerbated by Essebsi’s divisive son, Hafedh, whose dictatorial and entitled approach to party affairs alienated other Nidaa Tounes leaders, including Prime Minister Youssef Chahed, as well as the rank-and-file.⁷⁴ The mass defection of MPs, many of whom established splinter parties such as Machrou Tounes and Tahya Tounes, saw Nidaa Tounes reduced to 41 seats in parliament, making it the third-largest party in the ARP.⁷⁵ In April 2019, the party was split once again between two rival congresses, one led by Hafedh Caïd Essebsi and the other eventually choosing to merge with the Qalb Tounes party.⁷⁶ The passing of President Essebsi has been the latest blow to Nidaa Tounes, leaving the party far weaker than it was at its 2014 peak. In the presidential elections, Nidaa Tounes endorsed defense minister Abdelkrim Zbidi, who placed fourth with 11 percent of the vote.

POPULAR FRONT COALITION



PAST PERFORMANCE (SEATS WON)	2011: Did Not Enter ⁷⁶ 2014: 15	NO. OF CONSTITUENCIES CONTESTING	33	POLLING	1.6-9.9%
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NOTABLE CANDIDATES

Jilani Hammami (Tunis 1), leader of the Tunisian Workers Party; **Mbarka Aouania** (Ariana), widow of assassinated Popular Front member Mohamed Brahmi

71. Anne Wolf, “The Future of Tunisia’s Nidaa Tounes Party,” *Middle East Institute* (July 25, 2014), <https://www.mei.edu/publications/future-tunisia-nidaa-tounes-party>

72. Wolf, “The Future.”

73. Asma Ajroudi and Ramy Allahoum, “Tunisia’s Nidaa Tounes in shambles amid political turbulence,” *Al Jazeera*, December 5, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/tunisia-nidaa-tounes-shambles-political-turbulence-181202090020299.html>

74. Lamine Ghanmi, “Tunisia’s fractured secularists scramble to consolidate ranks,” *The Arab Weekly*, June 2, 2019, <https://the-arab-weekly.com/tunisia-fractured-secularists-scramble-consolidate-ranks>

75. Maryline Dumas, “Nidaa Tounes ‘is no longer part of the picture,’” *Middle East Eye*, March 28, 2019, <https://www.middle-easteye.net/news/nidaa-tounes-no-longer-part-picture>

76. Ghanmi, “Tunisia’s fractured secularists.”

77. The parties that originally joined the coalition secured 4 seats in 2011: the People’s Movement (2), the Democratic Patriots’ Unified Party (1), and the Party of Progressive Struggle (1)

Al Jabha, literally “The Front” but also known informally as the “Popular Front,” was founded in October 2012 as a leftist coalition of 12 small and avowedly secular political parties with diverse ideologies, representing Marxist, progressive, environmentalist, Pan-Arabist, and nationalist platforms.⁷⁸ The left-wing coalition, led by prominent activist Hamma Hammami, was formed after the defeat of leftist parties in the 2011 elections and has positioned itself as Ennahda’s staunchest opponent. It supports the nationalization of certain sectors of the economy, improving education and health care, and the protection of civil and individual rights.⁷⁹ In 2013, two prominent Popular Front leaders, Chokri Belaïd and Mohamed Brahmi, were assassinated by religious radicals. The outcry after their deaths energized the Popular Front’s base and propelled the coalition to the third-most seats (15) in the 2014 election.⁸⁰ Tensions arose within the coalition, however, over its internal governance and leadership, leading nine MPs to resign in May 2019. One of the departing MPs, Mongi Rahoui, the leader of the Democratic Patriots’ Unified Party, angered the coalition by forming a new political party, also called the Popular Front (Jabha Chaabia), which is running a separate electoral list in 2019.⁸¹ The split within the coalition risks dividing the left-wing vote, to the detriment of both lists. Its 2019 presidential candidate, Hamma Hammami, received just 0.7 percent of the vote.

POPULAR FRONT PARTY



PAST PERFORMANCE (SEATS WON)	2011: Did Not Enter 2014: Did Not Enter	NO. OF CONSTITUENCIES CONTESTING	18	POLLING	Unavailable
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NOTABLE CANDIDATES

Ahmed Seddik (Tunis 1), leader of the Attalia party; **Mongi Rahoui** (Jendouba), 2019 presidential candidate

The Popular Front Party, or “Jabha Chaabia,” was founded in 2019 when Monghi Rahoui, a banker and parliamentary representative from Jendouba since 2011, and eight other MPs broke away from the Popular Front (al Jabha) coalition due to disagreements over structural and political issues, as well as over leadership.⁸² Despite accusations from the coalition that the government was intentionally destroying the historical coalition by allowing the new party to appropriate its name, the Popular Front party was granted legal recognition on July 22, 2019, by the Ministry of Relations with Constitutional Bodies, Civil Society and Human Rights.⁸³ The new Popular Front party is chaired by Safa Dhaouadi and is supported by the al-Watad and Attalia parties, both former coalition members that represent leftist,

78. Communist Party of the Workers of Tunisia (PCOT), “Popular Front (Political Draft),” Revolutionary Democracy, September 2012, <https://www.revolutionarydemocracy.org/icmlpo/US25/tunisia25.htm>

79. Revolutionary Democracy, “Popular Front.”

80. Hakim Fekih, “Tunisie. Une gauche en perdition,” *Orient XXI* [Fr], September 11, 2019, <https://orientxxi.info/magazine/tunisie-une-gauche-en-deperdition,3278>


81. “Tunisia: Popular Front faces collapse due to presidential candidacy crisis,” Middle East Monitor, May 30, 2019, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20190530-tunisia-popular-front-faces-collapse-due-to-presidential-candidacy-crisis/>

82. “Ahmed Seddik nommé porte-parole de la coalition qui soutient Mongi Rahoui,” Web Manager Center [Fr], August 29, 2019, <https://www.webmanagercenter.com/2019/08/29/438233/ahmed-seddik-nomme-porte-parole-de-la-coalition-qui-soutient-mongi-rahoui/>

83. WJ, “Un nouveau parti politique nommé « Front populaire » voit le jour,” Réalités [Fr], July 22, 2019, <https://www.realites.com.tn/2019/07/un-nouveau-parti-politique-nomme-front-populaire-voit-le-jour/>

nationalist ideologies.⁸⁴ The party's electoral platform shares the coalition's social policies, including support for free education, social justice, and higher taxes, but diverges from it by championing economic policies that promote market liberalization.⁸⁵ This approach appears intended to strike a balance between progressivism and adaptation to the neoliberal structure of the global economy. Its 2019 presidential candidate, Rahoui, received 0.8 percent of the vote.

QALB TOUNES



PAST PERFORMANCE (SEATS WON)	2011: Did Not Enter 2014: Did Not Enter	NO. OF CONSTITUENCIES CONTESTING	33	POLLING	2.0-29.0%
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NOTABLE CANDIDATES
Samira Chouachi (Tunis 1), party spokesperson; **Ghazi Karoui** (Bizerte), brother of founder Nabil; **Sofiene Toubel** (Gafsa), former head of Nidaa Tounes parliamentary bloc

Known best for its imprisoned presidential candidate and media mogul Nabil Karoui, Qalb Tounes, or “Heart of Tunisia,” is new to the Tunisian political scene. Formally created in June 2019, the populist party's stated priority is combating poverty.⁸⁶ Karoui has said that the party will pursue a “national pact against poverty” as a priority legislative initiative to create an “urgent strategy and approach to meet the needs of the poor.”⁸⁷ Karoui had been virulently anti-Islamist, but his rhetoric has more recently begun to soften. The party has consistently polled around 20 percent in pre-election polling, even before “Qalb Tounes” was established, when it was identified simply as “Nabil Karoui's party,” illustrating just how central the populist candidate's persona is to the party itself. Given Karoui's charitable work in the Tunisian interior and the popularity of his Nessma TV station, Qalb Tounes is likely to perform best in more rural and impoverished districts.⁸⁸ The party is competing in all 33 districts, with well-known figures Sofiene Toubel, a former top Nidaa Tounes official, running in Gafsa, and party spokesperson Samira Chouachi, formerly of the Free Patriotic Union and Nidaa Tounes, running in Tunis 1. Karoui's brother, Ghazi, is at the top of the list in Bizerte; he allegedly fled to Algeria when his brother was arrested and is wanted on the same charges of money laundering.⁸⁹ If Karoui's strong performance in the presidential election, making the runoff with 15.6 percent of the vote, is any indication, Qalb Tounes could prove a force in the October parliamentary elections.

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87. “Élection présidentielle: L'équipe de campagne de Nabil Karoui dévoile son programme,” Huffpost Maghreb [Fr], September 4, 2019, https://www.huffpostmaghreb.com/amp/entry/election-presidentielle-lequipe-de-campagne-de-nabil-karoui-devoile-son-programme_mg_5d6fbd77e4b09bbc9ef7f57d/

88. “Tunisia media magnate announces presidential bid,” France24, May 28, 2019, <https://www.france24.com/en/20190528-tunisia-media-magnate-announces-presidential-bid>

89. Simon Speakman Cordall, “Candidate's arrest causes a stir in Tunisia's presidential race,” *The National*, August 25, 2019, <https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/candidate-s-arrest-causes-a-stir-in-tunisia-s-presidential-race-1.902523>

THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC UNION



PAST PERFORMANCE (SEATS WON)	2011: Did Not Enter	NO. OF CONSTITUENCIES CONTESTING	30	POLLING	Unavailable
	2014: Did Not Enter * Al Joumhourii party won 1 seat				

NOTABLE CANDIDATES

Basma Khalfoui (Tunis 1), wife of Chokri Belaid, an assassinated leftist activist; **Issam Chebbi** (Ariana), secretary-general of Al Joumhourii party

The Social Democratic Union (UDS), which was established in June 2019, is a coalition of five secular, center-to-center-left parties and movements that performed poorly running separately in the 2014 parliamentary elections: the Social Democratic Movement, Al Joumhourii (“Republican Party”), “Tunisia Ahead,” al-Massar, and the “Kadiroune” coalition.⁹⁰ Sharing an emphasis on justice and social reform, the constituent parties nevertheless diverge in their attitude toward business and the degree to which they cooperated with the Ben Ali regime. Whereas al-Massar and the Social Democratic Movement emerged from the Tunisian Communist party and Bourguiba’s Socialist Destourian party, respectively, the Al Joumhourii party includes long-time opposition figures and supports lowering corporate taxes.⁹¹ The Kadiroune Coalition is more progressive in its orientation, stressing the importance of participatory democracy.⁹² The UDS, in contrast to the typically centralized structures of Tunisian parties, has delegated the formation of electoral lists to the constituency-level.⁹³ Running together as a coalition, the UDS’s constituent parties may have a better chance of making it into parliament, but it remains to be seen whether internal differences between the independent groupings can be managed. The UDS nominated Abid Briki, president of Tunisia Ahead, as its candidate in the 2019 presidential election, but he received just 0.2 percent of the vote.

90. “L’Union démocratique sociale (UDS), coalition politique se présentera dans toutes les circonscriptions,” Espace Manager [Fr], July 10, 2019, <https://www.espacemanager.com/lunion-democratique-sociale-uds-coalition-politique-se-presentera-dans-toutes-les-circonscriptions>

91. Alex Russell and Daniel Tavana, “Tunisia’s Parliamentary & Presidential Elections,” *Project on Middle East Democracy* (October 18, 2014), <https://pomed.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Tunisia-Election-Guide-2014.pdf>

92. “Tunisie : Un nouveau collectif politique et citoyen nommé ‘Qadiroun,’” Web Manager Center [Fr], March 18, 2019, <https://www.webmanagercenter.com/2019/03/18/432418/tunisie-un-nouveau-collectif-politique-et-citoyen-nomme-qadiroun/>

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TAHYA TOUNES

PAST
PERFORMANCE
(SEATS WON)

2011: **Did Not Enter**
2014: **Did Not Enter**

NO. OF
CONSTITUENCIES
CONTESTING**33**

POLLING

3.1-19.6%

NOTABLE CANDIDATES

Hichem Ben Ahmed (Tunis 2), Minister of Transportation; **Mehdi Ben Gharbia** (Bizerte), former minister of relations with constitutional bodies, civil society, and human rights

Tahya Tounes, or “Long Live Tunisia,” emerged in early 2019 out of the National Coalition bloc in parliament, which had been formed the preceding fall in support of Prime Minister Youssef Chahed following his expulsion from Nidaa Tounes.⁹⁴ At the official party launch, one lawmaker said the party’s priority is to “lead economic reforms and return hope for frustrated Tunisians,”⁹⁵ and an official party statement said that it is “modernist and open to the global humanistic progressive culture.”⁹⁶ The party has some well-known figures topping its lists, including Minister of Transportation Hichem Ben Ahmed running in Tunis 2. Mehdi Ben Gharbia, a close ally of Chahed’s and the former minister of relations with constitutional bodies, civil society, and human rights, will top the list in Bizerte; he resigned somewhat suddenly in July 2018, saying that the “drama” in Nidaa Tounes was making meaningful governance impossible.⁹⁷ First as the National Coalition bloc and then as Tahya Tounes, the party has been successful in peeling off members of other parties and bringing them into its fold.⁹⁸ While the National Coalition bloc became the second largest in parliament with 44 seats, surpassing Nidaa Tounes, it is not clear whether that will translate to equivalent support among the electorate.⁹⁹ Chahed’s disappointing performance in the September 15 presidential election, garnering only 7.4 percent of the vote, suggests the party may struggle to gain votes.

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95. Amara, “New party born.”

96. “The Tahya Tounes Movement: A Deeper Look at Youssef Chahed’s New Party,” *Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies* (February 13, 2019), <https://www.dohainstitute.org/en/PoliticalStudies/Pages/The-Tahya-Tounes-Movement-Deeper-Look-at-Youssef-Chahed-New-Party.aspx>

97. “Élections législatives: Les têtes de liste de Tahya Tounes,” *Huffpost Maghreb* [Fr], July 30, 2019, https://www.huffpost-maghreb.com/entry/elections-legislatives-les-tetes-de-liste-de-tahya-tounes_mg_5d401979e4b01d8c97812d2a

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99. Yahmed and Yerkes, “Tunisia’s Political System.”

OTHER PARTIES/COALITIONS TO WATCH



THE COALITION OF DIGNITY

Founded by Seifeddine Makhoulf, who earned 4.4 percent of the 2019 presidential vote, the Coalition of Dignity includes a number of independents and small secular parties and is campaigning on a platform specifically aimed at “achieving the goals of the revolution.”¹⁰⁰



THE REPUBLICAN PATRIOTIC UNION / REPUBLICAN PEOPLE'S UNION

The Republican People's Union—sometimes referred to as the Republican Patriotic Union—is led by 2019 presidential candidate Lotfi Mraïhi, who earned a respectable 6.6 percent of the vote in the first round.



ANOTHER TUNISIA

Describing itself as an “independent” political initiative, Another Tunisia, or “Tounes Okhra,” is an opposition alliance comprising the Wafa Movement, the al-Irada party, and independent political actors. Former Prime Minister Hamadi Jebali and former President Moncef Marzouki are both supported by the coalition; together they earned about 3 percent of the votes in the 2019 presidential election.¹⁰¹



BENI WATANI

Beni Watani is another breakaway Nidaa Tounes party, and is fielding candidates in 31 districts.



AMAL TOUNES

Also referred to simply as “Al Amal,” Amal Tounes is another liberal, secular Bourguibist party. It is not currently represented in parliament, although it did field Selma Elloumi as its 2019 presidential candidate.

100. Ahmed al-Hebassi, “Have you heard Seifeddine Makhoulf is one of the giants of the revolution?” Kapitalis [Ar], February 6, 2019, <http://bit.ly/2of3nJd>

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