CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE

POMED PROJECT ON MIDDLE EAST DEMOCRACY

— Event Transcript —

Ten Years Later: Tunisia's Revolution and Democratic Transition

Thursday, January 14, 2021
10:00 am - 11:45 am EST

Watch the event here.
Read the event highlights here.

PANEL DISCUSSION

Sarah Yerkes [1:42]
Hello, everyone. Welcome to our event. As you all know, today is a momentous day for Tunisia. Ten years ago today the Tunisian people succeeded in removing from power dictator Zine El Abidene Ben Ali. When Ben Ali fled, he opened the door for a democratic transition that is still unfolding today. The Tunisian Uprisings, which began with the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi on December 17, 2010, also set off a series of mass protests across the Middle East and North Africa, commonly known as the Arab Spring. But today, Tunisia stands as the only democracy in the region, a country that faces challenges, particularly in the economic sphere, but which also has achieved many successes, from drafting a new democratic constitution, to creating and protecting a space for freedom of expression, and a vibrant civil society and free media, to serving as the beacon of hope for people across the region.

So I want to start off by first of all congratulating Tunisia and all Tunisians on this incredible feat, and I know this comes at a strange time when the country simultaneously is going under lockdown today due to coronavirus, so I hope that you can celebrate even if it's in your own homes. Well, we are thrilled today to be joined by an incredible panel of Tunisian activists and experts to tell us about their experience during the revolution and where things need to go to keep the transition on track for the next decade and beyond. We are going to start this morning with a panel which I will moderate shortly. And that's going to be followed by the premiere of a video that I'm very excited to share with all of you, which captures the experiences of Tunisians from across the country during the revolution and beyond. And we will then shift to a fireside chat conducted by POMED's Amy Hawthorne, with Ambassador Gordon Gray, who has served

as U.S. ambassador to Tunis during the revolution and had a front row seat to the events unfolding then.

Before we get started, let me just let you know how you can all participate and ask questions of our panelists. There are two methods for this. The first is through Zoom's Q&A feature. And the second is by emailing your questions to communications@pomed.org. And please feel free to send your questions during any part of the discussion and we will get to as many as we can later on.

So let me introduce our panelists and begin with our panel. Our first panelist is Achref Aouadi, who's a Tunisian activist and the founder of IWatch, a watchdog anti-corruption organization that was founded after the 2011 revolution. IWatch works to organize and advocate for increased government transparency and fights against corruption. Mr. Aouadi was chosen to represent the Tunisian civil society at the United Nations Convention against Corruption and also serves as an Ashoka fellow.

Amna Guellali is Amnesty International's Deputy Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa. Previously, she was a senior Tunisia and Algeria researcher at Human Rights Watch, where she investigated human rights abuses in both countries. Before joining Human Rights Watch, Guellali worked as an analyst at the office of the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court at The Hague, and as a senior researcher at the Department of International Law at the Astor Institute. She also served as legal officer at the regional delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Tunis. She holds a PhD from the European University Institute in Florence.

Saida Ounissi is a member of the Assembly of the Representatives of the People from the Ennahda party. She represents a constituency of France Nord, and when she was first elected to Parliament in 2014, she was the youngest Ennahda candidate and became one of the youngest members of Parliament. She sat on the committees of Finance, Planning, and Development and of Martyrs and Wounded of the Revolution. Previously, she worked as an intern at the African Development Bank and was also previously a researcher at the Research Institute on the Contemporary Maghreb.

So let me begin by asking each of you a relatively easy question, which is where were you during the revolution? And let me start with Amna.

Amna Guellali [5:38]
Hi, everyone, really happy to be here and to participate in this event, which, you know, gives us an opportunity to celebrate the Tunisia revolution in a time of a lockdown when we are almost really physically unable to celebrate such a great and important date, such a symbolic date in the history of Tunisia. And so to answer your question, at the time of the revolution, I was living in The Hague, and working at the International Criminal Court, at the office of the prosecutor, working there as an analyst. I started working there in 2008 and was living abroad for a long time, so living outside of Tunisia for more than 10 years when the revolution broke out.

I came back to Tunis at the time for the holidays. And I remember very distinctly when I was on the plane coming back to the country, reading regime newspapers, the newspapers that were all about, you know, propaganda for Ben Ali. And they were speaking about this, something that happened in Sidi Bouzid, a vendor setting himself on fire, and there were some protests. They were saying this, but then they considered that these protests were just marginal and were not important. And the entire media at the time was just downplaying what was happening. And so I spent two weeks in Tunisia. [I] had to go back to The Hague, before the end of the uprising, before the fall of the regime, before the 14th of January.

But during the time I was in Tunisia, I really felt that something very strong was happening, the stream of the protests, the steadfast way in which the activists and leaders—not leaders of the protests, because at the time, there were no leaders—but people who went on the streets. There was a real desire for change and a real thrust for a movement that would be: we'll put Tunisia on a different path than the path of dictatorship. And when the 14th of January happened, I was in The Hague, but I was following everything that was happening and was very frustrated not to be in my home country when all of this was happening. And thus, I decided to come back to Tunisia no matter what. And yeah, I came back a few months later and started participating in the transition process by joining an international human rights organization, Human Rights Watch. That's it.

Sarah Yerkes [9:07]
Thank you. And to you Achref, where were you during the revolution?

Achref Aouadi [9:16]
So, I was in Tunisia. I would say I was fortunate enough to be in the country. And it was, I think, a weird month of December. I remember the big debate of the time was a big scandal between a Tunisian rapper and a Tunisian actor, and that was the conversation, and then things broke out. And then, there was not much coverage at first. There was just someone who set himself on fire and then gradually the news, of course, they did not cover it. So at the time, I remember trying to find a reliable source of news. It was really slow, it was really slow, because the capital is always the last thing to be hit by anything. So I remember, it was Sidi Bouzid, but somehow the regime managed to cover, or give, their version of the story, and then things started shaking a little bit more in Kasserine, and that's when people started believing them. But, I remember, that was on [December] 31st. There [were] two Tunisias, actually: a Tunisia that was celebrating the new year, that wasn't even aware of what's going on; another Tunisia that has been shot at live by the police. So it was really weird. And then I remember we [were trying to] gather news and then share it on Facebook.

But the one serious thing that happened, to be honest, was maybe starting from [January] 10th when the UGTT had their general strike in Sfax. But for me, the moment I felt that the regime was weak [was] when they started shooting at people in Thala and so there was a need for blood donation for the hospital, in Thala, [a town] in Kasserine. So with my friends, we

organized a small campaign actually to collect blood. And we organized it in Géant, at the time the biggest mall in Tunisia, and we were afraid of what was going to happen, but nothing really happened. So for me, that was around the 11th [of January], I think. So when that happened, when we managed to get the campaign, and then gather donors, and then being able to send the blood to the hospital in Thala. At the time I said, the regime is weak, something like this would never happen, because this is first acknowledging that they shot at protesters. Second, this is somehow blood you're giving to the people who are anti-regime. So the fact that we managed to get away with it at the time was big actually. And we were telling people this is blood that's going to Thala. So for me, that was the first time it felt like— a revolution? Not really, I won't say I was optimistic that the regime would change. So, I don't know, for me [they were] interesting days, but I never saw it coming. And I never imagined that someone as bloody as Ben Ali would just leave and that's it.

But, I would say, it was a weird month of December, a weird month of January, when Facebook was all about big fights between people, like rappers making songs, and it was really a weird month, I remember. And then there was, of course, the famous battle between police and football supporters. I remember that there was, I don't know whether [it was] the twelfth or the thirteenth, but there was a big game between two big clubs. There was *L'Espérance* playing *L'Étoile*, so this is a huge rivalry for years. And that day *L'Espérance* was humiliated; they lost five to zero or something like that. So the Ultras and the supporters after the game, they started really fighting with the police, which happened all the time. But that was a turning point for me, because this is the time when you feel like the police are just—they're stepping back more. So there's so many fronts, [but] on social media, there isn't a front. Bloggers started going down to the south and feeding people with footage. At the same time, the supporters of football started gathering against the police and all over the country. So it was, as I said, a weird month, and all of that culminated in the 14th of January.

Sarah Yerkes [14:11]
Thank you. And to you, Saida, where were you during the revolution?

Sorry, I think you're muted, if you could unmute.

Saida Ounissi [14:26]
Okay, so we're back. Hi, everyone. I'm very, very glad to be here. I said, Amna, it's actually quite an occasion to go back on what happened 10 years ago, and to [celebrate] the revolution all together. I was at that time in Paris; I was still doing my masters. And I was part of, at that time, [a] very active Tunisian community who were demonstrating every evening after work or university and gathering. So on the 14th of January, we were demonstrating in ... the Tunisian 'hood, if I can say, in Paris, and that was the place where we learned about Ben Ali fleeing the country.

Sarah Yerkes [15:28]
This is great. These are really, really different experiences that you've all had. And so the next question I want to ask you, and I'll actually start with you Saida on this one, is: has the revolution

been a success? And if not, what needs to be done to make it a success? How do you actually move the country in the direction that the revolution was aiming for?

Saida Ounissi [15:49]
I think most of the people agree on the fact that the revolution has been a success on some particular things as freedom of speech, for example, the slowly but happening democratization of political institutions, for example, the pluralism, diversity of the political spectrum, but definitely a challenge, still, very much on social equity, social justice, economic development, the democratization of the economic sector, for example. So I would say that this is my take on this very kind of big question in a very [few minutes].

Sarah Yerkes [16:40]
Thank you. To Amna, do you think the revolution has been a success, and if not, what needs to be done to make it a success?

Amna Guellali [16:49]
The revolution itself was a success by the very fact that Ben Ali was ousted. It was such an incredible event to live through for a nation like Tunisia. What was less successful was the democratic transition, in the sense that [it] started off very well. It started off by laying the foundations for a new system of governance. It started off by agreeing on a path toward democracy, which was in the beginning bringing together a National Constituent Assembly (NCA). That was really a founding moment in the democratic process, whereby all the political actors, civil society actors agreed on the need for setting the building blocks for a new system through a new constitution.

And there was very broad and shared agreement in Tunisia on the form that the democratic transition should take. Whereby, we had the elections for the NCA, then a lot of debates on the new constitution. There were tensions, during those moments, in terms of the political opposition, having such tense moments because of the assassinations that happened in Tunisia in 2013. But still, there was kind of a consensus on what the path should be, and what kind of constitution we should have. We have the constitution at the end adopted in January 2014, which we believed will really help Tunisia consolidate democracy, and start fresh with a clean slate from the past. I think, from 2011, until 2014, the beginning of 2015, there was this broad shared consensus on the form of the democratic process, from 2015 until maybe 2019.

This has started shifting a little bit in the sense that, we went through a moment where the former regime figures came back, slowly, slowly, into the fora, and there was a kind of, not backsliding, but belief that even though the the new constitution and the democratic process were, from a procedural point of view, going in the right direction, there were also all kinds of new political actors that prompted also some backsliding, for example, on the transitional justice process, for example, on different things that were stalling also during this transition. And I think now, from 2019 onwards, until today—and today is, symbolically speaking, in terms of the fact that we have we are, we are under a lockdown but it's not only a health lockdown, it's a kind of a political lockdown, really. Because the very fact that the authorities have decided to put the

country between the 14th of January till the 18th of January into a lockdown, it says a lot about the political situation right now in Tunisia, which is, [as] I said earlier, starting in 2014, there was the return of the old regime figures, but now it's a full return of these figures.

The sense in Tunisia is one of despair, and the agreement on the political system does not exist anymore, the agreement around the democratic process does not exist anymore. And we are seeing the situation being blocked totally. For example, if you watch what is happening inside the parliament today, you would see that we are in a kind of a lockdown in terms of [how it's] very difficult to open up for initiatives, very difficult to move towards the consolidation of democracy. We don't have a Constitutional Court yet; we don't have reforms that are so much needed yet. So I tried to explain the different phases. I think, also, what happened is that we lost, because it was about giving a new foundation to society, to the social contract.

We spent a lot of time discussing ideological issues, issues around identity, around the form of the state—what state do we need, what state do we have? And what are the features of this new social contract with people who are on the conservative side, and others on the more progressive side. We lost sight, I think, of the more important, the very reasons why the people in Tunisia rose against the regime, which is more linked to economic and social rights. And so, now, we are in a situation where this kind of oblivion of the more social demands is coming back to haunt us in the sense that with the total blockage of the political actors, we are facing a [really] difficult economic situation. People in Tunisia today—despite all the progress on the political side—we are facing a very difficult economic situation, and economic and social rights were absolutely not addressed so far.

Sarah Yerkes [24:21]
Thank you. Achref, has the revolution been a success? And if not, what needs to be done to make it a success?

Achref Aouadi [24:29]
I don't know, it depends how you look at it. On a macro level, obviously, it sounds and looks like a success, especially if you look at it from [Washington, DC]. So it's a democracy, you have periodic elections. You have civil society, the vibrant scene of civil society, you have plurality in the political scene. So if you see it as, like the macro indicators, as I said, it's awesome.

But if we look and dig deeper into the micro indicators, I think torture is still there, police brutality is still there, there are still people who die in detention. Still, the judiciary is not fully independent. So that's why for me, it's a process that did not end yet and we need to invest more in it.

I think we failed in two things. The first one is in managing people's expectations. I think we were not honest with the Tunisian people, especially in 2011 and 2012, because we just kept on throwing dreams and hopes. And then a revolution comes already with a lot of expectations with high hopes. And then politicians, they just kept on feeding into that hope and then you got a lot of hopes. At the same time you have a very challenging economic situation, especially for the

Tunisian economy [which is] based on tourism. And then of course, you lost a lot of money, the value of our currency is going down. So all that created more issues. So of course, you had high hopes, high expectations, the economic situation doesn't follow. And then you got people who got more and more disappointed.

And I don't know, the election[s] were those doses of hope, that they happen to the Tunisian people every three years, four years, five years, but at the same time, they leave kind of a bitter taste after them because you dream a lot. Yeah, now we're gonna have a new president [who] is not corrupt. Now have we ended the transition, now we have a new constitution. Each time, I think we tried to find a reason to believe in democracy and in the revolution, but I think that the second area we failed in is—it's not like we failed, but rather were betrayed by our own political elites. You have people who are very different, they keep throwing hopes and dreams and promising things.

But when they rule the world together in a way that does not necessarily serve the revolution, the same political elite, the same economic elite, they found a way to survive together. And that's why you see that in terms of taxation on companies, it's gone really, really down since 2011. We're taxing [fewer] companies, we're taxing [fewer] businessmen, we've failed massively in our transitional justice, unfortunately. It could have been an opportunity for us to turn the page and start a new chapter, but these small fields that we don't see or we don't acknowledge that we're condemning people today, the failure of transitional justice would still make us talk about the the old regime versus the revolutionaries, the failure of the revolutionaries actually to come together and then have a clear project, [something for which] we are still paying [a] price. So for me, my assessment wouldn't be yes, failed or not, I think [we] still have a lot of opportunities to fix things.

Did the Friends of Tunisia help it? I think people tried, there [were] a lot of good intentions. But also was not really that Tunisia received a lot of funding. If we talk about the U.S., as it's echoed from POMED, I had the opportunity to discuss this in DC, when I was invited by POMED. I think managing better foreign aid for Tunisia would definitely help because at a certain point throwing money at Tunisia will not make the revolution successful. For years, I would speak just about civil society, because there are still so many funding mechanisms, like the MCC [Millennium Challenge Corporation] is a big project, one half a billion [dollars] that's going to be invested in Tunisia, but just the money coming for civil society. So I believe that if you just keep throwing money at problems, they won't be fixed, or they won't be self-fixed. And that's why I'm throwing money at civil society saying, hey, when civil society has money, they can fix things. I'm not sure that's the right approach. So I think, if we're gonna have a successful rest of the process, I think we should come together and discuss it. But I would still believe that it's 70% successful still, the economic challenges need to be addressed. I think we're making baby steps towards success.

Sarah Yerkes [29:50]
Thank you. And a couple of you have talked about the issue of polarization and sort of the shift away, I think, from pluralism that we saw in the beginning, or the consensus-based kind of governance that we saw at the beginning, towards more polarization, towards more sort of

people really feeling divided. And I wanted to first of all, ask Saida, as someone in Parliament, do you see this? Do you think that there has been increased polarization? Or do you think things are pretty much the same as they've been over the past couple of years or past five or six years? And if there is more polarization, you know, what can Parliament do to actually get around some of this or to fix and heal some of these divides?

Saida Ounissi [30:37]
I think that at this very moment, we are reaching the maximum of division, polarization, tension as well, inside the political class. This is especially notable in the parliament—in the capacity at the moment inside the parliament to vote, [to take] consensual decisions and to actually keep going in building the institutions of Tunisia.

Amna Guellali was saying something very interesting about the incapacity [...], it's really the incapacity of the political class and the parliament to come out with this Constitutional Court, which is very much needed. And you can't really think that you have guardians and limits to political power when you don't have at the same time this very core institution. But because of the polarization, because of the incapacity to vote, [to take a] common decision, because of—I think, I mean, we should say, probably—the end, the limit of consensus as a policy in Tunisia, we are being in a time where you can't—if not through votes, through really the new kind of power that you have—to go with a decision. Otherwise, you can't really take a decision.

And this is really, I think, not only sad, but it's quite dangerous, because you have the institutions which are not able to work. And if we think about how the integral rules, for example, of the Parliament, the constitution in itself, a lot of mechanisms which actually shaped the political spectrum, which actually shape the political system in Tunisia, the institutional system, definitely needs a consensus dialogue between different political families in order to come up with solutions, take decisions, take actions, and do something concrete for the country.

So I think one of the consequences—this is an idea that I've been experimenting and thinking about, and also writing about at the moment—which is that one of the consequences of the failure of transitional justice in Tunisia, because it is, I mean, we failed that there. And it's important to say that 10 years after the Revolution, the fact that the state in itself cannot say who's been a victim, who was not; the fact that the state was not able to provide to the justice sector all the means they needed to actually come up with trials of people who've been accused of crimes before the revolution and even after the revolution.

And thinking about that, today, because of this failure, you have two main political actors who've been feeding on that, who become strong and important and influential, both into the parliament, but you know, at the scale of the state: which is on one side, the PDL, Abir Moussi, and on the other side, Al Karama. I think today one of the consequences of the fact that these people could nourish [...] based on the failure of transitional justice, for some of them, the fact that we will usually see going on and...political parties who've been normalizing with the state, who've been more thinking about the integration into the state, integration into the normal political spectrum in Tunisia, and are not revolutionary enough. And on the other side, people who would make

their better—as we say in a French expression that I've been translating now, I don't know what's the equivalent in English—but really investing in the fact that the revolutionary moment was an error, was a mistake, and it was really better before the revolution. And working and investing in the nostalgia of the old regime, which is Abir Moussi and who are both sides of the spectrum today. I mean, I can talk about that, I'm a member of the Parliament. I'm living with these people on a daily basis. And I'm saying that today, the fact that we can't really progress into finishing what the constitution was intending to do in terms of institutional reform, the fact that we are losing our time coming back to ideological debates, for example, the fact that we are discussing if the revolution was or was not a mistake, I think that, yes, this very, very strong polarization today is harming definitely the process. So I don't know, I still have high hopes, I think we have a national dialogue, which is being prepared at the moment and being backed by the President of the Republic Kaïs Saïed, the whole process is supported by the General Tunisian Labor Union (UGTT), who as a union has proved before that they were able, they are capable of uniting and bringing everybody around one table. So I still have high hopes in, you know, having the political actors able to talk together, and to come up [with] solutions together, because once again, because of the way decision making is shaped by the law, by the rules in Tunisia, you need dialogue in order to take decisions.

Sarah Yerkes [37:53]
Thank you. There's two questions from the audience that kind of follow up on some of these points. And the first one is for Achref, which is, could you further discuss the "massive failure" of transitional justice, and the Truth and Dignity Commission (IVD). And then the second question, and I'll let you all sort of stew on this, think about it while Achref answers, but do you think that the national dialogue proposed by UGTT and President Saïed could break the current socio-political deadlock? How can you make the dialogue more inclusive of young and marginalized voices? So I'll let Achref, if you want to answer both of those, and then I'll let Saida and Amna come in as well.

Achref Aouadi [38:31]
Sure thing. I'd say the failure of transitional justice is, first of all, the process itself. The process was not really the perfect process, there was so much debate happening around it: was it inclusive, was everyone given the right to speak, to give their version of the story. I think it was really, really an issue. I would just think of one thing, which is there is this international affair between Tunisia and a businessman about the Tunisian French bank. And to be honest, the report of IVD was a clear, unfounded accusation to the Tunisian state, that would definitely serve the purpose of the businessman against the state. So knowing a little bit about this topic, I think that the methodology used was not really scientific methodology, [it] was not honest.

After that was the big debate about the president of the IVD, the process. So in all this, I think, we had an issue of, we lost the process. I remember, I was called by a friend of mine in the union of Tunisian journalists [asking], shall we push for publishing the final report of the IVD or not. That was one of the terrible moments I've ever lived, because there are so many people who suffered in terms of human rights, so they deserve recognition by the state. At the same time, if we, as a state acknowledge this process and we publish the report, this means we

somehow pleaded guilty in another affair, this famous affair of the bank. So we're put in the situation when we needed to choose between human rights and supporting the victims, or [risk] losing a lot of billions for the bank. So that's why for me, this is the issue of the IVD, and Sihem Ben Sedrine were not the perfect people to lead the process. It was very political. And then we found that we had IVD doing its job, and at the same time you found Beji Caid Essebsi, the previous president, trying to pass an amnesty law and now and then politicians are trying to pass an amnesty law.

And then even those who served the old regime, a guy like Ben Ali, his son-in-law, Slim Chiboub, is now in jail. While Slim Chiboub was the very first businessman who went to IVD. So did it even serve him? Did the process help someone from the old regime start a new page? It did not. So I think we lost a lot of money. And then we did not turn the page. We did not know our history, we did not know what's going on. At the same time, even those from the old regime, who believed in transitional justice, who believed in the IVD, after all, it did not serve them. They are now in jail. Like someone like Imed Trabelsi is now in jail. He tried to reconcile with the state but he couldn't find a way. So that's for me. I think it's complicated as a process. It's failed. And then, like the idea of polarization, I think it doesn't exist. Just another argument that we use in the campaigning, that we use before the elections. They said, like, if you see what polarization means, we have the old regime and they say the revolutionaries now, the last secretary general of the Democratic Constitutional Rally (RCD) [Ben Ali’s ruling party] serves now in the cabinet of Rachid Ghannouci. I know this says to me, that polarization is just a fake argument that they just use during the elections. But it's one system, one machine that's been governing, I think those just changing the seats. And that's it. But if you see Abir Moussi after all, she's let's say the only person from the old regime who decided to have its own political party and then go against the Islamists. But for the other old regime people they serve with the revolutionaries, and to me is just an electoral argument. But on the ground, it doesn't change anything.

For that question concerning the dialogue, I think dialogue as a process is great, definitely. We remember that we won a Nobel Prize for it, for organizing a national dialogue. But at the same time, I think it's gonna be again, one more debate for a political class that has no solutions, that lacks the creativity to offer solutions for the country. So I was hearing someone from the opposition, actually, the vice president of the Democratic bloc in the parliament, which is the main opposition now in the parliament. He was talking about [how] listening to youth is just a waste of time because there are no mechanisms to listen and discuss with youth. While the President actually is making it somehow important for this dialogue. If it's about to happen, it should necessarily include the youth. So you get a president who wants to include youth but has no clue how to do it. At the same time you got people who are supposed to be in this dialogue who believe that discussing with youth is just a waste of time because there is no such thing as youth and there are no mechanisms to discuss with them. So everyone is jumping on the easy solutions, the easy options. And you already see the number of people that are asking that other groups don't participate in this dialogue, I think it's going to be the president and UGTT only because you got the political parties, they have actually a full list of people they don't want to be around the same table with. So you want to have dialogue with just very few people. So hope it works, hope it's successful, but I'm not sure it's going to be inclusive. At a certain point that it

must go out of the official establishment, because when we talk about UGTT, [it is] still part of ... the Tunisian establishment. So maybe finding new versus different ways, thinking creatively outside of the box would be the way, but I'm not really optimistic. At the same time I think it's not about the dialogue. I think we lack a clear vision of where we want to go, of real reforms. We want to be brave enough to fight the corruption of the people we are close to. That's only when we start the real reforms.

Sarah Yerkes [45:34]
Thank you. And to you Amna, what are your views on the dialogue? And are there ways to make it more inclusive or make it sort of outside of the establishment as Achref has mentioned?

Amna Guellali [45:41]
Yeah, well, before going to the dialogue, I just wanted to disagree slightly with the assessment that Achref gave about the transitional justice process. Because I am from that part of civil society that really supported the process, and believes that even with all the shortcomings, and all the flaws of such a process that are kind of natural in the system where you had to have some kind of consensus around the transitional justice process itself. We believe that it still had value, it's still recorded in a document that is really an important historical document [about] what kind of violations and horrific things happened on a large scale in Tunisia. That is really important to have as a record as something that we can go back to as something that will remind us of what the system of oppression was. And, of course, like this incident, or this case that Achref is talking about is important, but cannot, in and of itself, delete completely or cancel completely any value for the IVD's report. I think the problem with the transitional justice system or the transitional justice process, the failures, were not the failures of the IVD, by definition, it's not only the IVD.

The IVD, of course, had some responsibility. But I think the more important, global aspect of the failure is really the lack of cooperation from the state, the fact that we had still inside the security services and at the helm of the state and at the helm of the Ministry of Interior people who didn't want at all to have any finding, any true unraveling of the system of oppression. I think what lacked for this transitional justice process to really go ahead was the real political will. And we are witnessing today the repercussion[s] of that, because, despite the fact that we had this process, where at least part of the population believed in it, even if it was demonized since the beginning by mass media who are aligned with some powerful political actors. It did have some buy in and a lot of people in Tunisia, I think, believed that the process should go ahead. But again, where we failed is the absence of constraints on the state to cooperate, to give the archives, to reveal the names of the people who are involved in the in the killing or torture or forced disappearances or other mass violations, to force the state to get to cooperate with the different different mechanisms. This is what happened with the IVD, and this is what is happening today with specialized chambers [whose] work is being curtailed. They are not able to do their work because of the lack of cooperation, because of the lack of political will to support the justice and to make this system of transitional justice really happen on the ground. That's my view. And so, I really wanted to share it.

And on the second question about the national dialogue, given the the history of the past national dialogues, and the fact that during a time of a total deadlock, like after political assassinations, after the suspension of the Parliament, we did believe in Tunisia, that if that there is no hope unless we get together and have some kind of dialogue. And I do believe that this national dialogue might have some positive outcome, although I'm a bit more doubtful today, given the context, given the fact that some political actors, for example, PDL, are not participating in this political dialogue. I don't know what outcome it will have, and I'm not sure it will be as successful as the first one, because the context is totally different. But I do hope that it will, you know, succeed.

I just wanted to answer a question that was directed to me, which is about the former regime, and the fact that in other democracies, they were kind of integrated in the process. And it's true that in Tunisia, there was a kind of arrangement with the former regime since the beginning. In Tunisia, you have to remember that when Ben Ali left, the power was then devolved to people who are from the same system. People who were from the former regime were the ones who conducted the transition. That's the real[lly] strange oddity of Tunisia's democratic process, is that people who were from the former regime were at the heart of the democratic process. They became the president of Tunisia, the First Minister of Tunisia was the same as from the former regime. So, and throughout the democratic process, we had people from the former regime.

The problem in Tunisia is not the one of excluding totally former regime people or not, it's more about accountability. And it's more about what kind of acceptable threshold of involvement in the horrific human rights record that we had in Tunisia, what kind of threshold is acceptable? Is it like people who have blood on their hands, people who were involved in the propaganda machine of Ben Ali, are these acceptable people to be able to have a dialogue with? That’s the question. In other democracies, in other democratic processes, there were also lustration laws to exclude people from the former regime from taking new, important positions in the democratic system. There were laws to prevent some of those who were really involved in human rights violations from taking part in the democratic system. So that's what we are grappling with in Tunisia, the fact that we didn't have such a process, we didn't have accountability to then start with a clean, fresh slate. And that's different maybe from other societies where there was some kind of lustration and some kind of definition of what is acceptable to integrate inside the democratic system.

Sarah Yerkes [54:34]
Thank you. I'll just say, sitting here in Washington quite close to the Capitol, we're going through this process ourselves of what role our current president should have in the future. So we are blessed with many, many, many questions, but only five minutes left. So unfortunately, I apologize to all of the participants who asked questions that we're not going to get a chance to answer. I do want to ask one more question, and give you all the chance to answer, and then you can maybe each take two minutes to answer, and then any final thoughts. And the question is, we talked a little bit about the concept of marginalization, I think Achref mentioned this idea of two Tunisias. What do you think the role of decentralization has been, or can be in the future, in addressing the issues related to the transition, addressing some of the issues of marginalization

that we have talked about so far? So let me—I'll start with you Saida—if you could answer that question, but then also just any sort of final remarks; try to keep it relatively short. Thank you.

Saida Ounissi [55:40]
Yes, I think it's a fundamental question in the democratization of Tunisia. And when we were talking about the revolution, [it] is also to include a new kind of people, new profiles, new types of political activists in the political system. And obviously, to open up the door in front of young people and also women. I think decentralization, in that way, was a great occasion to see coming in the political class, again, new people. But the thing is, exactly the same mechanism as transitional justice, and as I said in the very beginning of our panel is, if you don't give the means for that, if you don't invest in decentralization, if what you do is just vote laws in the parliament to ensure local powers, but at the same time you don't specify the relationship between local powers, central power, the role of the administration; if you don't invest, if you don't actually give them their financial independence in order to take their very own decisions; actually, they became the hostages of the central state. And, in reality, concretely, we don't really see the change [that] decentralization can give and the real impact on that, on the streets, on the relationship between citizens and the state is actually shaped.

So I think that we obviously must—we don't have a choice, we must continue the process of decentralization. But three years after the first local elections after the revolution, what we can say is, minors and the local political class [have] been investing as much time as fighting really for their powers with the central state than working on concrete, actual problems their cities are facing. They are doing themselves their own revolution in order to be taken seriously by the central administration, and also, all the types of local powers. And I'm thinking specifically, here, the governing rights, for example, and all this administration and appointed people, not elected people, by the central state, who continue to again guarantee this regime. And so definitely, if we want to see this democratization, and this revolution ten years after, growing—and as Achref said, it's a process—keep going, we definitely need to invest in decentralization. Maybe my last thought is to say that I'm part of the generation who at that time was in their twenties, and today we are in our thirties, and probably more mature. It's been a very interesting time. Most of my generation are still having high hopes into the future, despite the darkness of the situation, because we don't have another choice. And maybe we have the possibility to look at other experiences, what's happening in the U.S., you must know that it is really having an impact on the fact that democracy is never something which is guaranteed, it's actually something you fight for. You always fight for.

Sarah Yerkes [59:55]
Thank you so much. Achref, I'll turn to you for your final thoughts.

Achref Aouadi [1:00:04]
I think for the Tunisian revolution, there is maybe a lack of vision [of] what we want to achieve, because the notion of achieved goals—I don't recall [that] there is a list of goals that we wrote down that we want to achieve. [What we] definitely want to have is a country that's respectful to everyone, to have a country that's prosperous. But at the same time, there is a lack of vision. I

think Tunisia is like—having Moncef Marzouki as a president, having Beji Caid Essebsi as a president—I think we would have very different foreign policies. But when the Gulf crisis happened, I think the actions of Tunisia with Beji Caid Essebsi were something very different, I guess, [than] if we had Moncef Marzouki as president.

So I think now we don't know who we are. Are we a communist country? Certain institutions are. Are we a neo-liberal country? Certain institutions are. Are we conservatives? What [is] our standing ground in certain foreign issues? All these things that keep on changing based on who's ruling the country. So for me, if there is a real dialogue that should take place in Tunisia, it's definitely, definitely who we are or what we want to be as a country. And we keep postponing this and then we start using it in polarization during campaign. Who's losing? I think the whole nation that's losing. We don't have a clear compass where we should be heading. We don't know our North, at least economically and politically. So that's, to me, the things that we need to start discussing, because now this is a country with no vision, this is a country with no clear plan for the future.

For decentralization, I think it's something that the central organizations don't want to succeed. There is a constitution that clearly states the need to go for decentralization, but at the same time, I think that there are people afraid to lose some of their power. And I see so many people trying to make this process a failure. So for me, I still perceive decentralization as a solution to so many problems, but at the same time, I think the process is not supported enough. That's why when people talk about it, they only see negatives, and bad things. But for me, it's just that this process is not finding the right support—not really funding because I think the international community has been investing a lot in decentralization—it's just that there is no political will to make this process a success.

My final thought would be: good intentions are important, but having a clear plan with clear indicators is really what's missing. I hope more youth would go [in]to, I won't say politics, but would [say] go [in]to the public sphere in general, whether in civil society or joining political parties. But for me, I think those who will win the elections in 2024, they're still not aware of it; I'm sure they still don't know that they will be running for the elections in 2024. I'm pretty sure that there will be a lot of engineers and young people in 2022 [who] will not accept this mediocrity to carry on and they will be running. So for the future, I'm really optimistic because 2024 will be a year to cut with all the bad practices with patronage and all these things. And I'm pretty sure that the next generation of entrepreneurs, of politicians, of academia people will be just better.

Sarah Yerkes [1:04:08]
Thank you. And the final word to Amna. Oops, you're still muted.

Amna Guellali [1:04:16]
Thank you. I think what Achref said were very nice words to close this debate. But just to say that, for me, what has been missing and what I think would be really important to get the transition on track again, or the democratic process on track again, is accountability and the end

of impunity. And when I'm saying impunity, I'm not only talking about human rights violations, I'm talking about impunity on all levels. Because in Tunisia, what is happening today is the fact that nobody is answering for his wrongdoings. You have a total disregard for the system in terms of having people answering for what they have been doing on all levels. You have an accident somewhere, you have people who have mismanaged public funds, or who have not handled in the way they should have been handling, like works [sic], and people die out of that. Nobody answers for that. No real accountability is put in place, again, not only on human rights violations, not on the political side of things, but normally, you know, accountability for having caused harm or for having caused the death of someone, etc. And that's what is missing. I think this is linked also to the fact that we don't have a strong judicial system. We don't have independent real independence of the judiciary, despite all the more cosmetic changes that have happened since the beginning of the democratic process in terms of improving the independence of the judiciary setting in place or putting in place institutions that would replace the kind of stranglehold that the executive branch had on the traditional system. But in reality, things have not really changed. And that is what is missing also in Tunisia is to have some kind of accountability before real, strong, independent judges who have all the responsibility and all the mandate to hold people accountable and to then signal to the larger public, to the population, to the people who are in power that no, there is no way to get there, there is no possibility for people to get away from their responsibility. So that's one of the things I believe we have been missing and should be addressed if we want to move ahead with a system that is on track when it comes to the democratic process.

Sarah Yerkes [1:07:42]
Thank you so much, and thank you to all the panelists. This has been a really, really great discussion. And again, I apologize to all the people who had questions we didn't get a chance to answer, but I hope that we will be able to have more follow on discussions.

And now I am incredibly excited to share with you a video that my colleague Nesrine Mbarak and I, along with Carnegie's amazing digital content director, Cameron Zotter, put together to get at some of the same issues that we're talking about today. And this is a compilation of the thoughts and analysis of around 20 different Tunisian activists and analysts from across the country, representing different age groups and different political views. This is the premiere of this video, this is the first time that we are showing it to anyone, but it will be available after this session on the Carnegie Tunisia Monitor website. And I really encourage you all to share it with your networks and I hope that you enjoy it.

FIRESIDE CHAT

Amy Hawthorne [1:21:26]
Hello, everyone. I'm Amy Hawthorne, the deputy director for research at POMED, and I really enjoyed watching that film from Carnegie. So much food for thought. So many great Tunisian

voices there. So thank you Sarah and Nesrine for that great effort. I’m very pleased today to begin a conversation with Ambassador Gordon Gray. Gordon is currently the Chief Operating Officer at the Center for American Progress. But before that, he had a distinguished 35-year career in the U.S. government as a U.S. diplomat. And one of the most notable parts of his very distinguished career was serving as the U.S. ambassador to Tunisia from 2009 until 2012, witnessing the start of the Arab Spring and directing the U.S. response in support of Tunisia's democratic transition. So I'm pleased to have the chance to talk with Gordon for about 30 minutes or so, looking back at what happened 10 years ago as he saw it, and then looking a little bit at where Tunisia is today.

So, Gordon, let me go ahead and start by asking, how did the US Embassy in Tunis—in the months leading up to the beginning of the revolution in December 2010—how did the embassy see the situation in Tunisia at that time? And what signs did you see then that discontent was growing? And in hindsight, what signs did you miss that this momentous change was coming?

Amb. Gordon Gray [1:23:14]
Thanks, Amy. And thanks to you and Sarah for inviting me to participate in this great program this morning as we celebrate the accomplishments of the Tunisians, not only 10 years ago today, but also in the decade since. There were a number of signs of discontent that I would say even predated 2010. I'm thinking specifically of the labor unrest in Gafsa in 2008, which the government was successful in putting down, and then in October 2009, when Ben Ali was “reelected”—and I say that in quotation marks—for another five-year term. And there was a lot of discussion following his election about whether he was positioning—and some people thought he was positioning—his wife to succeed him. We found that it pretty unlikely given her lack of political abilities, shall we say. There was talk of his son-in-law, Sakher El Materi, who was elected to parliament, and that was a more realistic scenario. And there was a real sense in 2010 of discontent growing, but there was also almost a sense of the *fin du régime* sense. But I also don't want to exaggerate it and suggest that, when we were looking at things in 2010, we thought, “Ben Ali is going to be out of here before January 2011,” because it certainly wasn't like that. And that kind of ties in: What are the signs that we missed? I would say it was more timing than discontent. And I'm not sure anyone really saw the signs of how quickly it would happen, maybe more to the point, how brittle the regime was.

Amy Hawthorne [1:25:52]
Thank you, Gordon. And just to follow up on your remarks, one development that a lot of Tunisians have talked about as kind of contributing to the growing discontent and momentum for change in the fall, or December 2010, was the leak of WikiLeaks cables. And I'd like to ask you, if you're able to say, did the embassy at that time perceive that that was a factor within Tunisian political society? Were people discussing that, what they were reading, and kind of getting these senses of new information about their dictator Ben Ali? What do you remember at that time specifically regarding that issue, or were people too nervous to talk about it with you?

Amb. Gordon Gray [1:26:43]

Some people were too nervous to talk to us about it. Some of the people who had been embassy sources for information in cables that were stolen and released told us, you've burned us. I mean, not us personally, but the U.S government has burned us and it's just nothing personal, but we need to step back and we can't associate with you. My view has always been that the WikiLeaks explanation is a little too American-centric, and I think it's a little patronizing vis-à-vis the Tunisians. Tunisians didn't need a foreign embassy to tell them that Ben Ali was corrupt, that contracts were getting steered to his family, that Imed Trabelsi was elected mayor of La Goulette based on his family ties rather than on any intrinsic political… they didn't need us to tell them. So I've never really liked that explanation myself.

Amy Hawthorne [1:28:05]
And speaking of [the] Ben Ali dictatorship, I mean, can you tell us a little bit about what it was like to work as the U.S. ambassador, under the Ben Ali dictatorship? I think a lot of people who don't know Tunisia, and didn't know Tunisia then at that time, aren't aware of really how extremely repressive and closed Tunisia was. There was actually, in my opinion as an outsider, a little more political openness, relatively speaking, in Egypt at the time, more than there was in Tunisia. It was so repressive. What was it like working as the U.S. ambassador in the old Tunisia?

Amb. Gordon Gray [1:28:45]
First, before answering your question, I agree with you completely that, at that time that I was in Tunisia, 2009 to 2012, there was more political openness, however imperfect it was, obviously, in Egypt than there was in Tunisia. I had served in Cairo, as had a number of my colleagues at the embassy in Tunis from 2002 to 2005. So coming from Egypt, I mean, even if it was a four year interlude, it was very frustrating working in Tunisia. The government did not want to engage with us. It wasn't just the U.S., it was any foreign embassy. But worse, they really discouraged Tunisians, be they private individuals or civil society, from engaging with us. I'll give you one anecdote to illustrate that, if I may. Shortly after I got to Tunisia, I took a trip to Sfax to see Sfax, show the flag, meet people there. [The] Embassy set up a lunch with really pretty establishment characters: university president, member of parliament, people like that, maybe six [people]. One person showed up. The only person who showed up was the representative of the university president. Everyone else had gotten the word from the governor, they got a phone call an hour before saying don't go to this lunch. I had a dinner that night with a businessman, again, very establishment, who had been told by the governor not to hold the dinner, but he had said, forget that, [and] held it. One of the guests at the dinner ran an English language institute. So, since my schedule for the next day had been canceled by the governor, she asked me if I wanted to visit. I said sure. I taught English as a Peace Corps volunteer in Morocco, so I was quite interested. I went to the English language institute, was there maybe 45 minutes, saw a few classes. She was pulled into the Ministry of Interior twice to ask what happened during that visit. So that just gives—I don't think for any Tunisians in the audience this will come as a surprise at all—but just to give people who aren't familiar with what it was like being in Tunisia, for Tunisians, not just for foreign diplomats.

Amy Hawthorne [1:32:00]

Yeah, thank you. Next, I wanted to ask if you could tell us your memories about January 14, ten years ago today, and the days leading up to that. How much of a window did you actually have into what was going on inside the regime? When was it clear to you that things might be shifting really in a major way? And what messages was the U.S. sending the Tunisian government at that time?

Amb. Gordon Gray [1:32:34]
Obviously we heard about Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation and the protests that followed. One of the first signs was when, on December 28, 2010, Ben Ali visited Bouazizi in the hospital. And there's a very famous photograph of Bouazizi wrapped head-to-toe in bandages from his injuries, and Ben Ali visiting him. The idea that the king was visiting a subject was very much unlike Ben Ali, and that was to us the first indication that the regime felt it was in trouble. That same night, Ben Ali gave his first of three speeches in which he promised to look at the economic problems and said it was all this trouble was due to foreign forces, you know, the usual. And then he had the Cabinet, they replaced four ministers the next day. So that was one of the first signs that the regime felt that it was in trouble.

And as far as what our messages were to the Tunisian government as the demonstrations intensified, in January, we strongly advised them to avoid violence, which, unfortunately, they did not do. We did that both publicly and privately both in Washington and in Tunisia. But it was just antithetical to the way the Ben Ali regime—was antithetical to its DNA—and I think that's probably common to most authoritarian regimes.

Amy Hawthorne [1:34:55]
What was it like watching as an American diplomat? What was it like watching the Ben Ali regime crumble? I think many of our viewers, obviously our Tunisian viewers, lived through that. But for those who have not been in an authoritarian country in the moment that the dictatorship fell, as a foreigner, what was it like watching the regime crumble? And it crumbled pretty fast.

Amb. Gordon Gray [1:35:20]
It crumbled very quickly, you're right. Frankly, it was inspirational. One of the memories that sticks out in my mind is that we held a town hall meeting at the embassy for our Tunisian employees, I think it was around 11 o'clock on Friday, January 14, knowing that there was a tremendously large demonstration downtown, but not knowing that later that day Ben Ali would be on a plane to Jeddah. And it was the first time that Tunisians, the Tunisian employees, felt they could speak frankly among one another. And something they acknowledged at the town hall meeting. Just hearing them speak and hearing their stories and their sentiments about what they saw happening was, it was really a touching moment. I think shortly after Ben Ali fled, and talking to Tunisian contacts and Tunisian friends, I was struck by how many people said, it's the first time I really spoke to my neighbors, it was the first time I got to know them, particularly in Tunis, but elsewhere as well. You'll recall the security situation was a bit tenuous because the internal, interior security forces faded into the woodwork, which was a smart move on their part. But before the army came in to establish order, there were a lot of, what we would call in the [United] States, neighborhood watch organizations set up, and it really created a sense of civic

pride that Tunisians told me they never felt they completely enjoyed before. So it was all, just on a personal level, it was very, very inspiring.

Amy Hawthorne [1:37:48]
Were you surprised at how quickly the regime crumbled? I mean, many outsiders, including myself, who was watching Tunisia from afar, before, during the dictatorship, did not think that his regime would disintegrate so quickly, or at least disintegrate in a formal sense so quickly. It looked pretty solid, [but] of course, it wasn't. But were you and your colleagues surprised by the speed of the events on January 14? And soon after?

Amb. Gordon Gray [1:38:31]
Yes, we were surprised. I think it's fair to say everyone was surprised. And certainly looking at what happened further east and in other countries, Tunisia was the exception in that regard. And for all the criticism that Ben Ali richly deserves, to be fair, he left his country when he did, and the result was much less bloodshed than then we saw in Libya, or that we're seeing in Syria, or wherever.

Amy Hawthorne [1:39:20]
I'd like to shift gears a little bit and ask you, in your view, what do you think that the United States got right in its immediate response to Tunisia's revolution, the time when you were there as the ambassador? And also, how do you think the U.S. fell short or has fallen short in its support for Tunisian democratization?

Amb. Gordon Gray [1:39:45]
I think that the U.S., both the executive and the legislative branches, were quick to realize the magnitude and importance of what had happened in Tunisia, and were quick to offer both rhetorical support and some initial economic support. The rhetorical support, probably the most important, came on January 25, eleven days after the revolution, when, during the State of the Union address, President Obama said the American people stand with the Tunisians and their aspirations for democracy. That might not seem too momentous to American ears, but Tunisians from ministers to average citizens told me, in virtually the exact same words, "that brought tears to my eyes." Hearing President Obama say that and seeing the visual of both Democrats and Republicans, Senators and Congresspeople rising to their feet to give a standing ovation to that line, really, really resonated with the Tunisian people.

Of course, words are cheap, and you have to put your money where your mouth is, and I think that the U.S. government came up with some good programs to help ease the transition. One of the milestones was President Obama's invitation to then Prime Minister Beji Caid Essebsi to visit the Oval Office on October 7, 2011, that led to a number of agreements, and more educational scholarships, sovereign loan guarantees to help boost the financial stability of the Tunisian government, money for the Overseas Private Investment Corporation for franchises in Tunisia, Peace Corps, things like that. So I think the short term response was good. I think in the longer term, the United States has done, in other words, longer term meaning over the past

10 years, but more recently than when I was there, has done an excellent job in providing security assistance. And I think that's helped a great deal with the security situation in Tunisia.

I would have liked to have seen a more sustained effort by the U.S. government on trying to encourage U.S. investment in Tunisia. When we were there, we advocated strongly but unsuccessfully that the U.S. initiate discussions with the government of Tunisia on a free-trade agreement, not so much because we thought it would have great economic results or commercial results overnight, but because we thought doing so would be an important signal of confidence for foreign investors, not just for U.S. investors. I think we did very well on the political side. I think we did well, in the short term, I think we did well on security assistance. I would have liked to have seen us do more and would still like to see us do more on trade and job creation, because employment is such an important—unemployment was a catalyst of the revolution—and it's really central to the transition succeeding.

Amy Hawthorne [1:44:25]
Yeah, personally, I feel that there's a lot more that the U.S. could have done and should be doing now. And so we have a lot of room for improvement.

Amb. Gordon Gray [1:44:41]
Yes, but it's heartening that even though the Trump administration each year tried to cut back on the assistance for Tunisia, Congress reinstated it. So I think there's strong bipartisan support for Tunisia, which gives me some hope.

Amy Hawthorne [1:45:04]
Yeah, I agree with you, there is strong bipartisan support in Washington, on the Hill, for Tunisia. I also think that the U.S., it's easy to sort of forget that the U.S. pivoted very quickly to basically supporting an authoritarian regime, or not challenging an authoritarian regime, not really challenging the Ben Ali dictatorship in any significant way, but when the change happened, the United States pivoted immediately and basically welcomed what was happening in Tunisia. And it's easy to take that for granted, but I think that was very important that, from the beginning, the United States government immediately made clear that it welcomed democratic transition in Tunisia, and in my opinion, you know, gave a lot of really important signs to start making that policy reality. So let's hope for increased support and good and smart support for Tunisia in the coming period.

Just in closing, I'd like to ask you, in your career in the State Department, as a U.S. diplomat, you served in numerous Arab countries, and I'd like to ask you to reflect a little bit, what did you or what do you find different about Tunisia that might explain why it was the first country in the region to succeed in having such such a revolution to oust its dictator? And why do you think that, despite all the challenges and problems today that we've heard about from our Tunisian colleagues throughout this event, why do you think that Tunisia has been able to make really more progress, democratic progress, by far than any other than any other place in the region?

Amb. Gordon Gray [1:47:00]

I think a number of factors came together from Tunisia’s history. It had a fairly rich tradition of reforms. Tunisia outlawed slavery before the United States did, for example, but also, more recent reforms in the 20th century. Women have greater rights than in other countries in the region. I always like to point out that Tunisian women got the vote before Swiss women did, for example. But that's just one example of the rights. Fairly educated population. Population that has a lot of exposure to democratic norms. French media is a big, big influence. I think it's important that, if one contrasts the situation in Tunisia with, say, the situation in Egypt, the opposition leaders in Tunisia didn't go underground, they were in exile in countries with democratic traditions: Rached Ghannouchi in London; Moncef Marzouki in Paris; Hamadi Jebali for a while in Spain. And I think that's important as well. It's a fairly homogeneous society. And compromise is part of the nature of the society. And so I think all of those were reasons that the transition, the political transition, succeeded. And I think it's why Tunisia has come as far as it has in the past decade. And, unfortunately, when those factors are missing elsewhere, it's why perhaps other countries haven't progressed as much.

Amy Hawthorne [1:49:16]
Well, thank you very much Ambassador Gordon Gray for being with us today to mark this important occasion in Tunisia. And on behalf of POMED and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, thanks to all of our viewers for being with us today, especially our colleagues and friends in Tunisia. We celebrate and recognize all of your achievements and we are in solidarity with you. As supporters of democracy in the United States, Tunisia, and all around the world, we are in solidarity with you as you continue on your journey to making your society more just and more free for all Tunisians. So thank you everyone for being with us today and we look forward to seeing you at another event soon.

Amb. Gordon Gray [1:50:10]
Thanks, Amy.