

# *Tunisia in Perspective*

An Orientation Guide



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## CHAPTER 1: GEOGRAPHY

### Introduction

Tunisia occupies a strategic location on the Mediterranean coast of North Africa. It is halfway between the Atlantic Ocean and the Nile River, and is the northernmost point on the continent. With an area of 163,610 sq km (63,170 sq mi), Tunisia is a small African country, approximately the size of the state of Georgia.<sup>1</sup> It has nearly as much land boundary as it has coastline. Its northernmost tip, Cap Blanc, and southernmost city, Borj al-Khadra, are roughly 750 km (466 mi) apart. Distances between east and west border points vary from 100 to 380 km (62 to 236 mi).<sup>2, 3</sup> Tunisia lies between two large neighbors: Algeria to the west and Libya to the southeast. Together with Morocco and Mauritania, these five countries are known collectively as the Maghreb (Arabic for “the West”).<sup>4</sup>



Tunisia was once a lush, green region, home to large mammals such as lions and elephants. Deforestation and desertification have led to an increase in arid regions, particularly in the country’s center. Despite this history and its small size, Tunisia is endowed with great geographic and climatic diversity. Four distinct geographic divisions—the mountainous north, the high central plains, the low central plains, and the desert in the south—support ecosystems that vary from moist forests to sand seas. In the north a coastal Mediterranean climate of mild, rainy winters and hot, dry summers exists. This gives way to drier, more extreme weather in the interior plateaus and the desert south, which merges into the great Sahara. The majority of Tunisia’s 10.7 million people live in urban areas along the Mediterranean coast.<sup>5, 6</sup> Those who live in the less hospitable interior have adapted by building underground cave homes and hilltop *ksour* (granaries).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, “Tunisia,” in *The World Factbook*, 3 May 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ts.html>

<sup>2</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, “Tunisia (Shaded Relief Map),” 1990, <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/tunisia.gif>

<sup>3</sup> R. Hughes et al., “1.5: Tunisia,” in *A Directory of Africa Wetlands* (Wageningen, NL: Ramsar Sites Information Service, Ramsar/Wetlands International, 1992), <http://ramsar.wetlands.org/Portals/15/TUNISIA.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Harold D. Nelson, “Introduction,” in *Tunisia: A Country Study*, 3rd ed., ed. Harold D. Nelson (Washington, DC: American University, 1986), xix.

<sup>5</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, “Tunisia,” in *The World Factbook*, 3 May 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ts.html>

<sup>6</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Tunisia: People,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/609229/Tunisia#toc46603>

<sup>7</sup> Donna Wheeler, Paul Clammer, and Emilie Filou, “Gabes, Matmata and the Ksour,” in *Tunisia*, 5th ed. (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet, 2010), 223–225, 232.

## Geographic Divisions and Topographic Features

### *Mountainous North*

In the north, two mountain chains extend from the Atlas Mountains of Algeria: the Northern Tell and the High Tell (or the Dorsale). The Northern Tell includes the low, rounded Kroumirie and Mogod Mountains. To the south, the Dorsale comprises the higher, jagged Teboursouk, Tebessa, and Medjerda Mountains. The Dorsale marks Tunisia's highest peak, Jebel Chambi, at 1,544 m (5,066 ft).<sup>8</sup> This high ridge divides the country into two climatic regions: the mild and rainy Mediterranean north and the arid desert south. Tunisia's only permanent river, the Medjerda, divides the Northern Tell from the Dorsale. The Medjerda valley, northeast of the Dorsale, gets plenty of rainfall, and the clay soil makes it a fertile farmland for olives, wheat, grapes, citrus, jasmine, gum, and pistachios. The Cap Bon peninsula protrudes toward Italy from the northeastern corner of this region.



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Atlas mountains in Tunisia

### *High Central Plains*

South of the Dorsale are plateaus that range in height from 182–457 m (600–1,500 ft).<sup>9</sup> In the high central plains, just south and east of the Dorsale, broad alluvial basins are surrounded by low mountains. The sandy soil is dotted with sagebrush and esparto grass. The region is sparsely populated with sheep and goat farmers, and nomads who find adequate feed for their camels.<sup>10</sup>

### *Low Central Plains*

The low central plains connect the high plains with the coast. North to south, these plains run from Sousse (the well-watered Gulf of Hammamet) to Sfax (the drier Gulf of Gabès). West to east, flat gravelly plateaus give way to the humid coastal strip that Tunisians call al-Sāhil (Arabic for “shore”).<sup>11</sup> Al-Sāhil is home to most of Tunisia's olive plantations. It is densely populated and has several islands in the Gulf of Gabès, including Jerba and Kerkenna.



©US Army Africa/flickr.com  
Tunisian Valley

### *Desert South*

Just south of the central plains lie saltwater wetlands and oases that border Tunisia's deserts. The wetlands, which were once an extension of the Mediterranean, form several *chotts* or *shatfs* (Arabic for “salty lake”) including Chott al-Gharsa, Tunisia's lowest point at 17 m (55 ft) below

<sup>8</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Tunisia: Land: Relief,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/609229/Tunisia#toc46597>

<sup>9</sup> Rosalind Varghese Brown and Michael Spilling, “Chapter 1: Geography,” in *Tunisia: Cultures of the World* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Benchmark, 2009), 9.

<sup>10</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Tunisia: Land: Relief,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-46598/Tunisia>

<sup>11</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Al-Sāhil,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/516466/Al-Sahil>

sea level.<sup>12</sup> Date palms grow abundantly among the higher *chotts*. The oases of Tozeur and Douz are gateways to the Sahara. One of the Sahara's vast sand seas, the Grand Erg Oriental, stretches west to east from Algeria to Libya. With dunes averaging 117 m (385 ft) high, the Grand Erg Oriental covers 192,000 sq km (119,000 sq mi), including much of southern Tunisia.<sup>13</sup>

## Climate

Tunisia is in a warm temperate zone with three climatic regions. Northern and coastal parts of the country have a Mediterranean climate, with an average annual temperature range of 7–33°C (45–91°F), and rainfall of 80 cm (31 in). In general, winter months from November through February are cool and wet; the dry summers are hottest in August. The northwestern mountains may receive 150 cm (60 in) of rain annually, making them the wettest part of North Africa, and mountain temperatures drop below freezing in winter.<sup>14, 15, 16</sup>



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Man in desert with camels

In the central semi-arid region, annual rainfall averages 10–15 cm (4–6 in), just enough to support the growth of esparto grass and sagebrush. Seasonal temperatures inland become more extreme. For example, Gafsa's winter lows average 4°C (39°F), and summer highs average 38°C (100°F).<sup>17</sup> Mediterranean air currents moderate temperatures somewhat on the coastal plain.<sup>18</sup>

In the desert south, annual rainfall seldom exceeds 10 cm (4 in). Summer daytime temperatures frequently exceed 47°C (117°F), but in the desert the temperatures between day and night fluctuate dramatically.<sup>19, 20</sup> The *sirocco*, a strong hot wind from the Sahara, can bring sandstorms in the north.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Chott El-Jarid," 2012,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/301412/Chott-El-Jarid>

<sup>13</sup> Carol S. Breed et al., "Regional Studies of Sand Seas, Using LANDSAT (ERTS) Imagery," in *A Study of Global Sand Seas* (Geological Survey Professional Paper 1052), Edwin D. McKee, ed. (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office for the United States Geological Survey, 1979), 336.

<sup>14</sup> R. Hughes et al. "1.5: Tunisia," in *A Directory of Africa Wetlands* (Wageningen, NL: Ramsar Sites Information Service, Ramsar/Wetlands International, 1992), <http://ramsar.wetlands.org/Portals/15/TUNISIA.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> National Institute of Statistics-Tunisia, "Statistical Information: Territory: General Data," 2012, <http://www.ins.nat.tn/indexen.php>

<sup>16</sup> National Institute of Statistics-Tunisia, "Statistical Information: Territory: Climatology: Temperature: Annual Temperature Per Main Meteorological Station: Absolute Minimum," 2012, <http://www.ins.nat.tn/indexen.php>

<sup>17</sup> BBC, "Weather: Gafsa: Average Conditions," 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather/2468353>

<sup>18</sup> CultureGrams World Edition "Tunisia: Land and Climate," 2012, 1, [http://online.culturegrams.com/pdf/world\\_pdf.php?id=163](http://online.culturegrams.com/pdf/world_pdf.php?id=163)

<sup>19</sup> R. Hughes et al. "1.5: Tunisia," in *A Directory of Africa Wetlands* (Wageningen, NL: Ramsar Sites Information Service, Ramsar/Wetlands International, 1992), <http://ramsar.wetlands.org/Portals/15/TUNISIA.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> National Institute of Statistics-Tunisia, "Statistical Information: Territory: Climatology: Temperature: Annual Temperature Per Main Meteorological Station: Absolute Maximum," 2012, <http://www.ins.nat.tn/indexen.php>

<sup>21</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Tunisia: Land: Climate," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/609229/Tunisia#toc46597>



## Bodies of Water

### *Wadi Medjerda*

Tunisia's natural water resources are limited. The Wadi Medjerda (or Oued Medjerda) is the only perennially flowing river. (The Arabic term *wadi* more commonly refers to a dry valley or channel that becomes a river during a rainy season.) The Wadi Medjerda originates in Algeria and runs northeast through the Medjerda Valley between the Kroumirie and Dorsale mountain chains before emptying into the Gulf of Tunis and the Mediterranean Sea. Dams along the Wadi Medjerda and its tributaries, the Wadi Mallāq and the Wadi Tassah, irrigate nearby wheat-growing plains.<sup>22</sup> In the central regions, seasonal rains flood local wadis, which sometimes empty into salt lakes. The dry south has very few wadis.



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Salt lake in Tunisia

### *Ground Aquifers*

More than 500 underground aquifers (roughly a third of which are non-renewable) contribute the remaining 42.5% of Tunisia's total water resource potential.<sup>23</sup> Underground spring water fills cisterns in the rainy north; the dry south relies on infrequent rainwater to fill cisterns.

## Major Cities

Tunisia's urban population has grown rapidly since the 1970s.<sup>24</sup> Cities now house close to two-thirds of the country's 10.7 million people.<sup>25, 26, 27</sup> A typical Tunisian city has a medina—an Arab-built, walled and gated old town, with buildings that are hundreds or thousands of years old—and a *ville nouvelle* (French: “new town”) of European colonial boulevards and architecture. City outskirts contain wealthy suburbs and working-class ghettos. With the exception of Kairouan in the interior, Tunisia's major cities (and their economic and social advantages) are concentrated north and east along the Mediterranean coast.<sup>28</sup> The Tunisian Revolution of 2011 interrupted much city commerce, especially tourism. Unemployment, high

<sup>22</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Wadi Majardah,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/358911/Wadi-Majardah#ref992629>

<sup>23</sup> National Research Council, “The Water Resources and Water Management Regimes in Tunisia,” in *Agricultural Water Management: Proceedings of a Workshop in Tunisia (Series: Strengthening Science-Based Decision Making in Developing Countries)*, ed. Laura Holliday (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2007), 82–83, [http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record\\_id=11880&page=82](http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=11880&page=82)

<sup>24</sup> World Bank Indicators, “Urban Population (% of Total) in Tunisia,” Trading Economics, 2012, <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/tunisia/urban-population-percent-of-total-wb-data.html>

<sup>25</sup> National Institute of Statistics-Tunisia, “Statistical Information: Demographic and Social Data: General Data on the Population,” 2012, <http://www.ins.nat.tn/indexen.php>

<sup>26</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Tunisia: People,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/609229/Tunisia#toc46603>

<sup>27</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, “Tunisia,” in *The World Factbook*, 3 May 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ts.html>

<sup>28</sup> African Development Bank, “Tunisia: Interim Country Strategy Paper: 2012–2013,” 15 February 2012, 19, [http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Project-and-Operations/Catalogue%20Interim%20strategy%20Paper%20Anglais\\_Mise%20en%20page%201.pdf](http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Project-and-Operations/Catalogue%20Interim%20strategy%20Paper%20Anglais_Mise%20en%20page%201.pdf)



prices, and increasing religious concerns continue to inspire social protests and labor strikes, which sometimes lead to unannounced facilities closures and temporary city curfews.<sup>29, 30, 31</sup>

City	Alternate Spelling	Population (by Chief Town of Governate, 2009)
Tunis		651,000 (metropolitan area estimates top 1.2 million)
Sfax	Safaqis	283,000
Sousse	Susah	199,000
Kairouan	Al-Qayrawan	128,000
Gabes	Qabis	125,000
Bizerte	Banzart	121,000

### Tunis

Tunis, the nation's capital and largest city, is more than 3,000 years old and still developing.<sup>32, 33</sup> It began as a settlement on the southwestern shore of Lake Tunis, an inlet of the Mediterranean Sea. The city of Carthage rose and fell on the lake's opposite shore, and is now a high-priced suburb of the modern metropolis. Tunis' Roman history is preserved at the world-famous Bardo Museum, which houses a stellar collection of mosaics.<sup>34</sup> In the 7th century, Arabs began construction of the medina, now protected as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.<sup>35</sup> Spaniards and Ottoman Turks later fought for its possession. Ottomans began to expand the city beyond the Bab al-Bahr ("gate to the sea").<sup>36</sup> French colonists continued the expansion, renaming the gate Porte de France, and demolishing some of the old city's walls to reach their Ville Nouvelle built on reclaimed land to the east.<sup>37, 38</sup> In 1956, Tunis became the capital of independent Tunisia. Today, it is a major commercial and cultural center, supporting light and heavy industry, tourism, and agriculture.<sup>39</sup>



©Damian Entwistle/flickr.com  
Tunis medina mosque

<sup>29</sup> Tarek Amara, "Tunisia's Economy Still Awaits Post-Revolt Bounce," Reuters, 1 February 2012, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2012/02/01/uk-tunisia-economy-idUKTRE81017J20120201>

<sup>30</sup> Suzanne Daley, "Tensions on a Campus Mirror Turbulence in a New Tunisia," *New York Times*, 11 June 2012, [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/12/world/africa/tensions-at-manouba-university-mirror-turbulence-in-tunisia.html?\\_r=2&emc=tnt&tntemail=y](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/12/world/africa/tensions-at-manouba-university-mirror-turbulence-in-tunisia.html?_r=2&emc=tnt&tntemail=y)

<sup>31</sup> *New York Times*, "Tunisia," 11 June 2012,

<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/tunisia/index.html>

<sup>32</sup> Rosalind Varghese Brown and Michael Spilling, *Tunisia: Cultures of the World* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Benchmark, 2009), 13–14.

<sup>33</sup> K. J. Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1–5.

<sup>34</sup> National Heritage Institute, "The National Museum of Bardo," 16 December 2010, [http://www.inp.rnrt.tn/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=17&Itemid=39&lang=en](http://www.inp.rnrt.tn/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=17&Itemid=39&lang=en)

<sup>35</sup> UNESCO World Heritage Centre, "Medina of Tunis," 2012, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/36>

<sup>36</sup> Julia Ann Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans: North Africa and Europe in an Age of Migration, c. 1800–1900* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011), 34.

<sup>37</sup> Paul Sebag, *Tunis: Histoire d'une Ville* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1998), 261.

<sup>38</sup> Donna Wheeler, Paul Clammer, and Emilie Filou, *Tunisia*, 5th ed. (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2010), 65.

<sup>39</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Tunis," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/609220/Tunis>

Roads, railways, sea ports, and airports serve the city, including a city tram system and the country's primary international airport.<sup>40, 41</sup>

The Tunisian Revolution first reached Tunis in December 2010.<sup>42</sup> A second wave of protests in January 2011 led to deaths, destruction of government and private property (including the main train station), and an army-enforced curfew.<sup>43, 44, 45</sup> After the departure of former president Ben Ali, the post-revolution government faced continued demonstrations in Tunis, and security officials reportedly continued to use excessive force against protesters.<sup>46</sup> In 2012, demonstrators in Tunis protested an art exhibit deemed insulting to Islam. Later in the year, protests and attacks on the American embassy in Tunis resulted in damaged property and the deaths of several demonstrators.<sup>47</sup> The incident triggered riots and added to violent tensions over economic inequality and political repression.<sup>48, 49, 50</sup>

### Sfax

Sfax, located on the east coast opposite the Kerkennah Islands, is Tunisia's second-largest city.<sup>51</sup> The town site was the original Phoenician settlement, which became a Roman trade center for grain, and later, olive oil. Under Arab rule, Sfax grew as a terminus of the trans-Saharan caravan trade, and later as a port for trans-Mediterranean commerce. Ottoman Turks and Barbary pirates moved slaves and gold through the port city before French marines landed in 1881. The French started the industry to process and export phosphates from the mines of Gafsa.



©D@LY3D/flickr.com  
Old city in Sfax

<sup>40</sup> Donna Wheeler, Paul Clammer, and Emilie Filou, "Tunis," in *Tunisia*, 5th ed. (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2010), 84–87.

<sup>41</sup> Tore Kjeilen, "Tunis," LookLex Encyclopedia, n.d., <http://looklex.com/e.o/tunis.htm>

<sup>42</sup> James L. Gelvin, *The Arab Uprisings: What Everyone Needs to Know* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 27.

<sup>43</sup> David D. Kirkpatrick, "Protests Spread to Tunisia's Capital, and a Curfew is Decreed," *New York Times*, 12 January 2011, [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/13/world/africa/13tunisia.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/13/world/africa/13tunisia.html?_r=1)

<sup>44</sup> Al Jazeera, "Army of Streets Amid Tunisia Unrest," 15 January 2011, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2011/01/2011115135844457245.html>

<sup>45</sup> IBN Live, "Anti-Govt Protests Intensify in Tunisia," 25 January 2011, <http://ibnlive.in.com/news/antigovt-protests-intensify-in-tunisia/141431-2.html>

<sup>46</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, United States Department of State, "Tunisia," in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011*, [http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?dynamic\\_load\\_id=186451](http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?dynamic_load_id=186451)

<sup>47</sup> Associated Press, "US orders some diplomats out of Sudan, Tunisia; warns Americans against travel there," *Fox News*, 17 September 2012, <http://www.foxnews.com/travel/2012/09/17/us-orders-some-diplomats-out-sudan-tunisia-warns-americans-against-travel-there/>

<sup>48</sup> BBC News Africa, "Tunis Declares Curfew After 'Islamist' Rioting," 12 June 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-18416328>

<sup>49</sup> Bouazza Ben Bouazza, "Tunisia: 1 Dead, 62 Injured in Riots by Islamists," Associated Press, 13 June 2012, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/tunisia-1-dead-62-injured-riots-islamists>

<sup>50</sup> Mounir Souissi, "Tunisia Seeks to Quell Religious Tension After Unrest," AFP, 13 June 2012, <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5iWA3YRFouamhLccJVPEsRihrDsCw?docId=CNG.a64e1a6de1ee976ff962261620c8bc6.471>

<sup>51</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Sfax," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/516005/Sfax>

Presently, Sfax is southern Tunisia's business and transportation hub, supporting the region's farming, fishing, and mining, while future hopes are pinned on offshore oil and gas development.<sup>52</sup>

Sfax was bombarded by the French in 1881, and bombed by the Allies in World War II.<sup>53, 54</sup> Its large working class has engaged in periodic labor protests, strikes, and riots since the 1920s.<sup>55, 56</sup> Sfax's large prison has held a number of high-profile dissidents over the years, including current prime minister Hamadi Jebali.<sup>57, 58, 59</sup> In December 2010, the rapper El Général from Sfax was arrested for lyrics that challenged "Mr. President." The music soon became a soundtrack of the Tunisian Revolution.<sup>60, 61, 62</sup> Sfax workers called a general strike in January 2011, and many businesses suffered from the revolt.<sup>63, 64</sup> In the aftermath of the revolution, work strikes and political protests continue to occur.<sup>65, 66</sup>

### *Sousse*

Sousse is in the Sahel coastal strip on the Gulf of Hammamet, 100 km (62 mi) south of Tunis. The original Phoenician settlement was Hannibal's base in the Second Punic War, and later Pompey's headquarters in his battle against Julius Caesar.<sup>67, 68</sup> Third century Christians left

<sup>52</sup> Nicola Pratt, "Sfax," in *Cities of the Middle East and North Africa: A Historical Encyclopedia*, eds. Michael Dumper and Bruce E. Stanley (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2007), 332–334.

<sup>53</sup> *Grey River Argus*, PapersPast, National Library of New Zealand, "The Bombardment of Sfax," 7 September 1881, <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&d=GRA18810907.2.7>

<sup>54</sup> World Port Source, "Port of Sfax," 2012, [http://www.worldportsource.com/ports/TUN\\_Port\\_of\\_Sfax\\_2156.php](http://www.worldportsource.com/ports/TUN_Port_of_Sfax_2156.php)

<sup>55</sup> Kenneth J. Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 85, 98, 112.

<sup>56</sup> Nicola Pratt, "Sfax," in *Cities of the Middle East and North Africa: a Historical Encyclopedia*, eds. Michael Dumper and Bruce E. Stanley (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2007), 333.

<sup>57</sup> Matthew S. Gordon, "Encyclopedia of the Modern Middle East and North Africa: Sfax," Encyclopedia.com, 2004, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3424602422.html>

<sup>58</sup> Eric Goldstein, "Tunisia: Long-Term Solitary Confinement of Political Prisoners (Report 16:03(E))", Human Rights Watch, 6 July 2004, 17–19, 22, <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/tunisia0704.pdf>

<sup>59</sup> Joel Campagna, "Tunisia Report: The Smiling Oppressor," Committee to Protect Journalists, 23 September 2008, <http://cpj.org/reports/2008/09/tunisia-oppression.php>

<sup>60</sup> "El General, the Voice of Tunisia, English Subtitles," YouTube video, 4:18, a film posted by Canale di kapdkjumb, 10 January 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IeGIJ7OouR0>

<sup>61</sup> Vivienne Walt, "El General and the Rap Anthem of the Mideast Revolution," *Time*, 15 February 2011, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2049456,00.html>

<sup>62</sup> Jean-Pierre Filiu, *The Arab Revolution: Ten Lessons from the Democratic Uprising* (New York: Oxford University Press, 23 November 2011), 37.

<sup>63</sup> David D. Kirkpatrick, "Protests Spread to Tunisia's Capital, and a Curfew Is Decreed," *New York Times*, 12 January 2011, [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/13/world/africa/13tunisia.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/13/world/africa/13tunisia.html?_r=1)

<sup>64</sup> Ahmed Medien, "Unrest Hurting Sfax Economy," TunisiaLive, 7 September 2011, <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2011/09/07/unrest-hurting-sfax-economy/>

<sup>65</sup> Ahmad Ellali, "Strike in Sfax Train Station Brings Eid Traffic to a Standstill," TunisiaLive, 4 November 2011, <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2011/11/04/strike-in-sfax-train-station-brings-eid-traffic-to-a-standstill/>

<sup>66</sup> Adam Le Nevez, "Violence in Tunis Leads to Protests in Regional Cities," TunisiaLive, 10 April 2012, <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2012/04/10/violence-in-tunis-leads-to-protests-in-regional-cities/>

<sup>67</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Sousse," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/575523/Sousse>

<sup>68</sup> Donna Wheeler, Paul Clammer, and Emilie Filou, "Sousse," in *Tunisia*, 5th ed. (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet, 2010), 183.

behind several kilometers of underground catacombs, filled with 15,000 graves.<sup>69</sup> The city later became the port for the holy city of Kairouan, and Sousse's Islamic medina is now a UNESCO World Heritage site.<sup>70</sup> Sousse's *ribat* (fortified monastery) is an outstanding example of medieval Mediterranean military architecture.<sup>71</sup> World War II damage led to post-war reconstruction favoring tourism, and the city is now a popular holiday resort with miles of sandy beaches and a marina.<sup>72</sup>



©Michel Guilly/ flickr.com  
Sousse Medina

Known among Tunisians for its fine textiles, products from Sousse also include olives, sardines, and auto parts. Sousse is connected by rail and road to Tunis, Sfax, Gafsa, and Gabès.<sup>73</sup>

Sousse's tourism economy has suffered in the wake of the 2011 revolution.<sup>74</sup> Recent protests in the area have focused on religious issues, such as the right of women to wear *niqab*, a full face veil.<sup>75</sup> Disagreements about artistic freedom and respect for Islam preceded violence in June 2012, when a group tried to attack a Sousse art center, and a university student later died of wounds to the head.<sup>76</sup>

### *Kairouan*

Kairouan is located on a rocky inland plateau 60 km (36 mi) west of Sousse and 130 km (80 mi) south of Tunis. Tunisians consider Kairouan a holy site in Islam and worthy of pilgrimage. One of the Prophet Muhammad's companions, Sidi Sahab, is buried here.<sup>77</sup> Popular legend says that when the city was founded, a well appeared bringing *zem-zem* water from the sacred spring beneath the Grand Mosque in Mecca to the settlement of Kairouan.<sup>78</sup> The city's entire medina became a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1988.<sup>79</sup> Inside the medina, the Grand Mosque of Uqba, originally built in the seventh century, has a minaret 35 m (115 ft) tall. The new Tunisian Islamist organization Ansar al-Sharia uses the mosque as a media symbol, and held its second

<sup>69</sup> Ahmed Jaouadi, "Unearthing the Catacombs of Sousse," *TunisiaLive*, 7 April 2012, <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2012/04/07/unearthing-the-catacombs-of-sousse/>

<sup>70</sup> UNESCO World Heritage Centre, "Medina of Sousse," 2012, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/498>

<sup>71</sup> Ahmed Jaouadi, "Our Guide to Tunisia's UNESCO World Heritage Sites," *TunisiaLive*, 30 May 2012, <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2012/05/30/our-guide-to-tunisia-unesco-world-heritage-sites/>

<sup>72</sup> Donna Wheeler, Paul Clammer, and Emilie Filou, "Around Sousse," in *Tunisia*, 5th ed. (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet, 2010), 190.

<sup>73</sup> Tore Kjeilen, "Tunisia: Cities and Towns: Sousse," *LookLex Encyclopædia*, n.d., <http://looklex.com/e.o/sousse.htm>

<sup>74</sup> Seth Sherwood, "Tunisia after the Revolution," *New York Times*, 5 April 2012,

<http://travel.nytimes.com/2012/04/08/travel/tunisia-after-the-revolution.html?pagewanted=all>

<sup>75</sup> Tarek Amara, "Tunisia Islamists Storm University Over Veil Ban," *Reuters*, 8 October 2011,

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/10/08/us-tunisia-protest-veil-idUSTRE7971ML20111008>

<sup>76</sup> Tarek Amara and Lin Noueihed, "Tunisian Salafi Islamists Riot Over 'Insulting' Art," *Reuters*, 13 June 2012,

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/06/13/us-tunisia-salafis-clash-idUSBRE85B0XW20120613>

<sup>77</sup> "Kairouan 1920s," YouTube video, 6:06, a film by Rene Moreau, posted by Travel Film Archive, 7 May 2008,

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8F3F9aEnJS8&feature=plcp>

<sup>78</sup> Donna Wheeler, Paul Clammer, and Emilie Filou, "Gabes, Matmata and the Ksour," in *Tunisia*, 5th ed. (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2010), 195.

<sup>79</sup> UNESCO World Heritage Centre, "Kairouan," 2012, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/499>



annual meeting in Kairouan in May 2012.<sup>80, 81, 82</sup> The distinctive style and texture of carpets woven in the looms of Kairouan make it an important center of oriental carpet manufacture.

### *Bizerte*

Bizerte is the largest city on Tunisia's northern coast. Phoenicians, Arabs, Spaniards, and pirates occupied the site before the French made it a naval port, connecting Lake Bizerte to the Mediterranean Sea via canal. Bizerte's strategic position near the Straits of Sicily made it a coveted prize during World War II.<sup>83</sup> The French military stayed on after granting independence to Tunisia in 1956 and, in 1961, more than 1,000 Tunisians died in anti-French protests that broke out at the base. The French finally departed Bizerte in 1963.<sup>84</sup> Bizerte is now a free-trade zone, a regional market center, and a beach resort. Oil refining dominates local industry, followed by phosphate and iron ore processing.<sup>85</sup>

### **Environmental Concerns**

The UN Development Programme named water security, food security, and climate change as the main environmental challenges for development in the Arab world.<sup>86</sup> The Tunisian government's priorities have been to preserve arable land, and to promote the conservation, desalination, and recycling of water. Responses have been effective in the reforestation projects in the highlands of the north, in soil and water conservation in the central plains, and in dune fixation in the south. Disposal of residential and industrial waste is a growing problem that contributes to the pollution of drinking water, beaches, and marine environments.<sup>87 88, 89</sup> Tunisia participates in an array of organizations focused on the Mediterranean Sea, although no



©John Roberts/ flickr.com  
Desert dunes

<sup>80</sup> Jeffrey R. Halverson, "Extremism and Contested Tunisian Identity in Kairouan," *COMOPS Journal*, 12 October 2011, <http://comops.org/journal/2011/10/12/extremism-and-contested-tunisian-identity-in-kairouan/>

<sup>81</sup> Houda Trabelsi, "Salafist Congress in Kairouan Draws Thousands," *Magharebia*, 23 May 2012, [http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en\\_GB/features/awi/features/2012/05/23/feature-01](http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2012/05/23/feature-01)

<sup>82</sup> Aaron Y. Zelin, "The Salafi Challenge to Tunisia's Nascent Democracy," *Policywatch 1879*, The Washington Institute, 8 December 2011, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-salafi-challenge-to-tunisias-nascent-democracy>

<sup>83</sup> Historical Division, War Department, "To Bizerte with the II Corps, 23 April–13 May 1943," in *American Forces in Action series*, 1943 (republished by Center of Military History, United States Army, 1990), <http://www.history.army.mil/books/wwii/bizerte/bizerte-fm.htm>

<sup>84</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Bizerte," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/67346/Bizerte>

<sup>85</sup> Tore Kjeilen, "Tunisia: Cities and Towns: Bizerte," *LookLex Encyclopædia*, n.d., <http://looklex.com/e.o/bizerte.htm>

<sup>86</sup> United Nations Development Programme, "Arab Development Challenges Report 2011," 2011, 53, [http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/HDR/UNDP-ADCR\\_En-2012.pdf](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/HDR/UNDP-ADCR_En-2012.pdf)

<sup>87</sup> Division of Early Warning and Assessment, UNEP, "Tunisia," in *Africa: Atlas of Our Changing Environment* (Nairobi, Kenya: Division of Early Warning and Assessment, UNEP, 2008) 326–327, <http://www.unep.org/dewa/africa/AfricaAtlas/PDF/en/Chapter3c.pdf>

<sup>88</sup> UNEP Regional Office for Africa, "Tunisia," November 2008, <http://gridnairobi.unep.org/chm/roa/Country%20Profiles/Tunisia.doc>

<sup>89</sup> Encyclopedia of Earth, "Tunisia," 12 June 2012, <http://www.eoearth.org/article/Tunisia>

internationally recognized Marine Protected Areas had been established in Tunisian coastal waters as of 2008.<sup>90</sup>

### Natural Hazards

Wind becomes hazardous in Tunisia when the Saharan sirocco blows from the south.<sup>91, 92</sup> These summer winds (called *chili* in Tunisia, *chom* or *arifi* in North Africa) are hot, dry, and full of dust and fine sand that can damage plants, equipment, and lungs.<sup>93</sup> Water becomes hazardous in rainy season floods, particularly in the north.<sup>94</sup> Lack of rain leading to drought is an even greater hazard. Seasonal summertime water shortages are common in central and southern Tunisia.<sup>95</sup> Extended droughts have taken a major toll on the national economy in recent decades, reducing both agricultural production and residential access to running water, particularly in rural areas.<sup>96</sup> Some scientific models predict this drying trend to continue in Tunisia for decades to come.<sup>97, 98</sup>



©John Roberts/ flickr.com  
Sand dunes

<sup>90</sup> IUCN, WWF, and MedPAN, “Status of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean Sea,” (Gland, Switzerland : IUCN and France: WWF, 2008), 63, 97, <http://www.medpan.org/upload/1120.pdf>

<sup>91</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Tunisia: Climate,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/609229/Tunisia/46599/Soils#toc46600>

<sup>92</sup> Donna Wheeler, Paul Clammer, and Emilie Filou, “The Sahara,” in *Tunisia*, 5th ed. (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet, 2010), 238.

<sup>93</sup> Elmer R. Reiter, “Handbook for Forecasters in the Mediterranean, Part 1 (ENVPREDRSCHFAC Technical Paper 5-75),” (Monterey, CA: Environmental Prediction Research Facility, Naval Postgraduate School, November 1975), I–11, I–18,

[http://www.nrlmry.navy.mil/pubs/forecaster\\_handbooks/Med\\_1/Handbook%20for%20Forecasters%20in%20the%20Mediterranean%20Pt1.1.pdf](http://www.nrlmry.navy.mil/pubs/forecaster_handbooks/Med_1/Handbook%20for%20Forecasters%20in%20the%20Mediterranean%20Pt1.1.pdf)

<sup>94</sup> Kouichi Shirayanagi, “Several Reported Dead as Floods Ravage Northwest Tunisia,” *TunisiaLive*, 23 February 2012, <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2012/02/23/several-reported-dead-as-floods-ravage-northwest-tunisia/>

<sup>95</sup> Defense Pest Management Information Analysis Center, Armed Forces Pest Management Board, “Regional Disease Vector Ecology Profile, North Africa,” (Washington, DC: Walter Reed Army Medical Center, May 2000), 36, [http://www.afpmb.org/sites/default/files/pubs/dveps/nort\\_afr.pdf](http://www.afpmb.org/sites/default/files/pubs/dveps/nort_afr.pdf)

<sup>96</sup> Jane’s, “Natural Resources, Tunisia,” in *Sentinel Security Assessment – North Africa*, 30 January 2012, [https://www.intelink.gov/Reference/janes/display.html?type=S&nav=C\\_12&sn=nafrsu&ed=nafrsu29&docid=0058a0d7733031a6dba5e6ad8b82e2c5](https://www.intelink.gov/Reference/janes/display.html?type=S&nav=C_12&sn=nafrsu&ed=nafrsu29&docid=0058a0d7733031a6dba5e6ad8b82e2c5)

<sup>97</sup> Mike Hulme et al., “Africa Climate Change: 1900–2100,” *Climate Research* 17:145–168 (15 August 2001), 161, <http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic871786.files/c017p145.pdf>

<sup>98</sup> United Nations Development Programme, “Arab Development Challenges Report 2011,” 2011, [http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/HDR/UNDP-ADCR\\_En-2012.pdf](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/HDR/UNDP-ADCR_En-2012.pdf)

## Chapter 1 Assessment

1. Tunisia is located in an equatorial climate zone.  
**False**  
Tunisia is in a warm temperate zone with three climatic regions.
2. The capital city of Tunis is newly built since independence.  
**False**  
Tunis has a 3,000 year history, including Islamic expansion, Ottoman rule, and French colonialism.
3. Sfax is the most important transportation hub for phosphates in Tunisia's interior.  
**False**  
Sfax is a major port for fishing and trade, including the export of phosphates.
4. In 1961, a thousand Tunisians were killed protesting the presence of the Italian army.  
**False**  
French naval presence on Tunisian soil inspired the 1961 protest at the port of Bizerte.
5. Tunisians face the environmental challenges of decreasing farmlands and water supplies.  
**True**  
The government has been working to preserve arable land and promote water conservation.



## CHAPTER 2: HISTORY

### Introduction

Tunisia lies on historic paths of migration, invasion, and trade. Phoenician traders from the coast of Lebanon were the first migrants to encounter the indigenous peoples of Tunisia's North African coast. Romans later challenged Phoenician dominance in the region and won, ruling Tunisia for several centuries and introducing Christianity. Vandals from the north and Byzantines from the east across the Mediterranean Sea followed Roman rule. Arabs arrived during the seventh century and eventually became culturally dominant through their Islamic religion and Arabic language. In 1574, Muslim Turks assimilated Tunisia into the Ottoman Empire. The French invaded in 1881, and Tunisia became a protectorate of France for 70 years.



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Ancient Roman city of Dougga

In 1956, Habib Bourguiba, a secular nationalist, negotiated independence for Tunisia. During his 30 years as president, he made social and economic development his priorities, but tolerated little opposition. By 1987, Bourguiba's failing health and senility led his prime minister, Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali, to take power. At first, Ben Ali implemented many democratic measures, but his rule became increasingly repressive. By 2010, his economic development program had stalled. Ultimately, rising food prices and unemployment rates, corruption, and political repression led to a popular revolt that deposed Ben Ali on 14 January 2011. Interim leaders oversaw the election of a new legislative assembly in October 2011. At the time of this writing, the assembly is preparing a new constitution that will define procedures for future elections, currently scheduled for March 2013.

### Prehistory (Early Stone Age to 1100 B.C.E.)

When Paleolithic (Early Stone Age) humans appeared in Tunisia 200,000 years ago, much of the land was covered in forests and savanna grasses. After the last Ice Age around 6000 B.C.E., climate change began to dry up North Africa, and the Sahara Desert began to claim the land. People came from the east to central Tunisia, where they left behind remains of their Capsian culture such as pottery, jewelry, and carved stone and bone. Capsians (named after the city of Gafsa) were hunters who became herders and later, village farmers. Their burial practices included anointing the body with red ochre and sometimes, decapitation and dismemberment.<sup>99, 100, 101</sup>



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Berber village of Chenini

Toward the end of the Neolithic Period (New Stone Age) around 2500 B.C.E., there was a broad migration of peoples from the northeastern shores of the Mediterranean.<sup>102, 103, 104</sup> These peoples,

<sup>99</sup> Donna Wheeler, Paul Clammer, and Emilie Filou, *Tunisia*, 5th ed. (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2010), 26.

<sup>100</sup> Caroline M. Haverkort and David Lubell, "Cutmarks on Capsian Human Remains: Implications for Maghreb Holocene Social Organization and Palaeoeconomy," *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology* 9 (1999): 147–169.

<sup>101</sup> Barnaby Rogerson, *A Traveller's History of North Africa* (Brooklyn, NY and Northampton, MA: Interlink Books, 1998), 3.

later called Berbers, spread throughout North Africa. Some settled in the fertile mountain valleys of the north. Others adapted the horse (introduced to North Africa in approximately 1200 B.C.E.) and moved south into the Sahara.<sup>105</sup> The name “Berber” may derive from Greek *barbaroi*, Latin *barbari*, or Arabic *barbar*, derogatory terms for linguistic and cultural outsiders. Berber peoples call themselves Imazighen (“free men” or “noble ones”).<sup>106, 107, 108</sup>

### Phoenician Period (1100 B.C.E.–146 B.C.E)

The Phoenicians were the first invading migrant settlers of Tunisia.<sup>109</sup> Sea traders and colonizers, they hailed from maritime city-states along the coast of modern Israel, Lebanon, and Syria.<sup>110</sup> The seafaring merchants developed a number of settlements in North Africa as stepping stones to their port in Spain.<sup>111</sup> Over time, a chain of trading posts linked Phoenicia with the silver and gold mines in Numidia (Algeria) and southern Spain, and with Phoenician colonies on the islands of Corsica and Sardinia.<sup>112</sup> Phoenicians built most of their settlements in Tunisia, beginning with Utica, 35 km (22 mi) northwest of modern Tunis.<sup>113</sup> Their greatest settlement was Carthage, founded by Princess Elissa Dido from Tyre, Lebanon. Kart Hadasht, as the city was known then, was built near the settlement of Utica in 814 B.C.E. It became the center of Phoenicia’s Tunisian empire, which expanded to include other Carthaginian cities at the sites of present-day Sousse, Bizerte, Tabarka, Monastir, and Sfax.<sup>114, 115</sup>

Carthage was the foremost power in North Africa for the next 500 years. Yet by 600 B.C.E., the fledgling Roman Republic was expanding north to the Alps and south through Italy. Rome soon challenged Carthage for its European lands and Mediterranean trade in the Punic Wars (Punic is

<sup>102</sup> Robert Rinehart, “Chapter 1: Historical Setting,” in *Tunisia: A Country Study*, 3rd ed., ed. Harold D. Nelson (Washington, DC: American University, 1988), 4.

<sup>103</sup> Jamie Stokes, ed., “Berbers (Amazigh),” in *Encyclopedia of the Peoples of Africa and the Middle East*, (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2009), 113.

<sup>104</sup> Hsain Ilahiane, “Introduction,” in *Historical Dictionary of the Berbers (Imazighen)* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006), xxxi.

<sup>105</sup> Barnaby Rogerson, “The Fatimid and Ommayad,” in *A Traveller’s History of North Africa* (Brooklyn, NY and Northampton, MA: Interlink Books, 1998), 8.

<sup>106</sup> Jamie Stokes, ed., “Berbers (Amazigh),” in *Encyclopedia of the Peoples of Africa and the Middle East* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2009), 112.

<sup>107</sup> Hsain Ilahiane, “Introduction,” in *Historical Dictionary of the Berbers (Imazighen)* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006), xxx–xxxii.

<sup>108</sup> Barnaby Rogerson, “The Fatimid and Ommayad,” in *A Traveller’s History of North Africa* (Brooklyn, NY and Northampton, MA: Interlink Books, 1998), 8.

<sup>109</sup> Jamie Stokes, ed., “Phoenicians,” in *Encyclopedia of the Peoples of Africa and the Middle East* (New York: Facts on File [Infobase Publishing], 2009), 569.

<sup>110</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Phoenicia,” 2012,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/457123/Phoenicia>

<sup>111</sup> Gerald Zarr, “Chapter 1: Land and People,” in *Tunisia—Culture Smart! The Essential Guide to Customs & Culture* (London: Kuperard, 2009), 17–18.

<sup>112</sup> Robert Rinehart, “Chapter 1: Historical Setting,” in *Tunisia: A Country Study*, 3rd ed., ed. Harold D. Nelson (Washington, DC: American University, 1988), 5.

<sup>113</sup> Donna Wheeler, Paul Clammer, and Emilie Filou, *Tunisia*, 5th ed. (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2010), 26.

<sup>114</sup> Donna Wheeler, Paul Clammer, and Emilie Filou, *Tunisia*, 5th ed. (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2010), 26–28.

<sup>115</sup> Gerald Zarr, “Chapter 1: Land and People,” in *Tunisia—Culture Smart! The Essential Guide to Customs & Culture* (London: Kuperard, 2009), 18.

Latin for Phoenician).<sup>116</sup> During the Second Punic War (218–201 B.C.E.), Hannibal fought Rome with elephants that came from the mountain ranges of North Africa.<sup>117</sup> At the end of the Third Punic War (149–146 B.C.E.), the Romans burned the settlements, destroyed the farms, and enslaved the people of Carthage.<sup>118</sup>

### Roman Era (146 B.C.E.–439 C.E.)

For the next 500 years North Africans enjoyed Pax Romana, the Peace of Rome. Romans called their new province “Ifriqiya,” a name that later came to include the entire continent.<sup>119, 120</sup>

Today, the ruins of Roman towns in Tunisia—Bulla Regia, Thuburo Majus, Dougga, Sbeitla, El Jem—attest to the advanced Roman urban planning.<sup>121</sup> Carthage was rebuilt and became the central city of the western Roman Empire, second only to Rome itself.<sup>122</sup> North Africa’s earliest Christian communities formed in Carthage in the early centuries C.E.<sup>123</sup> The philosopher and church father, St. Augustine (354–430 C.E.), settled into church work in the western province of Numidia. He led the Roman Catholic Church against the Donatists, a schismatic Christian sect that remained important in North Africa until the arrival of Islam.<sup>124, 125, 126</sup>



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Roman ruins

Rome’s secular power was challenged. In 429, King Gaiseric led the Vandals from northern Europe to North Africa, and in 439 he occupied Carthage and subjugated Roman colonies. Using Carthage as their base, the Vandals invaded Spain, then Rome. After the death of Gaiseric in 477, the influence of the Vandals quickly dissipated.<sup>127</sup> The Byzantine Emperor Justinian (527–

<sup>116</sup> Donna Wheeler, Paul Clammer, and Emilie Filou, *Tunisia*, 5th ed. (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2010), 27.

<sup>117</sup> Andreas Kluth, *Hannibal and Me: What History’s Greatest Military Strategist Can Teach Us About Success and Failure* (New York: Riverhead Books, the Penguin Group, 2011), 71.

<sup>118</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Third Punic War,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/483533/Third-Punic-War>

<sup>119</sup> Henry Louis Gates, *The Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Reader* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2012).

<sup>120</sup> Gerald Zarr, “Chapter 1: Land and People,” in *Tunisia—Culture Smart! The Essential Guide to Customs & Culture* (London: Kuperard, 2009), 22.

<sup>121</sup> Donna Wheeler, Paul Clammer, and Emilie Filou, *Tunisia*, 5th ed. (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2010), 150–152, 157–159, 160–164, 176–179, 203–204.

<sup>122</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Africa,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/8126/Africa>

<sup>123</sup> John Iliffe, “Christianity and Islam,” in *Africans: The History of a Continent*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 38.

<sup>124</sup> Robert Rinehart, “Chapter 1: Historical Setting,” in *Tunisia: A Country Study*, 3rd ed., ed. Harold D. Nelson (Washington, DC: American University, 1988), 10–11.

<sup>125</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Saint Augustine,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/42902/Saint-Augustine>

<sup>126</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Donatist,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/169009/Donatist>

<sup>127</sup> Barnaby Rogerson, “The Fatimid and Ommayad,” in *A Traveller’s History of North Africa* (Brooklyn, NY and Northampton, MA: Interlink Books, 1998), 99, 105.

565) sent General Flavius Belisarius (505–565) to reclaim Mediterranean North Africa for the empire. Byzantine rule gave way to Arabs in the next century.<sup>128, 129, 130</sup>

## Islamic Rule

### *Umayyad and Abbasid Dynasties*

Arab conquerors began to expand west to Africa as early as 647. In 670, Kairouan was founded by Uqba ibn Nafi, a companion of Muhammad. Sidi Uqba began work on Kairouan's original Grand Mosque, and established the city as a base for further western campaigns of Arab Muslims.<sup>131, 132</sup> For nearly a thousand years, a succession of Islamic caliphates (caliph means leader) and dynasties claimed Tunisian territories, many from distant places—Umayyad (Damascus), Abbasid (Baghdad), Aghlabid, Fatimid (Cairo), Zirid, Almohad (Marrakech), and Hafsid. Religious and ethnic differences repeatedly led each new group to challenge, defeat, and succeed the rival group in power.



©David Weekly/flickr.com  
Kairouan Grand Mosque

The Umayyads believed (as Sunni Islam now dictates) that an orthodox Muslim should follow both the Quran and the *sunna*, or traditions of the Prophet. The Umayyads conquered Carthage, and founded Tunis as a naval base from which to take the last remaining Byzantine Mediterranean ports.<sup>133</sup> They were soon challenged by Kharijite Berbers. The North African Kharijite sect followed a version of Islam that did not require leaders to be Arabs.<sup>134</sup> For decades, Berbers (and Byzantines) resisted the Arab Umayyad conquest of North Africa. In 702, the Berber princess al-Kahina may have made her last stand against Arab armies in the coliseum of the Tunisian city of El Jem, and Kharijites briefly held Kairouan in the 750s.<sup>135, 136</sup>

In 750, the Umayyad Caliphate was replaced by the new and more tolerant Sunni doctrine of the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad.<sup>137</sup> In 800, Abbasids appointed the Berber Emir Ibrahim Al-

<sup>128</sup> Gerald Zarr, "Chapter 1: Land and People," in *Tunisia—Culture Smart! The Essential Guide to Customs & Culture* (London: Kuperard, 2009), 26–29.

<sup>129</sup> Donna Wheeler, Paul Clammer, and Emilie Filou, *Tunisia*, 5th ed. (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet, 2010), 29–30.

<sup>130</sup> Robert Rinehart, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting," in *Tunisia: A Country Study*, 3rd ed., ed. Harold D. Nelson (Washington, DC: American University, 1988), 11.

<sup>131</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Kairouan," 2012,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/485671/Kairouan>

<sup>132</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "North Africa: From the Arab Conquest to 1830," 2012,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/418538/North-Africa#toc46482>

<sup>133</sup> Barnaby Rogerson, "The Fatimid and Ommayad," in *A Traveller's History of North Africa* (Brooklyn, NY and Northampton, MA: Interlink Books, 1998), 123–124.

<sup>134</sup> Robert Rinehart, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting," in *Tunisia: A Country Study*, 3rd ed., ed. Harold D. Nelson (Washington, DC: American University, 1988), 13–14.

<sup>135</sup> Barnaby Rogerson, "The Fatimid and Ommayad," in *A Traveller's History of North Africa* (Brooklyn, NY and Northampton, MA: Interlink Books, 1998), 123–124.

<sup>136</sup> Donna Wheeler, Paul Clammer, and Emilie Filou, *Tunisia*, 5th ed. (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2010), 30.

<sup>137</sup> Robert Rinehart, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting," in *Tunisia: A Country Study*, 3rd ed., ed. Harold D. Nelson (Washington, DC: American University, 1988), 14.



Aghlab to govern Ifriqiya (the name of current Tunisia during this early Islamic period).<sup>138</sup> His followers and descendants, the Aghlabids, ruled during a period that has come to be called the Golden Age for its art, architecture, and literature, as well as its religious and cultural tolerance for affluent communities of Christians and Jews in Tunis and Kairouan.<sup>139, 140</sup> Yet in the 10th century, Fatimid missionaries of the Shi'a sect of Islam arrived from Egypt, and encouraged local Berbers to challenge the Aghlabids.<sup>141, 142</sup>

### *Successor Dynasties*

The Fatimid Dynasty, based in Cairo, derived its name from Fatima, daughter of the Prophet Muhammad and wife of Ali, a companion and distant relative of Muhammad. The Fatimids (and all Shi'a Muslims) venerated Ali, a successor by birthright to the Islamic caliphate. (Such reverence for the saintliness of an individual foreshadowed the popularity of marabouts, a Muslim believed to have supernatural powers, in Tunisia in the following centuries).<sup>143</sup> Sunni Muslims, on the other hand, had followed Ali's rival as the more capable caliph, and came to regard the veneration of any person as unorthodox and heretical.<sup>144, 145</sup>



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Wall built in the Hafsid era

After the Fatimids placed the governance of Tunisia into the hands of the Berber Zirids, anti-Shi'ite riots led the Zirids to return to Sunni practices. In response, the Fatimids sent the Beni Hilal, the "children of the Moon," west across North Africa. The Hilalians were Arab Bedouin nomads whose migration to the Egyptian desert had become problematic for the Fatimids.<sup>146</sup> In 1057, the Hilalians overran Kairouan. Their presence from Libya to Morocco eventually replaced Berber farming with Bedouin herding, and produced a lasting cultural Arabization.<sup>147</sup>

In the 12th century, Normans in Sicily briefly took commercial control of Tunis and other ports.<sup>148</sup> Berber Almohads from Morocco soon invaded Tunisian territories. The Almohads

<sup>138</sup> Barnaby Rogerson, "The Fatimid and Ommayad," in *A Traveller's History of North Africa* (Brooklyn, NY and Northampton, MA: Interlink Books, 1998), 140.

<sup>139</sup> Robert Rinehart, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting," in *Tunisia: A Country Study*, 3rd ed., ed. Harold D. Nelson (Washington, DC: American University, 1988), 14-17.

<sup>140</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Aghlabid Dynasty," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/9138/Aghlabid-dynasty>

<sup>141</sup> Barnaby Rogerson, "The Fatimid and Ommayad," in *A Traveller's History of North Africa* (Brooklyn, NY and Northampton, MA: Interlink Books, 1998), 147-148.

<sup>142</sup> Robert Rinehart, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting," in *Tunisia: A Country Study*, 3rd ed., ed. Harold D. Nelson (Washington, DC: American University, 1988), 18.

<sup>143</sup> Barnaby Rogerson, "The Fatimid and Ommayad," in *A Traveller's History of North Africa* (Brooklyn, NY and Northampton, MA: Interlink Books, 1998), 192.

<sup>144</sup> Robert Rinehart, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting," in *Tunisia: A Country Study*, 3rd ed., ed. Harold D. Nelson (Washington, DC: American University, 1988), 18.

<sup>145</sup> Phyllis G. Jestice, "Veneration of Holy People," in *Holy People of the World: A Cross-Cultural Encyclopedia*, vol. 3, ed. Phyllis G. Jestice (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2004), 888.

<sup>146</sup> Barnaby Rogerson, "The Fatimid and Ommayad," in *A Traveller's History of North Africa* (Brooklyn, NY and Northampton, MA: Interlink Books, 1998), 154-156.

<sup>147</sup> Robert Rinehart, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting," in *Tunisia: A Country Study*, 3rd ed., ed. Harold D. Nelson (Washington, DC: American University, 1988), 19.

<sup>148</sup> Barnaby Rogerson, "The Fatimid and Ommayad," in *A Traveller's History of North Africa* (Brooklyn, NY and Northampton, MA: Interlink Books, 1998), 203-205.

appointed an autonomous viceroy of Ifriqiya, and his Hafsids governed for more than 300 years.<sup>149</sup> Abu Zakariyya al-Hafs made Tunis the capital of the Hafsids. The Zeitouna (“olive tree”) Mosque and madrasa of Tunis became an important center of Maghrebi Islamic learning; Tunis-born Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) became a leading intellectual and historian of the age.<sup>150</sup> Tunis absorbed many of the Jews and Muslims who had been expelled during a Catholic conquest of Spain.<sup>151</sup>

### Ottoman Rule

At the beginning of the 16th century, the Spanish were competing with the Turkish Ottoman Empire for control of the Mediterranean. Pirates frequented the Barbary Coast (as the shores of North Africa became known). The famed Khair al-Din, or Barbarossa (“Red Beard”), operated from the island of Jerba. As *beylerbey* (“commander-in-chief”) of Algiers, he later took Tunis for the Ottomans, defeating the Hafsids allied with Catholic Spain.<sup>152</sup> By 1587, the Turks established governates



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Mosque in Jerba

across the Maghreb (modern day Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Morocco, and Mauritania), in which local authorities (*beys*) became increasingly powerful. Armies of janissaries maintained order and collected taxes, while navies of pirates collected ransoms and slaves. Trade eventually replaced piracy as Tunisia’s main source of revenue, although European powers (and the young United States of America) paid protection money to the *bey* of Tunis for immunity from piracy until the early 1800s.<sup>153, 154</sup> The Tunisian beylicate, or the central government, spent much of the 19th century in fear of foreign intervention. Actions toward preventing a wholesale takeover included the abolition of slavery, and the Arabic-speaking world’s first, and short-lived Constitution of 1861.<sup>155</sup>

<sup>149</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Hafsids Dynasty,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9038760/Hafsids-Dynasty>

<sup>150</sup> Barnaby Rogerson, “The Fatimid and Ommayad,” in *A Traveller’s History of North Africa* (Brooklyn, NY and Northampton, MA: Interlink Books, 1998), 198–199.

<sup>151</sup> Rebecca Weiner, “Sephardim,” Jewish Virtual Library, 2012, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/Judaism/Sephardim.html>

<sup>152</sup> Robert Rinehart, “Chapter 1: Historical Setting,” in *Tunisia: A Country Study*, 3rd ed., ed. Harold D. Nelson (Washington, DC: American University, 1988), 21–22.

<sup>153</sup> Robert Rinehart, “Chapter 1: Historical Setting,” in *Tunisia: A Country Study*, 3rd ed., ed. Harold D. Nelson (Washington, DC: American University, 1988), 22–25.

<sup>154</sup> Christopher Hitchens, “Jefferson Versus the Muslim Pirates,” *City Journal* (Spring 2007), [http://www.city-journal.org/html/17\\_2\\_urbanities-thomas\\_jefferson.html](http://www.city-journal.org/html/17_2_urbanities-thomas_jefferson.html)

<sup>155</sup> Robert Rinehart, “Chapter 1: Historical Setting,” in *Tunisia: A Country Study*, 3rd ed., ed. Harold D. Nelson (Washington, DC: American University, 1988), 25–28.

## French Protectorate (1881–1956)

### *French Colonization*

The French seized neighboring Algeria in 1830. During the Berlin Congress of 1878, Britain agreed to French control over Tunisia in return for recognition of British control over Cyprus. In 1881, 40,000 French soldiers and sailors arrived, ostensibly to quell native Khumiri incursions from Tunisia into Algeria.<sup>156</sup> Two years later, the Marsa Convention authorized changes such as the introduction of French legal code (leaving only personal matters to the Islamic shari'a courts) and a military draft.<sup>157, 158</sup>



©US Army Africa/flickr.com  
French military cemetery

The French focused on economic reforms to benefit France, such as regulating finance and banking, industrializing agriculture, and developing transportation infrastructure.<sup>159</sup>

### *Nationalist Resistance*

In the 1900s, a movement of French-educated “Young Tunisians” began to resist French occupation. Their speeches, newspapers, and organized boycotts eventually led to their arrest and expulsion from Tunisia.<sup>160</sup> In 1921 the Destour political party took up the nationalist resistance, followed by the Neo-Destour Party of Habib Bourguiba in 1934. On April 9, 1938, French forces fired on nationalist protesters, resulting in the deaths of over a hundred Tunisians (an event now remembered annually as “Martyrs’ Day”). The French government banned the party, and arrested and deported Bourguiba.<sup>161, 162</sup>

### *Toward Independence*

During World War II and afterwards, Bourguiba continued to push, at home and abroad, for Tunisian independence. Other organizations, including the trade union *Union Générale des Travailleurs Tunisiens* (UGTT) established in 1946, joined the nationalist effort. UGTT leader Farhat Hached was assassinated by extremist French settlers in 1952.<sup>163, 164</sup> Political crises and independence movements in Morocco and Algeria soon motivated France to open negotiations with Bourguiba for a smoother transition in Tunisia. Independence was granted on 20 March

<sup>156</sup> Robert Rinehart, “Chapter 1: Historical Setting,” in *Tunisia: A Country Study*, 3rd ed., ed. Harold D. Nelson (Washington, DC: American University, 1988), 30–31.

<sup>157</sup> Robert Rinehart, “Chapter 1: Historical Setting,” in *Tunisia: A Country Study*, 3rd ed., ed. Harold D. Nelson (Washington, DC: American University, 1988), 31–32, 283.

<sup>158</sup> Rosalind Varghese Brown and Michael Spilling, “Chapter 2: History,” in *Tunisia: Cultures of the World* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Benchmark, 2009), 33–34.

<sup>159</sup> Gerald Zarr, “Chapter 1: Land and People,” in *Tunisia—Culture Smart! The Essential Guide to Customs & Culture* (London: Kuperard, 2009), 43.

<sup>160</sup> Kenneth J. Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 69–72.

<sup>161</sup> Robert Rinehart, “Chapter 1: Historical Setting,” in *Tunisia: A Country Study*, 3rd ed., ed. Harold D. Nelson (Washington, DC: American University, 1988), 43.

<sup>162</sup> Donna Wheeler, Paul Clammer, and Emilie Filou, *Tunisia*, 5th ed. (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet, 2010), 33.

<sup>163</sup> Larry A. Barrie, “Union Generale Des Travailleurs Tunisiens (UGTT),” in *Encyclopedia of the Modern Middle East and North Africa*, 2004, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3424602775.html>

<sup>164</sup> Kenneth J. Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 124.



1956.<sup>165</sup> Five days later, Tunisians elected a majority of Neo-Destour party members to the new legislative assembly, which soon chose Bourguiba as its president.<sup>166</sup>

### President Bourguiba (1957–1987)

On 25 July 1957, the Constituent National Assembly abolished the old Turkish monarchic form of government and declared Tunisia a republic.<sup>167, 168</sup> Bourguiba became the new republic's first president, a post he held for 30 years.<sup>169</sup> He worked to make Tunisia a secular and modern state on a par with western Europe. Although the constitution says Islam is the nation's religion, Bourguiba separated church from state by abolishing the Islamic courts and religious schools, and confiscating land held by religious institutions.<sup>170, 171</sup> He introduced the Personal Status Code (PSC) of 1956 that gave women equal rights under the law, notably in marriage, voting, education and employment.<sup>172, 173</sup> Other reforms were universal primary education and a public health system.<sup>174</sup> The Neo-Destour Party became the Destourian Socialist Party in 1964.<sup>175</sup>



©Patrick Giraud/wikimedia  
Habib Bourguiba mausoleum

By the mid-1970s, a slowing economic and democratic development had created opposition to Bourguiba's government and authoritarian style of rule. (A 1974–1975 constitutional amendment had permitted Bourguiba's election as "President for Life.") Organizations like the old UGTT and the new Islamic Tendency Movement (MTI) became more active.<sup>176, 177</sup> Harsh government reactions to opposition were tracked by the newly formed Tunisian Human Rights League (LTDH), the first such organization in the Arab world. In 1978 and 1984, mass demonstrations against high food prices and unemployment resulted in government crackdowns that killed

<sup>165</sup> Kenneth J. Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 125–129.

<sup>166</sup> Robert Rinehart, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting," in *Tunisia: A Country Study*, 3rd ed., ed. Harold D. Nelson (Washington, DC: American University, 1988), 51.

<sup>167</sup> Robert Rinehart, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting," in *Tunisia: A Country Study*, 3rd ed., ed. Harold D. Nelson (Washington, DC: American University, 1988), 51.

<sup>168</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Tunisia: History," 2012,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/609229/Tunisia>

<sup>169</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Tunisia: History," 2012,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/609229/Tunisia>

<sup>170</sup> Gerald Zarr, "Chapter 1: Land and People," in *Tunisia—Culture Smart! The Essential Guide to Customs & Culture* (London: Kuperard, 2009), 48.

<sup>171</sup> Rosalind Varghese Brown and Michael Spilling, "Chapter 2: History," in *Tunisia: Cultures of the World* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Benchmark, 2009), 37.

<sup>172</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Habib Bourguiba: Presidency," 2012,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/75869/Habib-Bourguiba/278559/Presidency>

<sup>173</sup> Rosalind Varghese Brown and Michael Spilling, "Chapter 2: History," in *Tunisia: Cultures of the World* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Benchmark, 2009), 37.

<sup>174</sup> Gerald Zarr, "Chapter 1: Land and People," in *Tunisia—Culture Smart! The Essential Guide to Customs & Culture* (London: Kuperard, 2009), 47–48.

<sup>175</sup> Kenneth J. Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 147.

<sup>176</sup> David S. Sorenson, *An Introduction to the Modern Middle East: History, Religion, Political Economy, Politics* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, Perseus Books Group, 2008), 374.

<sup>177</sup> Kenneth J. Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 165–166.

scores of people.<sup>178</sup> In 1987, conflict between the government and the MTI led to the arrest, trial, and conviction of many MTI leaders. Government officials led by Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali opposed these death sentences, fearing a popular uprising if the Islamists were to be killed. As Bourguiba continued to demand repressive actions, doctors deemed him unfit to rule, and prime minister Ben Ali took the presidency on 7 November 1987 in a bloodless coup.<sup>179</sup>

### President Ben Ali (1987–2010)

President Ben Ali promised political liberalization and respect for human rights.<sup>180</sup> In 1988, the Destourian Socialist Party became the Democratic Constitutional Rally (RCD).<sup>181</sup> Ben Ali invited opposition and civil society groups to sign a National Pact that acknowledged Tunisia's Arab and Islamic heritage, reaffirmed the Personal Status Code, and promised respect for human rights and personal freedoms.<sup>182, 183</sup> In acknowledgment of governmental regulations separating religion from politics, the MTI removed "Islamist" from its name to become al-Nahda ("Renaissance"). It then sought recognition as a political party.<sup>184, 185</sup>

Ben Ali tried to maintain stability (and power) by controlling political opposition. Al-Nahda was denied legal status—its members ran as independent candidates in elections.<sup>186</sup> When an RCD office in Tunis was firebombed in the 1990s, al-Nahda denied involvement, but hundreds of its members were arrested and later convicted of planning a coup.<sup>187</sup> The Ben Ali regime suppressed freedom of speech, of the press, and of association. The Tunisian embassy in Qatar was closed in protest against an Al-Jazeera broadcast of remarks by veteran Tunisian dissident Moncef Marzouki (who became interim president of Tunisia in 2011).<sup>188, 189</sup> Demonstrations against difficult economic times were difficult to prevent. For example, the UGTT led protests among Gafsa



©Thierry Ehrmann/flickr.com  
Ben Ali portrait

<sup>178</sup> Kenneth J. Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 165–166, 169–170.

<sup>179</sup> Kenneth J. Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 175, 209. David S. Sorenson, *An Introduction to the Modern Middle East: History, Religion, Political Economy, Politics* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, Perseus Books Group, 2008), 372–373.

<sup>180</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Tunisia," 9 March 2012, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5439.htm>

<sup>181</sup> Kenneth J. Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 185.

<sup>182</sup> Kenneth J. Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 187–189.

<sup>183</sup> Andrew Borowiec, *Modern Tunisia: A Democratic Apprenticeship* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1998), 74.

<sup>184</sup> Alexis Arieff, "Political Transition in Tunisia (RS21666)," Congressional Research Service, 18 June 2012, 8, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS21666.pdf>

<sup>185</sup> Andrew Borowiec, *Modern Tunisia: A Democratic Apprenticeship* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1998), 45.

<sup>186</sup> Alexis Arieff, "Political Transition in Tunisia (RS21666)," Congressional Research Service, 18 June 2012, 8, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS21666.pdf>

<sup>187</sup> Kamel Labidi, "Tunisia: Independent but Not Free," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, March 2006, <http://mondediplo.com/2006/03/04tunisia>

<sup>188</sup> Christopher Alexander, *Tunisia: Stability and Reform in the Modern Maghreb* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 64.

<sup>189</sup> BBC News Africa, "Tunisia Profile: Timeline," 14 June 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14107720>

miners in 2008 and 2010. The UGTT then organized antigovernment protests that propelled the ouster of President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali in January 2011.<sup>190</sup>

In 2005, the legislative assembly granted special benefits and legal exemptions to retiring presidents and their family members.<sup>191</sup> Suspicions grew that Ben Ali, his wife, Leila Trabelsi, and their families were “illegally appropriating national assets and skimming wealth from most sectors of the Tunisian economy.”<sup>192</sup>

## Revolution and Recent Events

Political repression, along with rising food prices, corruption, and high unemployment among Tunisia’s educated younger generation, ultimately led to revolt. On 17 December 2010, a fruit vendor in the provincial town of Sidi Bouzid set himself on fire after his cart was confiscated. The self-immolation triggered nationwide protests against the Ben Ali regime. Subsequent events became known in Tunisia as the “Sidi Bouzid Revolt,” and internationally as the “Jasmine Revolution.” On 14 January 2011, Ben Ali was forced to flee the country after a month of escalating street protests. By March, official government sources reported that 78 protesters died and 100 were injured during the demonstrations (other sources have since reported more than 300 deaths).<sup>193, 194</sup> Despite the government’s tight restrictions on internet use, social media appear to have been a primary organizational tool of the protesters.<sup>195, 196</sup>



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Revolution poster

Following the departure of Ben Ali, an interim government—consisting of official opposition members and no one from the Ben Ali regime—conducted the election of a new Constituent Assembly in October 2011. In December the assembly adopted an interim constitution and elected Moncef Marzouki interim president.<sup>197</sup> In 2012, Ben Ali was tried in absentia and sentenced to life in prison for his role in hundreds of civilian deaths. Some of his allies received

<sup>190</sup> Alexis Arieff, “Political Transition in Tunisia (RS21666),” Congressional Research Service, 18 June 2012, 15, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS21666.pdf>

<sup>191</sup> Kamel Labidi, “Tunisia: Independent but Not Free,” *Le Monde Diplomatique*, March 2006, <http://mondediplo.com/2006/03/04tunisia>

<sup>192</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/60277/Zine-al-Abidine-Ben-Ali>

<sup>193</sup> Amnesty International, “Security Forces in Tunisia Must Be Held Accountable for Killing Protestors,” 1 March 2011, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/report/security-forces-tunisia-must-be-held-accountable-killing-protesters-2011-03->

<sup>194</sup> Tarek Amara, “Tunisian Court Sentences Ben Ali, Security Chiefs over Killings,” Reuters, 13 June 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/06/13/us-tunisia-benali-sentence-idUSBRE85C1CZ20120613>

<sup>195</sup> David D. Kirkpatrick, “Amid Rioting, Tunisia Closes Universities,” *New York Times*, 10 January 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/11/world/africa/11tunisia.html?ref=tunisia>

<sup>196</sup> Aidan Lewis, “Tunisia Protests: Cyber War Mirrors Unrest on Streets,” BBC News Africa, 14 January 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12180954>

<sup>197</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Jasmine Revolution,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1753072/Jasmine-Revolution>

lighter sentences, triggering protests.<sup>198, 199</sup> The search continues for national assets hidden in foreign real estate, yachts and planes, and bank accounts.<sup>200</sup>

As of 2012, Tunisians were debating their religious identity. Conservative Islamists (labeled “Salafists” in many media reports), newly freed from government restrictions, are protesting against what they view as the secularism of universities and media. A key figure for Tunisia’s Islamists is Rachid Ghannouchi, the long-time head of the al-Nahda political party who spent years in exile before the Jasmine Revolution. Defenders of cosmopolitan tradition are calling for the government, currently led by moderate Islamists, to curb the violent protests of religious fundamentalists.<sup>201</sup> Government leaders have suggested that provocateurs, criminals, and ousted members of the former regime are often behind the escalation to violence of those protests that disrupt daily life, requiring the action of law enforcement officials and curfews.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Tarek Amara, “Tunisian Court Sentences Ben Ali, Security Chiefs over Killings,” Reuters, 13 June 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/06/13/us-tunisia-benali-sentence-idUSBRE85C1CZ20120613>

<sup>199</sup> Voice of America News, “Tunisia’s Ousted President Sentenced to Life in Prison,” 13 June 2012, <http://www.voanews.com/content/tunisia-outsted-president-ali-sentenced-to-life-in-prison/1210804.html>

<sup>200</sup> Robert F. Worth, “Obstacles Mar Quest for Arab Dictators’ Assets,” *New York Times*, 7 June 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/08/world/middleeast/libya-egypt-and-tunisia-try-to-recover-assets.html?pagewanted=1&tntemail=y&r=4&emc=tnt>

<sup>201</sup> Jane’s, “Tunisian Government Expresses Concern Over Religious Tensions,” in *Country Risk Daily Report*, 20 March 2012.

<sup>202</sup> Al Jazeera, “Tunisian Leaders Condemn ‘Extremist’ Riots,” 13 June 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2012/06/201261313558863257.html>

## Chapter 2 Assessment

1. The Young Tunisians, a movement led by French-educated Tunisians, formed in the 1900s to resist French occupation.

**True**

The French arrested many members of the Young Tunisians and expelled them from Tunisia.

2. The national trade union, *Union Générale des Travailleurs Tunisiens* (UGTT), was founded by members of the Young Tunisians movement.

**False**

The Destour political party took up the Young Tunisians' national resistance policy in 1921. The nationalist UGTT formed in 1946.

3. During the Ottoman period, the Tunisian *bey* received substantial income from Europeans and Americans buying immunity from Mediterranean piracy.

**True**

Mediterranean trade eventually replaced piracy as Tunisia's main source of revenue.

4. The Phoenicians of Carthage finally defeated the Romans at the end of the Third Punic War.

**False**

The Romans burned the settlements, destroyed the farms, and enslaved the people of Carthage at the end of the Third Punic War.

5. After 23 years in office, President Ben Ali was removed by a bloodless coup in 2011.

**False**

A popular uprising ousted Ben Ali from power on 14 January 2011. Hundreds of people died in the violence of the revolution.



## CHAPTER 3: ECONOMY

### Introduction

Tunisia's economy has diversified from a traditional emphasis on agriculture to include industrial and service sectors. Mining and manufacturing, banking and tourism, farming and fishing all contributed to the country's 5% average economic (GDP) growth rate over the past 40 years.<sup>203</sup> Since independence, the government has applied both socialist and neoliberal approaches to manage the economy. Funding for water and power infrastructure, price subsidies, education, and public sector employment helped establish a modest but rising standard of living for a healthy, well-educated workforce, but also created high expectations for opportunities and services in a country of limited resources and revenues.



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Man cycling

When the country faced inflation and growing budget and trade deficits, the government acted to liberalize (privatize) the economy, increase foreign investment and reduce public welfare spending. These actions, according to some analysts, increased corruption, unequal distribution of wealth, unemployment, and poverty. Regional socioeconomic imbalance between the prosperous coast and the impoverished interior grew. These problems fueled the 2011 revolution. The difficulties of resolving the economic problems are testing the new government. Whether the people have the patience to wait for incremental economic changes over the long term is a concern for many analysts.

### Agriculture

Tunisia was ancient Rome's bread basket, and agriculture continues to be a valued economic sector. Farming, herding, and fishing account for about 10% of the GDP and employ nearly 20% of the workforce.<sup>204</sup> Roughly 18% of the land is farmable, while another third is pasture and woodland.<sup>205, 206</sup> Productive areas include the wheat fields and vineyards of the northern greenbelt and Cap Bon region, the olive and citrus groves of the central and coastal plains, and the *palmeraies* (date plantations) of the southern oases. Tunisians also harvest cork oak and esparto grass for paper manufacturing.<sup>207</sup> The country's 41 fishing ports supply sardines, mackerel, and squid.<sup>208</sup> In the mid-1970s, Tunisia's increasingly wealthy population grew



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Fruit stand

<sup>203</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Tunisia," in *The World Factbook*, 8 June 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ts.html>

<sup>204</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Tunisia," in *The World Factbook*, 8 June 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ts.html>

<sup>205</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Tunisia: Utilisation des Terres," 3 May 2012, <http://www.fao.org/countries/55528/en/tun/>

<sup>206</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "FAOSTAT, Land Use Database: Resources: Tunisia: Area Items," 22 June 2012, <http://faostat.fao.org/site/377/DesktopDefault.aspx?PageID=377#anchor>

<sup>207</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Tunisia: Economy: Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/609229/Tunisia>

beyond the capacity of domestic agriculture, and the country began to rely on imported foodstuffs.<sup>209</sup> Efforts to regain self-sufficiency have been somewhat successful with meat and dairy products, but less so with staples such as wheat, vegetable oil, and sugar.<sup>210</sup> Weather conditions affected agriculture more than the revolution in 2011. Good 2012 harvests were anticipated.<sup>211</sup>

## Industry

Industry accounts for about 34% of GDP and 32% of the labor force.<sup>212</sup> Tunisia's industrial sector consists of nearly 6,000 enterprises, approximately half of which work entirely in export.<sup>213</sup> Manufacturing is concentrated in a few industries. Traditional textile weaving, embroidering, etc. have been absorbed into "Maghreb maquiladoras" where clothing piecework is produced in sweatshop conditions.<sup>214</sup> Of the textiles produced, 90% are exported.<sup>215</sup>) The production of leather shoes, luggage, and other items has been similarly industrialized.<sup>216</sup> Olive oil factories, flour mills, dairies, cold storage units, fish canneries, and wineries are some of the many types of food processing.<sup>217, 218</sup> In recent decades diversification



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Fish market

<sup>208</sup> Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Tunisie," 2012, [http://www.fao.org/fishery/countrysector/FI-CP\\_TN/fr](http://www.fao.org/fishery/countrysector/FI-CP_TN/fr)

<sup>209</sup> Boubaker Thabet, Mongi Boughzala, and Badr Ben Ammar, "Agriculture and Food Policy in Tunisia," in *Food and Agricultural Policies in the Middle East and North Africa: Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia, Turkey*, comps. M. Allaya and B. Thabet, *Cahiers Options Mediterraneees*, vol. 7 (Montpellier: CIHEAM-IAMM, 1994), 184, <http://ressources.ciheam.org/om/pdf/c07/94400058.pdf>

<sup>210</sup> Agnes Dhur, "Secondary Data Analysis of the Food Security Situation in Tunisia," (working paper, Regional Bureau for the Middle East, World Food Programme, April 2011), 8, <http://www.wfp.org/content/tunisia-secondary-data-analysis-food-security-situation-april-2011>

<sup>211</sup> Global Information and Early Warning System, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Tunisia: Food Security Snapshot," 22 March 2012,

<http://www.fao.org/giews/countrybrief/country.jsp?code=TUN&lang=en>

<sup>212</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Tunisia," in *The World Factbook*, 8 June 2012,

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ts.html>

<sup>213</sup> Agency for the Promotion of Industry and Innovation, Ministry of Industry and Technology, "Tunisian Industry Portal: Overview of Tunisian Industry," 6 June 2012, <http://www.tunisianindustry.nat.tn/en/tissu.asp>

<sup>214</sup> Claire Therese Oueslati-Porter, "The Maghreb Maquiladora: Gender, Labor, and Socio-Economic Power in a Tunisian Export Processing Zone" (master's thesis, University of South Florida, 2011). 23–24, 97, 114, <http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4932&context=etd>

<sup>215</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Tunisia," 9 March 2012, <http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/tunisia/196390.htm>

<sup>216</sup> Agency for the Promotion of Industry and Innovation, Ministry of Industry and Technology, "Tunisian Industry Portal: Manufacture of Leather and Footwear," 6 June 2012,

<http://www.tunisianindustry.nat.tn/en/zoom.asp?action=list&idsect=06>

<sup>217</sup> Agency for the Promotion of Industry and Innovation, Ministry of Industry and Technology, "Tunisian Industry Portal: Manufacture of Food Products," May 2012,

<http://www.tunisianindustry.nat.tn/en/zoom.asp?action=list&idsect=05>

<sup>218</sup> Donna Wheeler, Paul Clammer, and Emilie Filou, *Tunisia*, 5th ed. (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2010), 119.



into the production of mechanical and electrical goods has occurred.<sup>219</sup> Nonmanufacturing industry is dominated by phosphate mining and oil and gas production.<sup>220</sup>

Industrial growth in Tunisia is constrained by the limited supply of raw materials and power, as well as limited domestic demand.<sup>221</sup> The production growth rate dropped by about 6% in 2011.<sup>222</sup> Recovery of the industrial sector in early 2012 late–r slowed because of declining sales to Europe, Tunisia’s main export partner for industrial goods and services.<sup>223</sup>

## Energy

The Tunisian government has long considered energy a key economic sector, and exercises state control over production and distribution.<sup>224, 225</sup> But foreign investment and expertise remain necessary for the sector. Natural gas was first found at Cap Bon in 1949, and petroleum was discovered in southern Tunisia at the el-Borma oil field in 1964.<sup>226</sup> Recent estimates of Tunisia’s proven energy reserves are 430 million barrels of oil and 65 billion cubic meters of natural gas, much of it offshore.<sup>227, 228</sup> Operations at dozens of oil fields produced an average of 78,000 barrels daily in 2011, down 2.5% from 2010.<sup>229, 230, 231</sup> Tunisia became a net importer of oil in 1999–2000, and



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Selling fuel

<sup>219</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Tunisia: Economy: Manufacturing,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/609229/Tunisia>

<sup>220</sup> African Economic Outlook, “Tunisia: Recent Developments and Prospects,” 22 June 2012, <http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/countries/north-africa/tunisia/>

<sup>221</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Tunisia: Economy: Manufacturing,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/609229/Tunisia>

<sup>222</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, “Tunisia,” in *The World Factbook*, 3 May 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ts.html>

<sup>223</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit, “Tunisia: The Recovery of Some Sectors Is Faltering,” 8 June 2012, <http://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=459112230&Country=Tunisia&topic=Economy&subtopic=Recent+de+velopments&subsubtopic=Economic+performance%3a+The+recovery+of+some+sectors+is+faltering>

<sup>224</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Background Note: Tunisia,” 9 March 2012, <http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/tunisia/196390.htm>

<sup>225</sup> Ministry of Industry, Republic of Tunisia, “Portail de l’Industrie & de la Technologie: Energie,” 18 June 2012, <http://www.industrie.gov.tn/fr/doc.asp?mcat=22&mrub=97>

<sup>226</sup> David S. Sorenson, *An Introduction to the Modern Middle East: History, Religion, Political Economy, Politics* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, Perseus Books Group, 2008), 379.

<sup>227</sup> Mowafa Taib, “The Mineral Industry of Tunisia,” in *2010 Minerals Yearbook*, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Department of the Interior, March 2012, 40.3, <http://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs/country/2010/myb3-2010-ts.pdf>

<sup>228</sup> International Energy Agency, “Key World Energy Statistics 2011,” 56–57, [www.iea.org/textbase/nppdf/free/2011/key\\_world\\_energy\\_stats.pdf](http://www.iea.org/textbase/nppdf/free/2011/key_world_energy_stats.pdf)

<sup>229</sup> Market Observatory for Energy, European Union, “Tunisia,” September 2010, 2, [http://ec.europa.eu/energy/observatory/doc/country/2010\\_09\\_tunisia.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/energy/observatory/doc/country/2010_09_tunisia.pdf)

<sup>230</sup> Enterprise Tunisienne D’Activites Petrolieres (ETAP), “Global Map,” 2012, <http://www.etap.com.tn/index.php?lg=3>

<sup>231</sup> British Petroleum, “BP Statistical Review of World Energy,” June 2012, 8, [http://www.bp.com/assets/bp\\_internet/globalbp/globalbp\\_uk\\_english/reports\\_and\\_publications/statistical\\_energy\\_review\\_2011/STAGING/local\\_assets/pdf/statistical\\_review\\_of\\_world\\_energy\\_full\\_report\\_2012.pdf](http://www.bp.com/assets/bp_internet/globalbp/globalbp_uk_english/reports_and_publications/statistical_energy_review_2011/STAGING/local_assets/pdf/statistical_review_of_world_energy_full_report_2012.pdf)

may exhaust its oil supplies within 15 years.<sup>232, 233</sup> Efforts have turned to boosting natural gas production, and moving energy production from oil to gas: in 2010, natural gas powered 95% of Tunisia's electricity.<sup>234</sup> Both oil and gas pipelines run from Algeria through Tunisia, and Tunisia collects royalties for the Enrico Mattei Gasline (a.k.a. the Transmed) that continues on to Italy.<sup>235</sup> (A Mellitah–Gabes pipeline from Libya is still on the drawing board).<sup>236</sup>

Tunisia could refine a modest amount of uranium from its phosphate deposits. Planning began in 2006 to construct and operate nuclear power plants by 2023, but was halted in 2011.<sup>237, 238, 239</sup>

## Natural Resources

Tunisia's natural resources are limited, particularly compared to its neighbors. Apart from the beaches, harbors, and marine resources of the Mediterranean coast, economically significant natural resources are mostly mineral. In 2010, minerals made up about 25% of the total value of exports, including 14% hydrocarbons and 9% phosphate products.<sup>240</sup>

Ten years after the 1885 discovery of phosphates in southwestern Tunisia, the French established the Gafsa Phosphates and Railroad Company.<sup>241, 242</sup> The mineral's economic importance later motivated the Tunisian government to nationalize its mining, and to develop in-country processing factories for phosphoric acid and chemical fertilizers.<sup>243, 244</sup> Tunisia has 600 million metric tons of phosphate



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Olive oil factory

<sup>232</sup> Jane's, "Natural Resources," in *Sentinel Security Assessment North Africa*, 30 January 2012,

<http://articles.janes.com/articles/Janes-Sentinel-Security-Assessment-North-Africa/Natural-resources-Tunisia.html>

<sup>233</sup> MBendi Information Services, "Oil and Gas in Tunisia–Overview," 2012,

<http://www.mbendi.com/indy/oilg/af/tu/p0005.htm>

<sup>234</sup> Oxford Business Group, "Tunisia 2010," 2010, 6.

<sup>235</sup> Jane's, "Natural Resources," in *Sentinel Security Assessment North Africa*, 30 January 2012,

<http://articles.janes.com/articles/Janes-Sentinel-Security-Assessment-North-Africa/Natural-resources-Tunisia.html>

<sup>236</sup> theodora.com, "North Africa Pipelines Map," 6 May 2008,

[http://www.theodora.com/pipelines/north\\_africa\\_oil\\_gas\\_products\\_pipelines\\_map.html](http://www.theodora.com/pipelines/north_africa_oil_gas_products_pipelines_map.html)

<sup>237</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency, "Tunisia," 2009, [http://www-](http://www-pub.iaea.org/MTCD/Publications/PDF/CNPP2011_CD/countryprofiles/Tunisia/Tunisia2011.htm)

[pub.iaea.org/MTCD/Publications/PDF/CNPP2011\\_CD/countryprofiles/Tunisia/Tunisia2011.htm](http://www-pub.iaea.org/MTCD/Publications/PDF/CNPP2011_CD/countryprofiles/Tunisia/Tunisia2011.htm)

<sup>238</sup> Reuters, "France Seals Nuclear, Aid Deals With Tunisia," 23 April 2009,

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/2009/04/23/idUKLN941296>

<sup>239</sup> U.S. Commercial Service, U.S. Department of Commerce, "Doing Business in Tunisia: 2012 Country Commercial Guide for U.S. Companies," 25 April 2012, 3,

<http://photos.state.gov/libraries/tunisia/231771/PDFs/2012%20Tunisia%20Country%20Commercial%20Guide.pdf>

<sup>240</sup> Mowafa Taib, "The Mineral Industry of Tunisia," in *2010 Minerals Yearbook*, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Department of the Interior, March 2012, 40.1, <http://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs/country/2010/myb3-2010-ts.pdf>

<sup>241</sup> Phil Thomas, "Sur la Decouverte de Gisements de Phosphate de Chaux dans le Sud de la Tunisie," *Comptes Rendus de l'Academie des Sciences*, vol. CI. (1885): 1184–1187.

<sup>242</sup> Ministry of Industry and Technology, Republic of Tunisia, Tunisian Phosphate Industry, "Compagnie Des Phosphates de Gafsa: History," n.d., <http://www.gct.com.tn/english/wcpg.htm>

<sup>243</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Tunisia: Resources and Power," 2012,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/609229/Tunisia/46609/Resources-and-power>

<sup>244</sup> Ministry of Industry and Technology, Republic of Tunisia, Tunisian Phosphate Industry, "Groupe Chimique Tunisien," n.d., <http://www.gct.com.tn/english/wphosph.htm>

reserves, or about 2% of the world reserve base.<sup>245</sup> In 2010, Tunisia was the world's fifth-largest producer of phosphate rock.<sup>246</sup> In 2011, the phosphate industry was hit hard by the revolution. Worker protests interrupted mining and processing productivity, reducing sales almost 60% and revenues nearly 30% from 2010 levels.<sup>247, 248</sup>

## Trade

Tunisia has often reported a trade deficit since 1960.<sup>249</sup> The country is a net exporter of textiles, agricultural products (olive oil, citrus, vegetables), and phosphates.<sup>250</sup> To meet local demand, Tunisia imports machinery and equipment, chemicals, fuel, and food.<sup>251</sup> In the 1970s, the government began to promote export-only businesses as one way to reduce, if not eliminate, the chronic trade deficit.<sup>252</sup> Due to interruptions in oil and phosphate exports, Tunisia's trade deficit doubled to more than USD 630 million during 2011.<sup>253</sup>



©McKay Savage/ flickr.com  
Tunisian textiles

The European Union (EU) is Tunisia's principal trade partner; France, Italy, and Germany are the main markets.<sup>254, 255</sup> In 2010, Tunisia exchanged about 74% of its exports and 63% of its imports with the EU.<sup>256</sup> Tunisia became an EU "Economic Area" in 1995, the first Arab nation in the Mediterranean basin to receive this honor. The new status boosted its exports and permitted Tunisians to work in EU countries.<sup>257</sup> In January 2008, Tunisia entered into a free trade agreement with the EU, which eliminated trade taxes and barriers on manufactured

<sup>245</sup> F. Zapata and R.N. Roy, eds., "Use of Phosphate Rocks for Sustainable Agriculture," in *FAO Fertilizer and Plant Nutrition Bulletin* 13 (Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2004), 13, <ftp://ftp.fao.org/agl/agll/docs/fpnb13.pdf>

<sup>246</sup> Mowafa Taib, "The Mineral Industry of Tunisia," in *2010 Minerals Yearbook*, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Department of the Interior, March 2012, 40.1, <http://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs/country/2010/myb3-2010-ts.pdf>

<sup>247</sup> FitchRatings, "Compagnie des Phosphates de Gafsa," 18 January 2012, [http://www.alacrastore.com/research/fitch-ratings-Compagnie\\_Des\\_Phosphates\\_De\\_Gafsa-660030\\_report\\_frame](http://www.alacrastore.com/research/fitch-ratings-Compagnie_Des_Phosphates_De_Gafsa-660030_report_frame)

<sup>248</sup> Reuters Africa, "TEXT-Fitch Affirms Compagnie des Phosphates de Gafsa," 8 November 2011, <http://af.reuters.com/article/tunisiaNews/idAFWNA298420111108>

<sup>249</sup> Worldmark Encyclopedia of Nations, "Tunisia: Balance of Payments," 2007, *Encyclopedia.com* (27 June 2012), <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-2586700129.html>

<sup>250</sup> Trading Economics, "Tunisia Exports," 2012, <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/tunisia/exports>

<sup>251</sup> Trading Economics, "Tunisia Imports," 2012, <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/tunisia/imports>

<sup>252</sup> FinaCorp, "North Africa/Tunisia, Tunisian Stock Exchange: Weekly Market Watch, February 6th to 10th 2012," 11 May 2012, [http://www.finacorp.net:8080/site/publications/mreports/11052012MREPORT\\_134\\_2.pdf](http://www.finacorp.net:8080/site/publications/mreports/11052012MREPORT_134_2.pdf)

<sup>253</sup> FinaCorp, "North Africa/Tunisia, Tunisian Stock Exchange: Weekly Market Watch, February 6th to 10th 2012," 11 May 2012, [http://www.finacorp.net:8080/site/publications/mreports/11052012MREPORT\\_134\\_2.pdf](http://www.finacorp.net:8080/site/publications/mreports/11052012MREPORT_134_2.pdf)

<sup>254</sup> Directorate General for Trade, European Commission, "Tunisia–Trade Statistics," 21 March 2012, [http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc\\_122002.pdf](http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc_122002.pdf)

<sup>255</sup> UN Comtrade, "Snapshot: Tunisia," 2010, <http://comtrade.un.org/db/ce/ceSnapshotd.aspx?r=788>

<sup>256</sup> World Trade Organization, "Trade Profiles 2011" (Geneva: WTO Publications, 2011), 173, [http://www.wto.org/english/res\\_e/booksp\\_e/anrep\\_e/trade\\_profiles11\\_e.pdf](http://www.wto.org/english/res_e/booksp_e/anrep_e/trade_profiles11_e.pdf)

<sup>257</sup> Kenneth J. Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 197.

products.<sup>258</sup> Economic difficulties in the EU began to slow Tunisia's overall economic growth in 2009, and may undermine Tunisia's attempts to generate positive growth in 2012.<sup>259</sup>

Tunisia's major trading partner in the Maghreb is Libya. In 2011, the Tunisia–Libya trade dropped by 20% from USD 1 billion to USD 806 million, reflecting the political turmoil in both countries. Tunisian exports to Libya remained stable, but imports from Libya dropped by 93%. Optimistic analysts view Libya's needs for post-war reconstruction as an economic opportunity for Tunisia. Tunisia is member of several Arab trade agreements and organizations, including the Arab Maghreb Union (with Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania, and Libya) and the Agadir Agreement for free trade (with Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco).<sup>260</sup>

## Transportation

Tunisia's transportation network provides links with all parts of the country as well as with regional neighbors and global sectors, by sea, road, rail, and air. Like energy, transportation is a key economic sector with its own government ministry and many nationalized companies.<sup>261</sup> Ships operate out of seven major ports, including the major cruise port of La Goulette in Tunis.<sup>262</sup> Paved roads date to Roman times, and today cross into both Algeria and Libya. In the 19th century, European colonization brought two different gauge rail systems to Tunisia: standard gauge rails to the north, and the slower narrow tracks for the phosphate mines to the south.<sup>263</sup> Tunisia's 29 airports include 7 with international flights.<sup>264</sup>

## Tourism

With over 1,400 km (870 mi) of Mediterranean coastline, numerous archeological and historical sites, world-class art and architecture, and blockbuster film locations, possibilities for tourism abound in Tunisia. Tourism has sustained traditional handicraft manufacture.<sup>265</sup> The ministry of tourism and national tourist board are looking to develop desert sport and ecotourism,



©John Georgiou/flickr.com  
View of Sidi Bou Said

<sup>258</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Tunisia," 9 March 2012, <http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/tunisia/196390.htm>

<sup>259</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit, "Tunisia: The Recovery of Some Sectors Is Faltering," 8 June 2012, <http://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=459112230&Country=Tunisia&topic=Economy&subtopic=Recent+developments&subsubtopic=Economic+performance%3a+The+recovery+of+some+sectors+is+faltering>

<sup>260</sup> U.S. Commercial Service, Department of Commerce, "Doing Business in Tunisia: 2012 Country Commercial Guide for U.S. Companies," 25 April 2012, 4, <http://photos.state.gov/libraries/tunisia/231771/PDFs/2012%20Tunisia%20Country%20Commercial%20Guide.pdf>

<sup>261</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Tunisia," 9 March 2012, <http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/tunisia/196390.htm>

<sup>262</sup> Office de la Marine Marchande et des Ports [Tunisia], "The Port Chain: A Port Chain at the Heart of the Mediterranean," 2008, [http://www.ommp.nat.tn/page.php?code\\_menu=1&code\\_page=2](http://www.ommp.nat.tn/page.php?code_menu=1&code_page=2)

<sup>263</sup> Societe Nationale des Chemins de Fer Tunisiens, "Historical," 2007, <http://www.sncft.com.tn/fr/sncft/historique.html>

<sup>264</sup> Office de L'Aviation Civile et des Aeroports [Tunisia], "Office Missions," n.d., [http://www.oaca.nat.tn/english/index\\_public\\_eng\\_org.htm](http://www.oaca.nat.tn/english/index_public_eng_org.htm)

<sup>265</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Tunisia," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/609229/Tunisia>



medical “tourism” (from Europe and North Africa), and ethnic and cultural festivals.<sup>266, 267, 268</sup>

Before the 2011 revolution, international tourism was a major source of foreign currency. In 2010, Tunisia reported 6.9 million visitors, mainly from Europe and North Africa, generating USD 2.5 billion in tourism revenues. Numbers for 2011 dropped to 4.8 million tourists and USD 1.7 billion in foreign currency. These setbacks in tourism negatively affected Tunisia’s economic growth.<sup>269, 270</sup> (The number of Libyan tourists dropped by 86% in the first quarter of 2011 compared to 2010. Libyan tourism was expected to continue to decline and even halt.<sup>271</sup>) In 2012, analysts hope that tourism will rebound.<sup>272, 273, 274</sup> For long-term stability, employment in tourism will have to shift from low-wage, unskilled jobs to high-salary, skilled positions.<sup>275</sup>

## Banking and Finance

Tunisia’s banking system comprises state-owned and private institutions, including 18 commercial and investment banks, 8 offshore banks, two merchant banks, and a savings bank.<sup>276, 277</sup> Administrative structure and practice carry over from French colonial times. The Central Bank of Tunisia (CBT) was created in 1958, two years after Tunisia’s independence from France. The CBT determines monetary policy, supervises lending institutions, manages national gold and foreign currency reserves, and issues banknotes and coins.<sup>278, 279</sup> In October 2011, the

<sup>266</sup> Cherifa Lakhoua, “Medical Tourism Industry in Tunisia” (3rd EUNAM Meeting, Hammamet, 12–13 March 2012), [http://www.dkfz.de/en/molgen\\_epidemiology/EUNAM/Dokumente/Tunis2012\\_ChriFa-MEDICAL-TOURISM-INDUSTRY-IN-TUNISIA.pdf](http://www.dkfz.de/en/molgen_epidemiology/EUNAM/Dokumente/Tunis2012_ChriFa-MEDICAL-TOURISM-INDUSTRY-IN-TUNISIA.pdf)

<sup>267</sup> Oxford Business Group, “The Report: Tunisia 2010: Tourism,” 2010, 162–180, [http://www.oxfordbusinessgroup.com/full\\_content/tourism-112](http://www.oxfordbusinessgroup.com/full_content/tourism-112)

<sup>268</sup> Euromonitor International, “Travel and Tourism in Tunisia: Executive Summary,” August 2011, <http://www.euromonitor.com/travel-and-tourism-in-tunisia/report>

<sup>269</sup> U.S. Commercial Service, Department of Commerce, “Doing Business in Tunisia: 2012 Country Commercial Guide for U.S. Companies,” 25 April 2012, 3, <http://photos.state.gov/libraries/tunisia/231771/PDFs/2012%20Tunisia%20Country%20Commercial%20Guide.pdf>

<sup>270</sup> African Economic Outlook, “Tunisia: Recent Developments and Prospects,” 22 June 2012, <http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/countries/north-africa/tunisia/>

<sup>271</sup> African Development Bank, North Africa Quarterly Analytical, “Impact of Libya’s Conflict on the Tunisian Economy: A Preliminary Assessment,” July 2011, 7, <http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/The%20Impact%20of%20Libyan%20Conflict%20on%20Tunisia%20ENG.pdf>

<sup>272</sup> Mayank Gupta, “Tunisia Tourism Is Returning to Normal After Unrest,” Easy Destination, 12 March 2012, <http://www.easydestination.net/blog/index.php?itemid=1674>

<sup>273</sup> World Travel and Tourism Council, “Travel and Tourism: Economic Impact 2012: Tunisia,” 2012, 14, [http://www.wttc.org/site\\_media/uploads/downloads/tunisia2012.pdf](http://www.wttc.org/site_media/uploads/downloads/tunisia2012.pdf)

<sup>274</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit, “Tunisia: The Recovery of Some Sectors Is Faltering,” 8 June 2012, <http://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=459112230&Country=Tunisia&topic=Economy&subtopic=Recent+developments&subsubtopic=Economic+performance%3a+The+recovery+of+some+sectors+is+faltering>

<sup>275</sup> Lahcen Achy, “Tunisia’s Economic Challenges,” Carnegie Middle East Center, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, December 2011, 3, 10, [http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/tunisia\\_economy.pdf](http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/tunisia_economy.pdf)

<sup>276</sup> Encyclopedia.com, “Tunisia: Banking and Securities,” in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Nations*, 2007, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-2586700129.html>

<sup>277</sup> U.S. Commercial Service, Department of Commerce, “Doing Business in Tunisia: 2012 Country Commercial Guide for U.S. Companies,” 25 April 2012, 56–57, <http://photos.state.gov/libraries/tunisia/231771/PDFs/2012%20Tunisia%20Country%20Commercial%20Guide.pdf>

<sup>278</sup> Central Bank of Tunisia, “About Us: History,” c2006, <http://www.bct.gov.tn/bct/siteprod/english/presentation/missions.jsp>

CBT issued two new bills: 20 dinars and 50 dinars.<sup>280</sup> The Tunisian dinar (TND) is pegged to a basket of weighted currencies including the euro and the U.S. dollar. The TND is not traded on world currency markets.<sup>281</sup> Currency conversions involving the import of foreign currencies are tightly controlled, and the TND may not be commercially exported from the country.<sup>282</sup> Such control has allowed the CBT to limit fluctuations in the value of the TND during global economic changes like the 2008–2009 recession. In 2012, the government held controlling shares in half of the country’s 20 major banks. (Foreign participation in the five biggest banks was over 20%.)<sup>283</sup>

The first Tunisian retail Islamic bank, Zitouna Bank, opened for business in 2010, under the ownership of Mohamed Sakher El Materi, Ben Ali’s son-in-law.<sup>284, 285</sup> Islamic banking operates under a distinct set of rules in compliance with shari’a (Islamic) law. According to the Oxford Business Group, “speculation is forbidden and interest for the rental of money is unacceptable.” Furthermore, “bank transactions must be a trade procedure that is vigilant of risk and works in the interest of the community.”<sup>286</sup> In February 2011, the CBT took over supervision of Zitouna Bank as part of the interim government’s confiscation of assets of the family of former President Ben Ali.<sup>287</sup>



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Tunis ATM

In 2010, the World Economic Forum noted low investor confidence in the stability of the Tunisian banking system.<sup>288</sup> Non-performing loans have been a problem for Tunisian banks, and their proportion may have returned to over 20% in 2011.<sup>289</sup> Throughout 2011, the CBT lowered the minimum required reserves for banks to operate from 12.5% to 2.5%.<sup>290</sup> In 2011, the TND depreciated slightly against the euro and U.S. dollar.<sup>291</sup> (As of August 2012, the dinar is at around USD 1.0 = TND 1.6.<sup>292</sup>)

<sup>279</sup> Central Bank of Tunisia, “About Us: Tasks,” c2006,

<http://www.bct.gov.tn/bct/siteprod/english/presentation/historique.jsp>

<sup>280</sup> Banknote News, “Tunisia New 20- and 50-dinar Notes Confirmed,” 28 November 2011,

<http://banknotenews.com/files/tag-tunisia.php>

<sup>281</sup> Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “2012 Investment Climate Statement—Tunisia,” June 2012, <http://www.state.gov/e/eb/rls/othr/ics/2012/191253.htm>

<sup>282</sup> Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Tunisia: Country Specific Information,” 4 June 2012, [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1045.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1045.html)

<sup>283</sup> Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “2012 Investment Climate Statement—Tunisia,” June 2012, <http://www.state.gov/e/eb/rls/othr/ics/2012/191253.htm>

<sup>284</sup> Banque Zitouna, “A Propos de la Banque,” 2011, [http://www.banquezitouna.com/a-propos-de-la-banque\\_25](http://www.banquezitouna.com/a-propos-de-la-banque_25)

<sup>285</sup> Mohamed Guesmi, “Tunisian Government to Level the Playing Field for Islamic Finance,” 1 May 2012, <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2012/05/01/tunisian-government-to-level-the-playing-field-for-islamic-finance/>

<sup>286</sup> Oxford Business Group, “Seal of Approval: Islamic Products are Sparking Widespread Interest,” in *The Report: Tunisia 2010: Banking*, 2010 <http://www.oxfordbusinessgroup.com/news/seal-approval-islamic-products-are-sparking-widespread-interest>

<sup>287</sup> Central Bank of Tunisia, “Press Release,” 11 February 2011,

<http://www.bct.gov.tn/bct/siteprod/documents/com11.02.11.ang.pdf>

<sup>288</sup> World Economic Forum, “Country/Economy Profile: Tunisia,” in *Global Competitiveness Report 2010–2011*, 2010, 328, [https://members.weforum.org/pdf/Global\\_Competitiveness\\_Reports/Profiles/Tunisia.pdf](https://members.weforum.org/pdf/Global_Competitiveness_Reports/Profiles/Tunisia.pdf)

<sup>289</sup> African Economic Outlook, “Tunisia: Recent Developments and Prospects,” 22 June 2012,

<http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/countries/north-africa/tunisia/>

<sup>290</sup> Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “2012 Investment Climate Statement—Tunisia,” June 2012, <http://www.state.gov/e/eb/rls/othr/ics/2012/191253.htm>

## Investment

French investment developed Tunisia's railroads, mines, and ports during the French colonial rule.<sup>293</sup> In 1957, independent Tunisia founded the Societe Tunisienne de Banque (STB), a development bank, to encourage continued international investment in national projects.<sup>294</sup> While the STB moved into other investment and banking activities, new investment institutions developed. The Tunisian Stock Exchange (TSE) was created in 1969 as a public establishment. In 1994–1995, the TSE reorganized into a privately held company, supervised by the newly established, state-run Financial Market Council.<sup>295, 296</sup> Much of the stock market is small investors buying bonds (as opposed to large companies raising business capital).<sup>297</sup> At the end of 2011, the total capitalization value of the 57 companies listed on the TSE was USD 9.8 billion, down from USD 10.6 billion in 2010.<sup>298, 299</sup> Microfinancing received a boost from Tunisia's post-revolution government in a November 2011 decree aimed at making financial services, including loans, easily available to people with lower incomes.<sup>300</sup>



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Olive tree

## Standard of Living

The average standard of living in Tunisia is high for a developing country in Africa. Most of the population have access to electricity (99.5%), water (94%), and sanitation (85%). The majority of Tunisians own their homes.<sup>301, 302</sup> Nationwide free health care and education have led to an average life span of 75 years, low rates of infant mortality (14%), and high rates of literacy (over 80%).<sup>303, 304</sup> Average annual income per capita in Tunisia is USD 4,200.<sup>305</sup>

<sup>291</sup> Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “2012 Investment Climate Statement—Tunisia,” June 2012, <http://www.state.gov/e/eb/rls/othr/ics/2012/191253.htm>

<sup>292</sup> XE.com, “Universal Currency Converter: US Dollar–Tunisian Dinar,” 25 July 2012, <http://www.xe.com/ucc/convert/?Amount=1&From=USD&To=TND>

<sup>293</sup> Kenneth J. Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 61.

<sup>294</sup> Societe Tunisienne de Banque (STB), “Historical,” 2007,

<http://translate.google.com/translate?sl=auto&tl=en&js=n&prev=t&hl=en&ie=UTF-8&layout=2&eof=1&u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.stb.com.tn%2FSTBBank%2FPages%2FHistorique.aspx&act=url>

<sup>295</sup> Bourse de Tunis, “Tunis Stock Exchange History,” 2007, <http://www.bvmt.com.tn/EN/company/?view=history>

<sup>296</sup> Republique Tunisienne, Conseil du Marche Financier, “Presentation,” 2001,

<http://www.cmf.org.tn/htm/presentation/cmf.htm>

<sup>297</sup> African Economic Outlook, “Tunisia: Recent Developments and Prospects,” 22 June 2012,

<http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/countries/north-africa/tunisia/>

<sup>298</sup> Bourse de Tunis, “Listed Companies,” 2007, <http://www.bvmt.com.tn/companies/?view=listedincompany>

<sup>299</sup> Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “2012 Investment Climate Statement—Tunisia,” June 2012, <http://www.state.gov/e/eb/rls/othr/ics/2012/191253.htm>

<sup>300</sup> Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “2012 Investment Climate Statement—Tunisia,” June 2012, <http://www.state.gov/e/eb/rls/othr/ics/2012/191253.htm>

<sup>301</sup> National Statistical Institute, Ministry of Development and International Cooperation, Republic of Tunisia, *Statistical Indicators of Tunisia*, Issue 19, Edition 2010 (Tunis: CEDEX, December 2010), 6.

<http://www.ins.nat.tn/indexen.php>

<sup>302</sup> Trading Economics, “World Bank Indicators—Tunisia,” 2012, <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/world-bank-list-by-country?c=tunisia>

<sup>303</sup> World Health Organization, “Tunisian Health Profile,” May 2012, <http://www.who.int/gho/countries/tun.pdf>



Unacknowledged disparities in living standards sparked the Tunisian revolution. Official national poverty rates for 2005, originally reported at 3.8%, were recently refigured at 11.8%. Newly analyzed regional differences in the data show rates nearing 30% in the interior, offset by rates of 5% to 7% in Tunis and the east. The produce vendor who became a symbol of the revolution set himself on fire in the interior town of Sidi Bouzid, and economic protests continue there and Kasserine, Gafsa, and other hard hit areas in 2012.<sup>306, 307</sup> Other problems that have lowered living standards are consumer debt and rising food prices—a serious threat for families who must spend 50% or more of their household budget on food.<sup>308, 309</sup> Rising unemployment among recent college graduates may increase poverty among this demographic.<sup>310</sup>



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Berber kitchen

Quality of life in Tunisia was further diminished by political and social repression. New media technologies, often associated with the high living standards of developed countries, were heavily censored during the Ben Ali era (as were journalists, artists, and intellectuals who used them to communicate dissident content).<sup>311</sup> Government restrictions on information were lifted in spring 2011. Tunisians are now contesting the moral and religious limits on freedom of expression.

## Employment

Tunisia's workforce numbered 3.9 million in 2011. Nearly 50% worked in services (retail trade, public administration, finance, tourism, and defense), about 32% were in industry, and 18% worked in agriculture.<sup>312, 313</sup> Tunisians are often described to potential foreign investors as a well-educated, low-cost labor force. In 2011, the minimum monthly wage (for a 40-hour work

<sup>304</sup> National Institute of Statistics–Tunisia, The Tunisian Government Portal, “Most Recent Indicators,” 10 September 2012, <http://www.ins.nat.tn/indexen.php>

<sup>305</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Background Note: Tunisia,” 9 March 2012, <http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/tunisia/196390.htm>

<sup>306</sup> Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Tunisia: Country Specific Information,” 4 June 2012, [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1045.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1045.html)

<sup>307</sup> Reese Erlich and Sidi Bouzid, “Tunisia Still Struggling After the Revolution,” Deutsche Welle, 1 June 2012, <http://www.dw.de/dw/article/0,,15988647,00.html>

<sup>308</sup> National Statistical Institute, Ministry of Development and International Cooperation, Republic of Tunisia, *Statistical Indicators of Tunisia*, Issue 19, Edition 2010 (Tunis: CEDEX, December 2010), 6. <http://www.ins.nat.tn/indexen.php>

<sup>309</sup> Mischa Benoit-Lavelle, “Consumer Debt Trap Brings Suffering to Tunisian Families,” TunisiaLive, 15 March 2012, <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2012/03/15/consumer-debt-trap-brings-suffering-to-tunisian-families/>

<sup>310</sup> World Bank, “Data: Tunisia,” c2012, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tunisia>

<sup>311</sup> Eric Goldstein, “Middle Class Revolution,” Human Rights Watch, Foreign Policy, 19 January 2011, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/01/19/middle-class-revolution>

<sup>312</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, “Tunisia,” in *The World Factbook*, 3 May 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ts.html>

<sup>313</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Tunisia,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/609229/Tunisia>

week) was TND 246 (USD 178).<sup>314</sup> The low salaries for public employees have been blamed for endemic corruption, while the low salaries for unionized workers have often led to strikes.<sup>315</sup>

Labor unions have a long history in Tunisia. The General Union of Tunisian Workers (UGTT) was established in 1946 to support Tunisian workers in close collaboration with the nationalist movement. The UGTT struck against the Bourguiba government on 26 January 1978. Known as “Black Thursday,” the revolt left 150 dead, and the government arrested UGTT leaders and declared a state of emergency. In the 1980s, the UGTT was outlawed for a time after threatening to strike for better wages, and other organizations emerged.<sup>316, 317</sup> The UGTT cooperated with Ben Ali at the beginning of his presidency, but it later helped foment the 2011 revolution.<sup>318</sup> Since Ben Ali’s departure, more trade unions have appeared.<sup>319</sup> In an opinion poll conducted in early 2012, Tunisians complained that continuing strikes are “hurting the country as a whole and are not addressing the critical issue of job creation.”<sup>320, 321</sup>



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Men working

Labor strikes, both organized and spontaneous, underline Tunisia’s persistent, structural unemployment problem. Overall, unemployment rose to 19% in 2011.<sup>322 323</sup> A demographic peak of youth entering the job market puts unemployment among recent university graduates at 25–44%.<sup>324, 325, 326</sup> The government cannot sustainably fund the amount of white collar, public sector positions that unemployed (young) graduates seek. Current job growth, as in the tourism sector, tends toward temporary, low-wage jobs.<sup>327</sup> It will take years to generate enough new jobs

<sup>314</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Background Note: Tunisia,” 9 March 2012, <http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/tunisia/196390.htm>

<sup>315</sup> James L. Gelvin, *The Arab Uprisings: What Everyone Needs to Know* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 40.

<sup>316</sup> Larry A. Barrie, “Union Generale Des Travailleurs Tunisiens (UGTT),” in *Encyclopedia of the Modern Middle East and North Africa*, 2004, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3424602775.html>

<sup>317</sup> James L. Gelvin, *The Arab Uprisings: What Everyone Needs to Know* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 55.

<sup>318</sup> Eric Lee and Benjamin Weinthal, “Trade Unions: The Revolutionary Social Network at Play in Egypt and Tunisia,” *Guardian*, 10 February 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/feb/10/trade-unions-egypt-tunisia>

<sup>319</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Background Note: Tunisia,” 9 March 2012, <http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/tunisia/196390.htm>

<sup>320</sup> Nicole Rowsell and Asma Ben Yahia, “Revolution to Reform: Citizen Expectations on the One-year Anniversary of the Tunisian Uprising,” National Democratic Institute, January 2012, 7, [http://www.ndi.org/files/NDI\\_Tunisia-FG-Report-Jan2012-ENG.pdf](http://www.ndi.org/files/NDI_Tunisia-FG-Report-Jan2012-ENG.pdf)

<sup>321</sup> Ted Wynne, “Labor Strikes Plague New Islamist Governments,” United States Institute of Peace, 7 May 2012, <http://www.usip.org/publications/labor-strikes-plague-new-islamist-governments>

<sup>322</sup> World Bank, “Tunisia Overview,” 2012, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tunisia/overview>

<sup>323</sup> Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “2012 Investment Climate Statement—Tunisia,” June 2012, <http://www.state.gov/e/eb/rls/othr/ics/2012/191253.htm>

<sup>324</sup> Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “2012 Investment Climate Statement—Tunisia,” June 2012, <http://www.state.gov/e/eb/rls/othr/ics/2012/191253.htm>

<sup>325</sup> World Bank, “Tunisia Overview,” 2012, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tunisia/overview>

<sup>326</sup> Ben Guerdane, “Unemployment Breeds Anger in Home of Arab Spring,” Reuters, 30 May 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/05/30/us-tunisia-unemployment-idUSBRE84T0WT20120530>

<sup>327</sup> Lahcen Achy, “Tunisia’s Economic Challenges,” Carnegie Middle East Center, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, December 2011, 8–11, [http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/tunisia\\_economy.pdf](http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/tunisia_economy.pdf)

to match the skills and desires of the available workforce. In 2011, the return of Tunisian migrant workers from Libya further worsened labor woes.<sup>328</sup>

## Public and Private Sectors

President Bourguiba's Destourian Socialist Party exemplified Tunisia's commitment to a strong public sector. President Ben Ali's Democratic Constitutional Rally steered economic development toward greater privatization of industry and less state control of investment, often on the recommendations of the World Trade Organization (of which Tunisia is a founding member) and the International Monetary Fund.<sup>329</sup> The interim government today maintains control in "strategic sectors" such as water resources, energy, mining, transportation, and finance.<sup>330</sup> Onshore investment regulations require Tunisian participation in enterprises producing for the local market, while offshore investment incentives encourage export-only businesses. Thus, foreigners may not own agricultural land, but they are encouraged to invest in agricultural export projects.<sup>331</sup> Tunisia's most-favored-nation tariffs are viewed as high.<sup>332</sup>



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Men cooking

Corruption in Tunisia has often been attributed to privatization; cronies of those in power gained ownership of public entities at low cost.<sup>333</sup> The Ben Ali regime also created GONGOs—government-organized non-governmental organizations—which collected private "charitable donations" to offset the limits on public spending mandated by structural adjustment (World Bank and International Monetary Fund loans). Charitable donors received preferred access to government resources and services.<sup>334</sup> In November 2011, the interim government's Independent Commission to Investigate Corruption issued its report on abuses during the Ben Ali era, and signed a new rule to fight corruption, the Law of the Struggle Against Corruption.<sup>335, 336</sup>

<sup>328</sup> Lahcen Achy, "Tunisia's Economic Challenges," Carnegie Middle East Center, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, December 2011, 5, [http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/tunisia\\_economy.pdf](http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/tunisia_economy.pdf)

<sup>329</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Tunisia," 9 March 2012, <http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/tunisia/196390.htm>

<sup>330</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Tunisia," 9 March 2012, <http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/tunisia/196390.htm>

<sup>331</sup> Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "2012 Investment Climate Statement—Tunisia," June 2012, <http://www.state.gov/e/eb/rls/othr/ics/2012/191253.htm>

<sup>332</sup> Isabelle Tsakok, *Success in Agricultural Transformation: What It Means and What makes It Happen* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 141.

<sup>333</sup> James L. Gelvin, *The Arab Uprisings: What Everyone Needs to Know* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 40.

<sup>334</sup> Fadhel Kaboub, "The Middle East's Neoliberalism-Corruption Nexus," *Dollars & Sense*, May/June 2011, 7, <http://personal.denison.edu/~kaboubf/Pub/Media/2011-May-DS-NeoliberalismCorruptionNexus.pdf>

<sup>335</sup> Ahmed Ellali, "Abdelfattah Amor: We Will Continue Struggling Against Corruption," *TunisiaLive*, 11 November 2011, <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2011/11/11/abdelfattah-amor-we-will-continue-struggling-against-corruption/>

<sup>336</sup> World Bank, "Tunisia Overview," 2012, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tunisia/overview>

## Outlook

Economic problems that had been growing for many years were major causes of the Tunisian revolution of 2011. The rising cost of living was compounded by growing income disparities between the rich and poor, young and old, and among geographic regions. The revolution slowed the economy even further.<sup>337, 338</sup> Industrial production was interrupted, tourism declined, and foreign investors waited for signs of returning stability.<sup>339</sup> In 2012, economic recovery appeared to be uneven across sectors and fragile overall.<sup>340</sup> Tunisians are impatient to experience economic improvement, and may continue to protest against the slow pace of change for the foreseeable future.



©David Weekly/flickr.com  
Boy gutting a fish

<sup>337</sup> African Economic Outlook, “Tunisia: Recent Developments and Prospects,” 22 June 2012, <http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/countries/north-africa/tunisia/>

<sup>338</sup> World Bank, “Tunisia Overview,” 2012, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tunisia/overview>

<sup>339</sup> Reuters, “UPDATE 1: Tunisia Boosts Liquidity to Spur Post-Crisis Growth,” 30 March 2011, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/03/30/tunisia-cbank-idUSLDE72T2BU20110330>

<sup>340</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit, “Tunisia: The Recovery of Some Sectors Is Faltering,” 8 June 2012, <http://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=459112230&Country=Tunisia&topic=Economy&subtopic=Recent+developments&subsubtopic=Economic+performance%3a+The+recovery+of+some+sectors+is+faltering>

## Chapter 3 Assessment

1. Tunisia's Mediterranean greenbelts and desert oases produce enough food to sustain its small population.

**False**

Tunisia has relied on imported food since the mid-1970s, especially staples such as wheat and sugar.

2. Tunisia depends its exports to the European market for a large part of its income.

**True**

The European Union (EU) is Tunisia's main trade partner. Economic difficulties in the EU may slow Tunisia's attempts to recover from the economic contraction of the 2011 revolution.

3. Tourism is a major source of foreign currency, with the potential to drive Tunisia's future economic growth.

**True**

Skilled positions in ecotourism, medical tourism, or festival production and performance must be added to temporary, unskilled, low-wage jobs.

4. Tunisia has as much petroleum and natural gas reserves as Algeria and Libya.

**False**

Tunisia's natural resources are small compared to its neighbors.

5. With its moderate standard of living, high literacy rates, and low population growth rate, unemployment is not a problem in Tunisia.

**False**

Unemployment was 19% in 2011. Tunisia faces the challenge of creating more jobs for university graduates entering the job market.



## CHAPTER 4: SOCIETY

### Introduction

Tunisia is often described as the most homogenous of Maghreb nations. A single ethnicity, language, and religion unite 98% of the population. Anti-colonial sentiment created a sense of Tunisian national identity, leading to independence in 1956. Tunisia's presidents continued to promote national solidarity, although at times through oppression, while building a modern nation-state.



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Pet fox

Tunisia achieved many successes in social development. Average life expectancy lengthened and birth rates dropped. Health and education improved, as did the social status of women. A middle class developed, with middle-class expectations of a middle-class lifestyle. When social progress stalled and economic inequalities became too large, a revolution became inevitable. Today, if Tunisia's income disparities continue to intensify regional and religious differences, a less homogenous nation may result.

### Ethnic Groups and Languages

In Tunisia, 98% of the population are Arabic-speaking Sunni Muslims.<sup>341</sup> The descendants of Berbers, Phoenicians, Romans, Arabs, Spaniards, Turks, and others have intermarried and assimilated into a shared society and culture. Ethnicity is typically mixed—most everyone is “Arab-Berber”—and rarely a source of social conflict. A few Berber groups in the far south or in the hills near the Algerian border, retain a distinct ethnic identity, which is reinforced by some monolingualism among their Berber language speakers.<sup>342, 343, 344, 345</sup>



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Berber women

Traces of the Berber past can be seen in place names like Guermezza and Chenini, and in the rich artifacts that are produced in these regions. Another ethnic group that exists as a trace culture today is the Jews of Jerba. Once a lively colony of Sephardic Jews, most emigrated to the state of Israel in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>346</sup> Many

<sup>341</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, “Tunisia,” in *The World Factbook*, 3 May 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ts.html>

<sup>342</sup> M. Paul Lewis, ed., “Nafusi,” in *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, 16th ed. (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2009), [http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_language.asp?code=jbn](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=jbn)

<sup>343</sup> Zouhir Gabsi, “An Outline of the Shilha (Berber) Vernacular of Douiret (Southern Tunisia)” (PhD thesis, University of Western Sydney, 2003), <http://arrow.uws.edu.au:8080/vital/access/manager/Repository/uws:573>

<sup>344</sup> Moha Ennaji, “Aspects of Multilingualism in the Maghreb,” *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 87 (1991), 7–14.

<sup>345</sup> Maarten Kossmann and B. Grimes, “Berber Languages,” in *International Encyclopedia of Linguistics*, vol. 1, ed. William J. Frawley (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 218–221.

<sup>346</sup> Nicholas S. Hopkins, “Tunisia: Demography,” *Countries and Their Cultures*, 2012 <http://www.everyculture.com/To-Z/Tunisia.html>

French and Italian colonists left Tunisia in the early years after independence in 1956. Sub-Saharan Africans may be descendants of slaves, or migrant workers.<sup>347</sup>

Several varieties of the Arabic language coexist in Tunisia. Classical Arabic is preserved in the Quran and studied at theological and literary institutes.<sup>348</sup> Modern Standard Arabic is the language of media, government, and public education. Tunisian Arabic, also known as Darija or Tunisi, is one of the Western Arabic dialects spoken throughout the Maghreb.<sup>349</sup> From Morocco to Libya, Western Arabic speakers understand each other, but they may not be understood by visitors from the Arabian peninsula. For the learner of Arabic, Darija is distinguished by loanwords from French, Italian, Spanish, Berber, and Turkish.<sup>350</sup> Darija is not written in Arabic script, but rather transliterated into other alphabets.<sup>351</sup> Tunis, a dialect of Darija, is used in textbooks for foreigners.<sup>352</sup>

While Arabic is the official language of Tunisia, French is the second language of government, business, and science.<sup>353</sup> (In post-independence Tunisia, the use of French was somewhat less politically charged than in neighboring Algeria and Morocco.<sup>354</sup>) Road signs, street names, and government and public buildings signs are in Arabic and French. English is rarely used, except in tourist information and places.<sup>355</sup> In recent decades, English has become a second foreign language (in addition to French) in the school curriculum.<sup>356, 357</sup>

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<sup>347</sup> LaVerle Berry and Robert Rinehart, "Chapter 2: The Society and Its Environment," in *Tunisia: A Country Study*, 3rd ed., ed. Harold D. Nelson (Washington, DC: American University, 1986), 85–86.

<sup>348</sup> Keith Walters, "Fergie's Prescience: The Changing Nature of Diglossia in Tunisia," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 163 (2003), 77–109.

<sup>349</sup> Donna Wheeler, Paul Clammer, and Emilie Filou, *Tunisia*, 5th ed. (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2010), 313.

<sup>350</sup> Gerald Zarr, *Tunisia—Culture Smart! The Essential Guide to Customs & Culture* (London: Kuperard, 2009), 154–155.

<sup>351</sup> Donna Wheeler, Paul Clammer, and Emilie Filou, *Tunisia*, 5th ed. (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet, 2010), 313.

<sup>352</sup> M. Paul Lewis, ed., "Languages of Tunisia," in *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, 16th ed. (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2009), [http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_country.asp?name=tn](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=tn)

<sup>353</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Tunisia: The Arts," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/609229/Tunisia>

<sup>354</sup> Harold D. Nelson, "Introduction," in *Tunisia: A Country Study*, 3rd ed., ed. Harold D. Nelson (Washington, DC: American University, 1986), 88.

<sup>355</sup> Jacques Leclerc, "Tunisie: 4.5 Les Langues de L'Affichage," *L'Aménagement Linguistique dans le Monde*, 2012, <http://www.tlfq.ulaval.ca/axl/afrique/tunisie.htm>

<sup>356</sup> John Battenburg, "English Versus French: Language Rivalry in Tunisia," *World Englishes* (July 1997), 281–290, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1467-971X.00062/abstract>

<sup>357</sup> Max de Lotbiniere, "Tunisia Turns to a New Language Partner: British Council Signs On to Help Reform English Teaching 'Without Undermining French,'" *Guardian Weekly*, 5 February 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2009/feb/06/tunisia-tefl>

## Religion

Tunisia's 1959 constitution declared Islam the state religion, a declaration that is expected to carry over into the constitution that is due in 2013.<sup>358, 359</sup> Some 98% of Tunisians are Sunni Muslims of the Malikite rite. A community of Kharijite Muslims survives among the Berber speakers on Jerba Island, as do a small number of Jews. Other Tunisians who do not identify themselves as Sunni Muslims may be Shi'a and/or Sufi Muslims, Christians, Jews, or Bahais.<sup>360</sup>



©Seth Frantzman/flickr.com  
Catholic church, Tunis

Islam is one of the principal world religions and one of the three faiths that emerged from the Middle East. Its holy book is the Quran, which followers believe was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad in the early seventh century C.E. Sunni Muslims adhere to the *sunna* (teachings) and *hadith* (sayings) of Muhammad, who is held to be the last of the prophets who followed in the monotheistic tradition of Abraham (Ibrahim). The faith teaches charity, observance of prayer, fasting, and ethical conduct. Followers are asked to perform a pilgrimage, if possible, to Mecca, the birthplace of Muhammad and the location of the holiest of Islamic sites, the Kaaba.

Tunisia is a center of popular religious beliefs and practices known as maraboutism. The marabouts of North Africa are Muslim saints from all periods of the Maghreb's Muslim past, often associated with Islamic Sufi mysticism.<sup>361</sup> Each marabout in his lifetime was considered divinely endowed. Some were healers who performed miracles and conferred blessings on supplicants, and others were sages or holy warriors. The marabout tombs, or *zawaya* (sing. *zawiya*), are found throughout Tunisia. They are now sites of pilgrimages and local festivals. Devout believers come seeking divine blessings (*baraka*) or healing.<sup>362</sup> The veneration of marabouts is objectionable to conservative Sunnis such as Salafists, who find no precedent for it in the *sunna* or *hadith*. Since the 2011 revolution, some Tunisian Salafists have desecrated *zawaya*.<sup>363</sup>



©John Morris?/flickr.com  
Kairouan minaret

With the fall of the Ben Ali regime, religious differences among Muslims have reemerged onto the political scene. All sides have criticized the interim government for being either too secular—for example, in failing to declare *shari'a* the main source of legislation in the new

<sup>358</sup> LaVerle Berry and Robert Rinehart, "Chapter 2: The Society and Its Environment," in *Tunisia: A Country Study*, 3rd ed., Harold D. Nelson, ed., (Washington, DC: American University, 1986), 113.

<sup>359</sup> Alexis Arieff, "Political Transition in Tunisia (RS21666)," Congressional Research Service, 18 June 2012, 2, 5, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS21666.pdf>

<sup>360</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "July–December, 2010 International Religious Freedom Report: Tunisia," 13 September 2011, [http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2010\\_5/168277.htm](http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2010_5/168277.htm)

<sup>361</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Marabout," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/search?query=marabout>

<sup>362</sup> Sacred Sites: Places of Peace and Power, "Kairouan," 2010,

<http://www.sacredsites.com/africa/tunisia/kairouan.html>

<sup>363</sup> Magharebia, "Tunisian Salafists Raise Flag at Sufi Site," 11 March 2012,

[http://magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en\\_GB/features/awi/newsbriefs/general/2012/03/11/newsbrief-01](http://magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/newsbriefs/general/2012/03/11/newsbrief-01)

constitution—or too religious—for example, in fining a TV station owner for violation of moral values by showing a film deemed insulting to Islam.<sup>364, 365</sup>

## Gender Issues

In Tunisia, Arab culture and Muslim beliefs combine to produce a patriarchal society in which men decide what is best for the family and dominate the public sphere. However, Tunisia is unique in the Arab Middle East for its governmental support of gender equity for women. The Personal Status Code (PSC) of 1956 legislated many changes to practices traditionally justified as *shari'a* (Islamic law). The PSC outlawed polygamy although Islam permits a man to have up to four wives in marriage. It further abolished repudiation, the right of men (and only men) to divorce at will, and granted women equal rights (and responsibilities) in divorce. Women gained the rights to be educated, vote, run for office, and enter all trades and professions.<sup>366, 367</sup> Amendments to the PSC strengthened alimony and child support regulations, allowed women to marry non-Muslims, and removed the wording that a woman must “obey” her husband.<sup>368, 369, 370</sup> The PSC did not entirely eliminate traditional attitudes. Housework and child care remain female-only responsibilities, even when women work outside the home, and sexual harassment is a continuing problem.<sup>371, 372</sup>



©BockoPix/flickr.com  
Tunisian woman

Since the 2011 revolution, some Tunisians fear that Islamist influence in the new government will turn back women’s legal rights in the future constitution and other laws.<sup>373, 374</sup> More immediately troubling, Tunisian women have expressed a growing sense of insecurity in public places and lack of respect of their views as citizens.<sup>375</sup>

<sup>364</sup> AFP, “Tunisia’s Constitution Will Not Be Based on Sharia: Islamist Party,” Al Arabiya News, 27 March 2012, <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/03/27/203529.html>

<sup>365</sup> Associated Press, “Tunisian Court Fines TV Station Boss for Airing Animated Film Persepolis,” *Guardian*, 3 May 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/may/03/tunisian-court-tv-station-persepolis>

<sup>366</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Habib Bourguiba: Presidency,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/75869/Habib-Bourguiba/278558/Attainment-of-power>

<sup>367</sup> Rosalind Varghese Brown and Michael Spilling, “Chapter 2: History,” in *Tunisia: Cultures of the World* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Benchmark, 2009), 37.

<sup>368</sup> Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby, eds., “Tunisians: Gender Issues,” in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life*, 2nd ed. (Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, Cengage Learning, 2009), 561.

<sup>369</sup> Mounira M. Charrad, “Tunisia: Personal Status Code,” *Gale Encyclopedia of the Modern Middle East & North Africa*, Answers.com, 2004, <http://www.answers.com/topic/tunisia-personal-status-code>

<sup>370</sup> Social Institutions and Gender Index, “Tunisia,” 2012, [http://genderindex.org/country/tunisia#\\_ftnref25](http://genderindex.org/country/tunisia#_ftnref25)

<sup>371</sup> Carolyn Lamboley, “Talk is Cheap: Addressing Sexual Harassment in Tunisia,” *TunisiaLive*, 14 April 2012, <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2012/04/14/talk-is-cheap-addressing-sexual-harassment-in-tunisia/>

<sup>372</sup> Ministère de la Santé Publique, République Tunisienne, “Enquete Nationale sur la Violence a l’Egard des Femmes en Tunisie,” 2010, [http://www.onfp.tn/liens/violence\\_29/brochure.pdf](http://www.onfp.tn/liens/violence_29/brochure.pdf)

<sup>373</sup> Sana Ajmi, “Tunisian Women Question Future and Role of Personal Status Code,” *TunisiaLive*, 7 March 2012, <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2012/03/07/tunisian-women-question-future-and-role-of-personal-status-code/>

<sup>374</sup> Steve Inskeep, “Tunisian Women Turn Revolution into Opportunity,” NPR, 5 June 2012, <http://www.npr.org/2012/06/05/154282351/tunisian-women-turn-revolution-into-opportunity>

<sup>375</sup> Gallup, “After the Arab Uprisings: Women on Rights, Religion, and Rebuilding—Final Report,” Summer 2012, 6, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/155306/Arab-Uprisings-Women-Rights-Religion-Rebuilding.aspx>



## Cuisine

The Tunisian kitchen is southern Mediterranean and reminiscent of southern Italian and French cuisines.<sup>376</sup> Long ago, Berbers contributed the national dish, *couscous*, made of semolina grains and served with vegetables or stews of chicken, lamb, or seafood. Spaniards brought chilies to North Africa from the New World, and Tunisians made *harissa*. This paste of finely milled hot chili peppers, garlic, and olive oil is served as an appetizer with virtually every meal. Other common ingredients of Tunisian cuisine include tomatoes, onions, chickpeas, dates, figs, and olives. The Tunisian kitchen also produces delicious pastries, such as *baklawa* (baklava) or the “stones of Carthage,” colorful bite-sized cakes topped with sugar walnuts. The fillings in *brik*, fried triangles of wafer-thin pastry, may be savoury (egg, cheese, tuna) or sweet (almond or sesame paste).<sup>377, 378, 379</sup>



©Magharebia/flickr.com  
Traditional feast

Tunisians are fond of strong coffee and mint tea. Cold beverages are flavored with fruits and flowers. While strict Muslims avoid alcohol, Tunisian wineries and breweries produce wine and beer, and liqueurs are distilled from local figs, dates, and herbs.<sup>380, 381, 382</sup>

## Traditional Dress

A visitor to the capital city, Tunis, is not likely to see young urban Tunisians wearing traditional dress. Yet, a trip to the countryside, or to one of the many regional folk festivals, would show Tunisians in traditional dress. For a man, this is a white *jalabiyya* (long robe) and baggy pants, over which is worn a dark short vest in warmer months, or a dark brown *bernous* (burnoose, hooded robe) made of wool or camel hair when it is colder. The *chehia* (or fez), a round, red or brown felt cap with a black tassel emerging from the top, is the traditional head covering for men. Tunisia was the primary manufacturer and exporter of the fez throughout the late Ottoman empire.<sup>383</sup> Women traditionally wear a long black robe (*sisfari*) to cover the arms, legs, and house clothes in public,



©Eliantotralenuvole/flickr.com  
Woman in traditional clothes

<sup>376</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Tunisia: Cultural Life: Daily Life and Social Customs,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/609229/Tunisia>

<sup>377</sup> University of New Hampshire, “The Cultural Cuisine Courier,” n.d., 1–2, <http://extension.unh.edu/Counties/Carroll/docs/NCAfrica.pdf>

<sup>378</sup> Donna Wheeler, Paul Clammer, and Emilie Filou, *Tunisia*, 5th ed. (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2010), 52–55.

<sup>379</sup> Sean Haley, “Our Guide to Tunisian Cuisine,” TunisiaLive, 1 September 2011, <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2011/09/01/our-guide-to-tunisian-cuisine/>

<sup>380</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Tunisia: Cultural Life: Daily Life and Social Customs,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/609229/Tunisia>

<sup>381</sup> Donna Wheeler, Paul Clammer, and Emilie Filou, *Tunisia*, 5th ed. (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet, 2010), 55–56.

<sup>382</sup> Gerald Zarr, *Tunisia—Culture Smart! The Essential Guide to Customs & Culture* (London: Kuperard, 2009), 121–123.

<sup>383</sup> Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby, eds., “Tunisians,” in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life*, 2nd ed. (Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, Cengage Learning, 2009), 559.



along with a *mellia* to cover the head and shoulders.<sup>384, 385</sup>

Female dress is politicized in Tunisia. Before the 2011 revolution, Tunisian government policy discouraged women from wearing the *hijab* (head covering), outlawing it for female government employees.<sup>386</sup> In early 2011, the interior ministry announced that Muslim women may wear the headscarf and Muslim men may wear beards for their photos in identification papers.<sup>387</sup> Salafists later challenged institutional bans on the *niqab* (face veil), and one case has gone to court.<sup>388, 389</sup>

## Arts

Tunisians of the 21st century balance an interest in the arts of Europe and Asia with a cultivation of indigenous art forms, which the government has endorsed and underwritten.

International festivals—such as the Testour Festival of Malouf Music, the Tabarka Jazz Festival, and the music, dance, theater, art, and film festivals of Carthage—attract large numbers of foreign tourists and artists. Festivals may showcase the work of famous artists like Abu al-Qassem al-Chabbi (1909–1934),

Tunisia’s national poet, whose work “To the Tyrants of the World” became a touchstone of the 2011 Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt.<sup>390</sup> A national office of handicrafts supports training and product sales for local wood carvers, metal workers, weavers, potters, and makers of baskets, glass, jewelry, and clothing.<sup>391</sup> Calligraphy and painting miniatures are traditional fine arts.<sup>392</sup>

The greatness of Tunisian Islamic architecture can be seen in classical mosques and public buildings. The typical Tunisian house, made of concrete with whitewash stucco, has a blue or aquamarine door. Tunisia provided colonial period architecture for the film “The English Patient,” and unique underground homes for “Star Wars.”<sup>393, 394, 395</sup>



©Astacus/flickr.com  
Ceramics

<sup>384</sup> Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby, eds. “Tunisians,” in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life*, 2nd ed., (Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, Cengage Learning, 2009), 559.

<sup>385</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Tunisia: Daily Life and Social Customs,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-93667/Tunisia>

<sup>386</sup> Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby, eds. “Tunisians,” in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life*, 2nd ed. (Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, Cengage Learning, 2009), 559.

<sup>387</sup> AFP, “Tunisia Allows Islamic Veil on ID Papers,” Google News, 1 April 2011, <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5jNKE5wRCHIORAlpVHnQRPdKiKtuw?docId=CNG.35b429a9727c7a4bda711221986b5300.901>

<sup>388</sup> Magharebia, “Tunisian Students, Salafists Clash over Niqab Ban,” 30 November 2011,

[http://magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en\\_GB/features/awi/newsbriefs/general/2011/11/30/newsbrief-01](http://magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/newsbriefs/general/2011/11/30/newsbrief-01)

<sup>389</sup> Bouazza Ben Bouazza, “Tunisia University Dean in Court in Veil Standoff,” Associated Press/ABC News, 5 July 2012, [http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/tunisia-university-dean-court-veil-standoff-16716524#.T\\_Ym8vWnl8E](http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/tunisia-university-dean-court-veil-standoff-16716524#.T_Ym8vWnl8E)

<sup>390</sup> Guy Raz, “Tunisian Poet’s Verses Inspire Arab Protestors,” All Things Considered, NPR, 30 January 2011, <http://www.npr.org/2011/01/30/133354601/Tunisian-Poets-Verses-Inspire-Arab-Protestors>

<sup>391</sup> Bernard Yaros, “Tunisian Government Seeks to Boost Production of Local Handicrafts,” TunisiaLive, 11 May 2012, <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2012/05/11/tunisian-government-seeks-to-boost-production-of-local-handicrafts/>

<sup>392</sup> CultureGrams World Edition, “Tunisia: The Arts,” 2012, [http://online.culturegrams.com/pdf/world\\_pdf.php?id=163](http://online.culturegrams.com/pdf/world_pdf.php?id=163)

<sup>393</sup> Donna Wheeler, Paul Clammer, and Emilie Filou, *Tunisia*, 5th ed. (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2010), 25, 74.

## Sports and Recreation

Traditional sporting activities include wild boar hunting, and camel and horse racing.<sup>396, 397</sup> Annual competitions, such as the Festival of the Sahara in Douz (which dates from 1910), are now marketed to tourists.<sup>398, 399</sup> Tunisia has a long history of games similar to hockey (*el 'egfa*) and soccer (*el koura*) that may have evolved from Berber rites for agricultural fertility and rain.<sup>400</sup>

Certainly the most popular sport in contemporary Tunisia is football (soccer), and each city or region has a team. Football matches tend to take place early Sunday afternoon, and cafes with sidewalk televisions are usually jammed. The national team, the Eagles of Carthage, is a fierce competitor in African Cup matches (2004 champions) and the Arab Football League, and has qualified for World Cup matches as well. Other popular sports are volleyball, handball, rugby, and basketball. Since 1964, Tunisians have earned 10 Olympic medals in athletics (track and field), boxing, and swimming.<sup>401</sup>

To relax as well as compete, Tunisians often turn to the water. Public bathhouses (*hammams*) date back to Roman times, and combine hygiene with gender-segregated socializing.<sup>402, 403</sup> The ministry of tourism now markets thalassotherapy (water therapy) to domestic and international visitors.<sup>404, 405</sup>



©Habib M'henni/flickr.com  
Local soccer team

<sup>394</sup> Adam Le Nevez, "35 Years Since Star Wars Premiered and the Force Is Still Strong in Tunisia," *TunisiaLive*, 24 May 2012, <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2012/05/24/35-years-since-star-wars-premiered-and-the-force-is-still-strong-in-tunisia/>

<sup>395</sup> Anouk Zijlma, "Star Wars Tours in Tunisia," *About.com*, 2012, <http://goafrica.about.com/od/peopleandculture/ss/Star-Wars-Tours-In-Tunisia.htm>

<sup>396</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Tunisia: Sports and Recreation," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/609229/Tunisia>

<sup>397</sup> Daisuke Sato, "Sport and Identity in Tunisia," *International Journal of Sport and Health Science* 3 (2005), 32–33.

<sup>398</sup> Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby, eds., "Tunisians," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life*, 2nd ed. (Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, Cengage Learning, 2009), 560.

<sup>399</sup> International Festival of the Sahara in Douz, "Presentation [French]," 2006, <http://www.festivaldouz.org.tn/fr/index.php?cat=2&id=1>

<sup>400</sup> Daisuke Sato, "Sport and Identity in Tunisia," *International Journal of Sport and Health Science* 3 (2005), 28–31.

<sup>401</sup> Official Website of the Olympic Movement, "Tunisia: Olympic Medals," 2012, <http://www.olympic.org/tunisia>

<sup>402</sup> Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby, eds. "Tunisians," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life*, 2nd ed. (Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, Cengage Learning, 2009), 561.

<sup>403</sup> Donna Wheeler, Paul Clammer, and Emilie Filou, "Gabes, Matmata and the Ksour," in *Tunisia*, 5th ed. (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2010), 74.

<sup>404</sup> Euromonitor International, "Travel and Tourism in Tunisia: Executive Summary," August 2011, <http://www.euromonitor.com/travel-and-tourism-in-tunisia/report>

<sup>405</sup> Ministère du Tourisme, République Tunisienne, "Thalassothérapie en Tunisie," Portail du Tourisme, 2011, <http://www.tourisme.gov.tn/index.php?id=95&L=0>

## Chapter 4 Assessment

1. While most Tunisians are Sunni Muslims, a few belong to the Shi'a sect of Islam.  
**True**  
 Some Tunisian Muslims follow Shi'a and/or Sufi beliefs and practices. Small populations of Christians and Jews live in Tunisia.
2. Tunisia's Personal Status Code (PSC) is a modern version of shari'a (Islamic law) that requires women to obey their husbands.  
**False**  
 The PSC legislates gender equity for women. It outlaws practices traditionally justified by shari'a, like polygamy, repudiation, and wifely obedience.
3. Even though Tunisia is an Islamic state, fruits and grains are fermented to make alcohol.  
**True**  
 Tunisia produces wine, beer, and liqueurs from local figs, dates, and herbs.
4. The language of instruction in primary schools is Darija, the Tunisian dialect of Arabic.  
**False**  
 The language of instruction in primary schools is Modern Standard Arabic. Darija is a colloquial, spoken dialect that lacks a standardized written form.
5. Tunisians must wear traditional dress in accordance with government policy and Islamic law.  
**False**  
 Before the 2011 revolution, Tunisian government policy discouraged women from wearing *hijab* (headcover). Conservative Islamists have since challenged institutional bans on *niqab* (face veil).

## CHAPTER 5: SECURITY

### Introduction

For decades, Tunisia was perceived as a peaceful, stable, and prosperous nation in a volatile region, a “voice for moderation and realism in the Middle East”.<sup>406</sup> When a 26-year-old fruit seller in Sidi Bouzid set himself on fire on 17 December 2010 to protest police confiscation of his cart, few anticipated the revolt and “Arab Spring” that would follow.<sup>407, 408</sup> Tunisians unleashed deep, long-held resentment and anger at then-President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali. During weeks of mass protests against high unemployment, government corruption, and the political repression by the Ben Ali regime, hundreds of demonstrators were killed in clashes with security forces.<sup>409, 410</sup> Ben Ali fled the country for Saudi Arabia on 14 January 2011, and has since been convicted in absentia of economic crimes and causing civilian deaths.<sup>411, 412</sup>



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Security forces

In October 2011, an interim government oversaw elections of a new Constituent Assembly. This legislative body is charged with writing a new constitution that may redefine the nation’s leadership structure, and will determine how new leaders are to be chosen in 2013.<sup>413</sup> Tunisians are impatient with the lack of governmental solutions for economic problems, particularly high living costs and unemployment rates. They disagree about the role of Islam in government, and about the roles of both religion and government in relation to gender equity and civil rights.<sup>414, 415</sup> Protests and demonstrations highlighting these issues may contribute to internal security challenges for some time to come.

<sup>406</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Background Note: Tunisia: Foreign Relations,” 9 March 2012, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5439.htm#foreign>

<sup>407</sup> Debora MacKenzie, “I Predict a Riot: Where the Next Dictator Will Fall,” *New Scientist* Issue 2802 (3 March 2011), <http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg20928024.000-i-predict-a-riot-where-the-next-dictator-will-fall.html>

<sup>408</sup> Jay Ulfelder, “Crystal Clear,” *Foreign Policy*, 9 July 2012, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/06/22/crystal\\_clear](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/06/22/crystal_clear)

<sup>409</sup> Associated Press, “Report: 338 Killed During Tunisia Revolution,” *Fox News*, 5 May 2012, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2012/05/05/report-338-killed-during-tunisia-revolution/>

<sup>410</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, U.S. Department of State, “Tunisia,” in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011*, n.d., [http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?dynamic\\_load\\_id=186451](http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?dynamic_load_id=186451)

<sup>411</sup> Agence Presse France, “Tunisia Seizes Dozens of Ben Ali Yachts and Cars: Report,” *Google News*, 2 February 2012, <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5jkDK2ZM0AZYqaPFxVn-pwXDRmdcg?docId=CNG.024359129817f80d27d8ccd84469c668.51/>

<sup>412</sup> Tarek Amara, “Tunisian Court Sentences Ben Ali, Security Chiefs over Killings,” *Reuters*, 13 June 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/06/13/us-tunisia-benali-sentence-idUSBRE85C1CZ20120613>

<sup>413</sup> Alexis Arieff, “Political Transition in Tunisia (RS21666),” *Congressional Research Service*, 18 June 2012, 2, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS21666.pdf>

<sup>414</sup> Nicole Rowsell and Asma Ben Yahia, “Revolution to Reform: Citizen Expectations on the One-Year Anniversary of the Tunisian Uprising,” *National Democratic Institute*, January 2012, 7, 9, [http://www.ndi.org/files/NDI\\_Tunisia-FG-Report-Jan2012-ENG.pdf](http://www.ndi.org/files/NDI_Tunisia-FG-Report-Jan2012-ENG.pdf)

<sup>415</sup> Gallup, “After the Arab Uprisings: Women on Rights, Religion, and Rebuilding—Final Report,” Summer 2012, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/155306/Arab-Uprisings-Women-Rights-Religion-Rebuilding.aspx>

Tunisia has had few external threats to its security. Occasional disputes with neighbors are overshadowed by large-scale cooperative efforts, for example the Algeria-Tunisia joint gas pipeline, or the recent care extended to some 100,000 refugees from the 2011 Libyan civil war. However, uncontrolled arms and fighters from post-war Libya may become a security threat.<sup>416, 417</sup> Tunisia has generally tried to mediate in wider regional conflicts, whether among members of the Maghreb Union, or between Israel and Palestine.<sup>418</sup> But in post-revolution Tunisia, some political factions have called for the criminalization of relations with Israel.<sup>419</sup> Terrorist actions in Tunisia have been rare. The international consensus is that the Ben Ali government used the threat of terrorism to repress political dissent. However, the 2012 activities of Tunisian militants (described by some as international terrorists) has made it difficult for the interim government to balance newly won civil liberties with state security.<sup>420</sup>



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Waving flag

### U.S.-Tunisia Relations

Security and economic issues have long shaped U.S.-Tunisian relations. Given Tunisia's geopolitical position in North Africa and the Middle East, the bulk of U.S. bilateral assistance to Tunisia has gone toward military equipment, training, and education. The U.S. has provided a total of USD 890 million in military assistance since 1956, and provided an additional USD 32 million since the 2011 revolution. Tunisians regularly train at U.S. institutions, and some 70% of the Tunisian military inventory is of U.S. origin.<sup>421</sup> Tunisia is a member of the U.S. Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP), an interagency regional program focused on security issues in North and West Africa.<sup>422</sup> In 2012, Tunisia's interim government approached the U.S. for more help to fight al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb.<sup>423</sup>



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US sending supplies

Soon after the U.S. became the first major power to recognize newly independent Tunisia, Congress funded a USAID program for Tunisian economic and political development that

<sup>416</sup> Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Tunisia: Country Specific Information," 4 June 2012, [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1045.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1045.html)

<sup>417</sup> Magharebia, "Tunisian Airstrike Hits Traffickers in Tataouine," 21 June 2012, [http://magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en\\_GB/features/awi/newsbriefs/general/2012/06/21/newsbrief-01](http://magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/newsbriefs/general/2012/06/21/newsbrief-01)

<sup>418</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Tunisia: Foreign Relations," 9 March 2012, <http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/tunisia/196390.htm>

<sup>419</sup> George Sadek, "Tunisia: Move to Criminalize Normalization of Relations with Israel in the New Penal Code," 27 March 2012, Library of Congress, [http://www.loc.gov/lawweb/servlet/lloc\\_news?disp3\\_l205403054\\_text](http://www.loc.gov/lawweb/servlet/lloc_news?disp3_l205403054_text)

<sup>420</sup> Alexis Arieff, "Political Transition in Tunisia (RS21666)," Congressional Research Service, 18 June 2012, 7–9, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS21666.pdf>

<sup>421</sup> Embassy of the United States, Tunis, Tunisia, "Fact Sheet on U.S. Military and Political Assistance for Tunisia," April 2012, <http://tunisia.usembassy.gov/fact-sheet-u.s.-military-and-political-assistance.html>

<sup>422</sup> Alexis Arieff, "Political Transition in Tunisia (RS21666)," Congressional Research Service, 18 June 2012, 16–18, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS21666.pdf>

<sup>423</sup> Houda Trabelsi, "Tunisia Solicits Foreign Help to Counter al-Qaeda Threat," 22 June 2012, [http://magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en\\_GB/features/awi/features/2012/06/22/feature-02](http://magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2012/06/22/feature-02)



continued until 1994.<sup>424, 425</sup> The U.S. State Department's Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), launched in 2002, continues to support projects for education, women's empowerment, civil society development, and economic reform. The U.S. supported Tunisians' largely peaceful demonstrations and the interim government after the overthrow of President Ben Ali. In 2011, MEPI earmarked USD 20 million to support Tunisia's democratic transition and, in 2012, the U.S. State Department provided USD 100 million toward Tunisia's debt payments.<sup>426, 427</sup> Future years may see more growth in U.S. non-military aid and trade if Tunisia reduces corruption and human rights abuses.<sup>428</sup>

## Tunisian Relations with Neighboring Countries

### Algeria

Tunisia has developed a stable relationship with gas- and oil-rich Algeria. Tunisia supported Algeria during its war for independence from France (1954–1961). The countries signed friendship treaties in 1970 and in 1983, the same year in which their joint gas pipeline to Italy was inaugurated.<sup>429</sup> They resolved a long-standing land boundary dispute in 1993, and demarcated their maritime border in 2002.<sup>430, 431</sup> Algeria gave Tunisia USD 100 million in aid to support Tunisia's political and economic recovery after the overthrow of Tunisian President Ben Ali in January 2011.<sup>432</sup>



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Algerian flag

In the 2000s, Salafist insurgents merged with al-Qaeda to form al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), which continues to wage a terrorist campaign against the Algerian government and across regional borders.<sup>433</sup> Tunisia's border with Algeria is open (Tunisians reportedly drive into Algeria for its cheaper gasoline), but no bus or train service crosses the border.<sup>434</sup> Foreign

<sup>424</sup> Embassy of the United States, Tunis, Tunisia, "Fact Sheet on U.S. Military and Political Assistance for Tunisia," April 2012, <http://tunisia.usembassy.gov/fact-sheet-u.s.-military-and-political-assistance.html>

<sup>425</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Tunisia: U.S.-Tunisian Relations," 9 March 2012, <http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/tunisia/196390.htm>

<sup>426</sup> U.S. Department of State, Middle East Partnership Initiative, "Frequently Asked Questions About MEPI," n.d., <http://mepi.state.gov/about-faq.html>

<sup>427</sup> Alexis Arieff, "Political Transition in Tunisia (RS21666)," Congressional Research Service, 18 June 2012, 7–9, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS21666.pdf>

<sup>428</sup> Alexis Arieff, "Political Transition in Tunisia (RS21666)," Congressional Research Service, 18 June 2012, 14–15, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS21666.pdf>

<sup>429</sup> Jean R. Tartter, "Chapter 4: Government and Politics," in *Tunisia: A Country Study*, 3rd ed., ed. Harold D. Nelson (Washington, DC: American University, 1988), 254–255.

<sup>430</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Tunisia: Foreign Relations," 9 March 2012, <http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/tunisia/196390.htm>

<sup>431</sup> Judge Advocate General's Corps, U.S. Navy, "Tunisia," in *Maritime Claims Reference Manual* (DoD C-2005.1-M), 2005, 617, <http://www.jag.navy.mil/organization/documents/mcrm/tunisia.pdf>

<sup>432</sup> Associated Press, "Algeria Gives \$100 Million in Aid to Tunisia," *Bloomberg Businessweek*, 16 March 2011, <http://www.businessweek.com/ap/financialnews/D9M0I48O2.htm>

<sup>433</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Algeria," in *The World Factbook*, 28 June 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ag.html>

<sup>434</sup> Donna Wheeler, Paul Clammer, and Emilie Filou, *Tunisia*, 5th ed. (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2010), 143, 295.

travelers are cautioned against entering the border area because of the risk of terrorist activity.<sup>435</sup> Tunisia declared its Sahara desert a “closed military zone” in June 2012.<sup>436</sup>

### Libya

Tunisia had uneven relations with Libya under the late Colonel Muammar Qadhafi. In 1974 Tunisia’s President Bourguiba temporarily entertained Qadhafi’s proposal to unify the two countries.<sup>437</sup> In 1980, Tunisia suspected that Libya was behind an armed attack on security facilities in Gafsa. A 1982 cooperation agreement was strained in 1985 by the expulsion of hundreds of suspected Libyan spies from Tunisia and, in retaliation to this measure, by Libya’s expulsion of 30,000 Tunisian migrant workers.<sup>438</sup> Tunisia complied with UN sanctions against Libya for the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am airplane over Lockerbie, Scotland, but later supported lifting those sanctions.<sup>439, 440</sup> Libya became Tunisia’s most important trade partner outside of the European Union.



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Muammar Qadhafi

Libya’s 2011 civil war and its aftermath have presented several challenges for Tunisia. During the Libyan war, hundreds of thousands of Tunisian migrant workers and Libyan refugees fled to Tunisia, reducing remittance revenues, increasing unemployment, and straining humanitarian resources.<sup>441, 442</sup> Economic trade between the two countries dropped by about USD 200 million from USD 1 billion in 2010. (Tunisian exports to Libya remained stable, but imports from Libya dropped by 93% from about USD 284 million.)<sup>443</sup> High-level refugees strained political ties. Tunisia extradited Al Baghdadi Ali al-Mahmoud, Qadhafi’s prime minister, to Libya in June 2012, amid concerns that he would not receive a fair trial in Libya’s fragile justice system.<sup>444</sup> Despite Tunisian warnings not to fire across the border, Libyan armed conflict spilled into

<sup>435</sup> Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Tunisia: Country Specific Information,” 4 June 2012, [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1045.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1045.html)

<sup>436</sup> Magharebia, “Tunisian Sahara Declared ‘Closed Military Zone’,” 1 July 2012, [http://magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en\\_GB/features/awi/newsbriefs/general/2012/07/01/newsbrief-05](http://magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/newsbriefs/general/2012/07/01/newsbrief-05)

<sup>437</sup> Jean R. Tartter, “Chapter 4: Government and Politics,” in *Tunisia: A Country Study*, 3rd ed., ed. Harold D. Nelson (Washington, DC: American University [DA Pam 550-89], 1986, 256–257.

<sup>438</sup> Jane’s, “External Affairs,” *Security Sentinel*

<sup>439</sup> Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen M. Hobby, eds., “Tunisia: History,” in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of the Nations Vol. 2, Africa*, 12th ed. (Detroit, MI: Thomson Gale, 2007), 712.

<sup>440</sup> BBC News, “Push to Lift Libya Sanctions,” 29 December 2000, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/1092421.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/1092421.stm)

<sup>441</sup> Lahcen Achy, “Tunisia’s Economic Challenges,” Carnegie Middle East Center, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, December 2011, 5, [http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/tunisia\\_economy.pdf](http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/tunisia_economy.pdf)

<sup>442</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “2012 UNHCR Country Operations Profile: Tunisia,” 2012, <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e486166&submit=GO>

<sup>443</sup> U.S. Commercial Service, U.S. Department of Commerce, “Doing Business in Tunisia: 2012 Country Commercial Guide for U.S. Companies,” 2012, 4, <http://photos.state.gov/libraries/tunisia/231771/PDFs/2012%20Tunisia%20Country%20Commercial%20Guide.pdf>

<sup>444</sup> Reuters, “Tunisia Extradites Former Qaddafi Prime Minister to Libya,” *New York Times*, 24 June 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/25/world/middleeast/tunisia-extradites-qaddafis-prime-minister-to-libya.html?emc=tnt&tntemail=y>

Tunisian towns.<sup>445</sup> Since war's end, Tunisia-Libya borders have closed several times.<sup>446, 447, 448</sup> Uncontrolled arms and fighters from Libya continue to be a security threat.<sup>449, 450</sup>

### *European Union (EU)*

Tunisia participates in several European governance organizations, including the European Neighborhood Policy, the Mediterranean programs of NATO, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).<sup>451, 452</sup> France and Italy provide Tunisia with defense and security assistance.<sup>453</sup>



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EU election observer

A large Tunisian diaspora is concentrated in Europe. In 2008, roughly 870,000 Tunisians were living in Europe. The majority of the migrants (54.6%) are in France, followed by Italy (13.4%) and Germany (7.8%).<sup>454</sup> Tunisian expatriates and exiles have historically maintained opposition to the government from abroad. Islamic militancy in European diaspora communities has motivated countries to closely follow the movement of people between Europe and Tunisia.<sup>455</sup>

Tunisia shares a maritime boundary with Italy. The tiny Italian island of Lampedusa (pop. 5,000), a mere 113 km (70 mi) from the Tunisian mainland, for years has been a stopover for African migrant workers and refugees on the way to mainland Europe. In 2011, tens of thousands of Tunisians and Libyans overwhelmed the island. Lampedusa became a flashpoint for tensions about immigration between the EU and Africa—some Tunisians drowned seeking safe harbor, and others burned a refugee center.<sup>456, 457, 458</sup> The nearby island nation of Malta is also embroiled in the immigration tensions.<sup>459, 460</sup>

<sup>445</sup> Houda Mzioudet, "Tunisian Minister of Interior Addresses Concerns in Libyan-Tunisian Border Town," TunisiaLive, 26 May 2012, <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2012/05/26/tunisian-minister-of-interior-addresses-concerns-in-libyan-tunisian-border-town/>

<sup>446</sup> Anita McNaught, "Tunisia Closes Border with Libya Amid Tension," Al Jazeera, 9 December 2011, <http://www.aljazeera.com/video/africa/2011/12/2011129162014702704.html>

<sup>447</sup> Zied Mhersi, "Tunisian Libyan Border Cross Closed to Enhance Security," TunisiaLive, 3 February 2012, <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2012/02/03/tunisian-libyan-border-cross-closed-to-enhance-security/>

<sup>448</sup> Afifa Ltifi, "Libyans Close Ras Jadir Border," TunisiaLive, 10 June 2012, <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2012/06/10/libyans-close-ras-jadir-border/>

<sup>449</sup> Lin Noueihed and Tarek Amara, "Smuggling Stirs Trouble on Tunisia's Libya Border," Reuters, 2 May 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/05/02/us-tunisia-smuggling-idUSBRE8410UL20120502>

<sup>450</sup> Magharebia, "Tunisian Airstrike Hits Traffickers in Tataouine," 21 June 2012, [http://magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en\\_GB/features/awi/newsbriefs/general/2012/06/21/newsbrief-01](http://magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/newsbriefs/general/2012/06/21/newsbrief-01)

<sup>451</sup> High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, European Commission, "A New Response to a Changing Neighborhood: A Review of European Neighbourhood Policy," 25 May 2011, [http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com\\_11\\_303\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com_11_303_en.pdf)

<sup>452</sup> Jane's, "Security, Tunisia," in *Sentinel Security Assessment—North Africa*, 30 January 2012.

<sup>453</sup> Jane's, "Security and Foreign Forces, Tunisia," in *Sentinel Security Assessment—North Africa*, 20 April 2012.

<sup>454</sup> Teresa Graziano, "The Tunisian Diaspora: Between "Digital Riots" and Web Activism," (working paper Fondation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, April 2012), <http://www.e-diasporas.fr/working-papers/Graziano-Tunisians-EN.pdf>

<sup>455</sup> Jane's, "Security, Tunisia," in *Sentinel Security Assessment—North Africa*, 30 January 2012.

<sup>456</sup> Olly Lambert, "Italy's Lampedusa Left in Crisis After Arab Spring," BBC News Europe, 14 June 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-13747558>

## Military and Defense Forces

Tunisia's military is small compared to other countries in the Arab world—accounting for only 1.2% of GDP (USD 590 million) in 2011.<sup>461</sup> This reflects the actions of its former presidents, Bourguiba and Ben Ali, who kept the defense forces small and out of politics.<sup>462, 463</sup> Estimated total manpower in 2011 was 35,800, with 27,000 in the army, 4,800 in the navy, and 4,000 in the air force.<sup>464</sup> Conscription at age 20, for a one-year term of service, provides about 80% of land forces.<sup>465, 466</sup>



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Tunisian soldier

Historically, the makeup of the armed forces replicated regional disparities: conscripts came from economically depressed areas of the south, while officers came from the capital and coast.<sup>467</sup> Military equipment is largely surplus from the United States or NATO countries.<sup>468</sup> With the exception of a few troops in UN peacekeeping units, Tunisian soldiers have little combat experience. Their responsibilities to protect borders and maintain domestic stability have brought them into armed conflict with a growing number of smugglers, traffickers, insurgents, and terrorists in recent years. They are likely to receive increased international aid in future years to support their participation in international security activities.<sup>469, 470</sup>

Until a new constitution is in place and new leadership elections are held, Tunisia's president (Moncef Marzouki as of September 2012) is Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. The Ministry of National Defense oversees the three military branches, which are headed by Joint Chief of Staff Rachid Ammar. In January 2011, General Ammar refused to order the shooting of protestors and temporarily withdrew military forces from the capital Tunis. These actions have

<sup>457</sup> David McMurray, "Lamped USA," Middle East Research and Information Project, 11 April 2012, <http://merip.org/lamped-usa>

<sup>458</sup> Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2012—European Union: Italy*, 22 January 2012, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4f2007dcc.html>

<sup>459</sup> Nikki Abela Mercieca, "Malta on Alert as Tunisian Migrants Land in Lampedusa," *Times of Malta*, 13 February 2011, <http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20110213/local/malta-on-alert-as-tunisian-migrants-land-in-lampedusa.349982>

<sup>460</sup> Times of Malta, "Updated: AFM Coordinating Migrants' Rescue," 17 March 2012, <http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20120317/local/five-dead-on-immigrant-boat-off-lampedusa.411513>

<sup>461</sup> Jane's, "Defence Budget, Tunisia," in *Sentinel Security Assessment—North Africa*, 29 February 2012.

<sup>462</sup> James L. Gelvin, *The Arab Uprisings: What Everyone Needs to Know* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 61.

<sup>463</sup> Querine Hanlon, "Security Sector Reform in Tunisia: A Year after the Jasmine Revolution (Special Report 304)," United States Institute of Peace, March 2012, 4, <http://www.usip.org/files/resources/SR304.pdf>

<sup>464</sup> "Chapter Seven: Middle East and North Africa: Tunisia," in *The Military Balance* 111:1 (2011), 332–333.

<sup>465</sup> National Defense Ministry [Tunisia], "The National Service," n.d., [http://www.defense.tn/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=37](http://www.defense.tn/en/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=37)

<sup>466</sup> Jane's, "Armed Forces, Tunisia," in *Sentinel Security Assessment—North Africa*, 25 February 2012.

<sup>467</sup> Lewis B. Ware, *Tunisia in the Post-Bourguiba Era: The Role of the Military in a Civil Arab Republic* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 1986).

<sup>468</sup> Jane's, "Security, Tunisia," in *Sentinel Security Assessment—North Africa*, 30 January 2012.

<sup>469</sup> Agence France-Presse, "U.S. Gave Tunisia \$32 Million in Military Aid: General," *Defense News*, 24 April 2012, <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20120424/DEFREG04/304240005/U-S-Gave-Tunisia-32-million-Military-Aid-General>

<sup>470</sup> Alexis Arieff, "Political Transition in Tunisia (RS21666)," Congressional Research Service, 18 June 2012, 16–17, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS21666.pdf>



been credited with forcing Ben Ali's final departure from the country.<sup>471, 472</sup> The armed forces have since gained widespread public approval and trust; in contrast, the police and other internal security forces are "reviled and hated."<sup>473, 474, 475</sup>

### Police and Internal Security Forces

Tunisia's internal security forces began as two organizations: the Sûreté Nationale (SN-National Police), a continuation of French colonial policing, and the Garde Nationale (National Guard), a rural police force originally focused on patrolling the border during the Algerian war of independence.<sup>476</sup> Both groups are under the administration of the Interior Ministry although the National Guard receives training and equipment from the military.<sup>477, 478</sup> Combined forces numbered 50,000 before the 2011 revolution, and now total 61,000.<sup>479</sup> The National Guard's 12,000 paramilitary members continue to secure rural and coastal areas with small arms, armored personnel carriers, and inshore patrol craft. Their special forces conduct counterterrorism and hostage rescue. The National Police are organized into urban-centered districts, and enforce public safety, traffic rules, and so on. Special units at the national level train for riot control and rapid intervention, as well as counter-terrorism and hostage rescue. The Interior Ministry runs the Presidential Guard, the Judicial Police, the nation's prisons, intelligence services, and internal security training colleges.<sup>480, 481</sup> Tunisia's Directorate of Customs, under the Ministry of Finance, tackles internal security concerns associated with smuggling, drug trafficking, and the looting of cultural artifacts.<sup>482</sup>

Tunisia is now struggling to rebuild public confidence in its internal security services. In March 2011, the Interior Ministry announced online that it would disband the Directorate of State Security (a.k.a. "secret police"), the domestic intelligence agency



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Tunisian armed guard



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Riot police

<sup>471</sup> David D. Kirkpatrick, "In Tunisia, Clashes Continue as Power Shifts a Second Time," *New York Times*, 15 January 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/16/world/africa/16tunis.html>

<sup>472</sup> Jane's, "Security, Tunisia," in *Sentinel Security Assessment—North Africa*, 30 January 2012.

<sup>473</sup> Angelique Chrisafis, "Tunisia Calls in Army Reservists to Stem Unrest," *The Guardian*, 8 February 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/feb/08/tunisia-army-reservists-unrest>

<sup>474</sup> Querine Hanlon, "Security Sector Reform in Tunisia: A Year after the Jasmine Revolution (Special Report 304)," United States Institute of Peace, March 2012, 4–5, <http://www.usip.org/files/resources/SR304.pdf>

<sup>475</sup> Alexis Arieff, "Political Transition in Tunisia (RS21666)," Congressional Research Service, 18 June 2012, 8, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS21666.pdf>

<sup>476</sup> Frederick Ehrenreich, "Chapter 5: National Security," in *Tunisia: A Country Study*, 3rd ed., ed. Harold D. Nelson (Washington, DC: American University, 1988), 308, 312.

<sup>477</sup> Jane's, "Security and Foreign Forces, Tunisia," in *Sentinel Security Assessment—North Africa*, 20 April 2012.

<sup>478</sup> Jane's, "Armed Forces, Tunisia," in *Sentinel Security Assessment—North Africa*, 25 February 2012.

<sup>479</sup> Querine Hanlon, "Security Sector Reform in Tunisia: A Year after the Jasmine Revolution (Special Report 304)," United States Institute of Peace, March 2012, 6, <http://www.usip.org/files/resources/SR304.pdf>

<sup>480</sup> Jane's, "Security and Foreign Forces, Tunisia," in *Sentinel Security Assessment—North Africa*, 20 April 2012.

<sup>481</sup> Querine Hanlon, "Security Sector Reform in Tunisia: A Year after the Jasmine Revolution (Special Report 304)," United States Institute of Peace, March 2012, 5–6, <http://www.usip.org/files/resources/SR304.pdf>

<sup>482</sup> Jane's, "Security and Foreign Forces, Tunisia," in *Sentinel Security Assessment—North Africa*, 20 April 2012.



that had gathered secret files on Tunisians.<sup>483, 484, 485</sup> Several officials from Ben Ali’s interior ministry and internal security apparatus stood trial for their roles in the deaths of protestors during the revolution. Although many received convictions, some defendants were acquitted. This angered the families of protestors who were killed, and increased public demands for justice and compensation.<sup>486</sup> The interim government solicited a report on reform in Tunisia’s interior ministry and internal security sector, but found its proposals too “old regime.”<sup>487</sup> The International Crisis Group describes a “vicious circle” of relations between police and the public:<sup>488</sup>

Police—denounced by a public eager for accountability—are reluctant to patrol the streets; security suffers; in turn, the police are subject to harsher criticism, which only strengthens their resolve to stay on the sidelines. In other instances, the feeling of alienation from the public can lead security forces to violent excesses, which only make things worse.

## Issues Affecting Stability

### *Poverty*

For decades, low wages and unemployment, high living costs, and the unequal distribution of resources have periodically moved Tunisians to public protests. Poverty rates in the country’s interior are close to 30%, and the unemployment rate has been estimated at 25–44% among recent university graduates.<sup>489, 490, 491</sup> The Ben Ali government invested in employment programs and other initiatives for youth, but the programs were concentrated in urban areas. Since the 2011 revolution, more jobs and lowered living costs have been in the forefront of popular demands.<sup>492</sup> If jobs fail to materialize, and Tunisia fails to alleviate the associated poverty in other ways, violent protests may recur.

<sup>483</sup> BBC News Africa, “Tunisia Interim Leaders Dissolve Secret Police Agency,” 7 March 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12669461>

<sup>484</sup> Querine Hanlon, “Security Sector Reform in Tunisia: A Year after the Jasmine Revolution (Special Report 304),” United States Institute of Peace, March 2012, 6, <http://www.usip.org/files/resources/SR304.pdf>

<sup>485</sup> Jane’s, “Security and Foreign Forces, Tunisia,” in *Sentinel Security Assessment—North Africa*, 20 April 2012.

<sup>486</sup> Tarek Amara, “Tunisian Court Sentences Ben Ali, Security Chiefs over Killings,” Reuters, 13 June 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/06/13/us-tunisia-benali-sentence-idUSBRE85C1CZ20120613>

<sup>487</sup> Querine Hanlon, “Security Sector Reform in Tunisia: A Year after the Jasmine Revolution (Special Report 304),” United States Institute of Peace, March 2012, 8, <http://www.usip.org/files/resources/SR304.pdf>

<sup>488</sup> International Crisis Group, “Tunisia: Combatting Impunity, Restoring Security (Middle East-North Africa Report No. 123),” 9 May 2012, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/north-africa/tunisia/123-tunisia-combatting-impunity-restoring-security.aspx>

<sup>489</sup> Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “2012 Investment Climate Statement—Tunisia,” June 2012, <http://www.state.gov/e/eb/rls/othr/ics/2012/191253.htm>

<sup>490</sup> World Bank, “Tunisia Overview,” 2012, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tunisia/overview>

<sup>491</sup> Ben Guerdane, “Unemployment Breeds Anger in Home of Arab Spring,” Reuters, 30 May 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/05/30/us-tunisia-unemployment-idUSBRE84T0WT20120530>

<sup>492</sup> Nicole Rowsell and Asma Ben Yahia, “Revolution to Reform: Citizen Expectations on the One-Year Anniversary of the Tunisian Uprising,” National Democratic Institute, January 2012, 7, 9, [http://www.ndi.org/files/NDI\\_Tunisia-FG-Report-Jan2012-ENG.pdf](http://www.ndi.org/files/NDI_Tunisia-FG-Report-Jan2012-ENG.pdf)

### *Religious Extremism*

Since widespread Islamist protests in the 1980s, Arab governments felt justified in repressive crackdowns against religious extremists. Thus, Tunisia's largest Islamist group, al-Nahda, did not lead the 2011 revolution. Once Ben Ali left, exiled leaders returned to contribute to a changed Tunisia.<sup>493</sup> Al-Nahda won a 41% majority of legislative seats in the first free post-revolution elections.<sup>494</sup>

The interim government now faces pressure from more conservative Islamists, labeled by many as Salafists. They have desecrated *zawaya* (tomb sites) of venerated religious figures, on the grounds that true Muslims venerate only Allah.<sup>495</sup> They have protested against the government's refusal to name shari'a as the main source of legislation in the new constitution.<sup>496</sup>



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Political march

They have demonstrated against restrictions on the wearing of Islamic attire, bars and liquor stores, and art deemed insulting to Islam. Incidents have turned violent, and many Tunisians have condemned the government for failing to control these groups.<sup>497, 498</sup>

Links between extreme Islamists and terrorist organizations concern security analysts.<sup>499</sup> In May 2012, thousands traveled to Kairouan to attend the second national meeting of the Tunisian Salafist group Ansar al Sharia, which was founded by a member of the terrorist Tunisian Combatant Group.<sup>500</sup> In June 2012, al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri called on Tunisians to rise up against al-Nahda for accepting a constitution not based on shari'a.<sup>501</sup>

### *Refugees*

Political violence in Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt displaced a million people in 2011.<sup>502</sup> Tunisia absorbed hundreds of thousands of refugees and returning migrant workers, while thousands of Tunisians fled toward Europe. The crisis brought out the best in many Tunisians, who opened

<sup>493</sup> James L. Gelvin, *The Arab Uprisings: What Everyone Needs to Know* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 57–58.

<sup>494</sup> Alexis Arieff, "Political Transition in Tunisia (RS21666): Summary," Congressional Research Service, 18 June 2012, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS21666.pdf> Summary

<sup>495</sup> Magharebia, "Tunisian Salafists Raise Flag at Sufi Site," 11 March 2012,

[http://magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en\\_GB/features/awi/newsbriefs/general/2012/03/11/newsbrief-01](http://magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/newsbriefs/general/2012/03/11/newsbrief-01)

<sup>496</sup> AFP, "Tunisia's Constitution Will Not Be Based on Sharia: Islamist Party," Al Arabiya News, 27 March 2012, <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/03/27/203529.html>

<sup>497</sup> Jane's, "Tunisian Government Expresses Concern over Religious Tensions," in *Country Risk Daily Report*, 20 March 2012.

<sup>498</sup> Al Jazeera, "Tunisian Leaders Condemn 'Extremist' Riots," 13 June 2012,

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2012/06/201261313558863257.html>

<sup>499</sup> Alexis Arieff, "Political Transition in Tunisia (RS21666)," Congressional Research Service, 18 June 2012, 6–7, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS21666.pdf>

<sup>500</sup> Houda Trabelsi, "Salafist Congress in Kairouan Draws Thousands," Magharebia, 23 May 2012,

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<sup>501</sup> Alexis Arieff, "Political Transition in Tunisia (RS21666)," Congressional Research Service, 18 June 2012, 8,

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<sup>502</sup> Reuters Foundation, "Italy Quarrels with EU Partners Over Libyan Migrants," 11 April 2011,

<http://af.reuters.com/article/libyaNews/idAFLDE73A12U20110411?sp=true>

their homes to refugees.<sup>503</sup> According to some, the crisis also brought out the worst in many Europeans; EU members squabbled over who should be responsible for the humanitarian assistance of the refugees.<sup>504, 505</sup>

The “mixed migratory flows” of 2011—the largest refugee crisis to date in the Mediterranean—involved additional security issues. When over 100,000 people converged on the Libya-Tunisia border, many were stranded without food, water, or shelter.<sup>506, 507</sup> Refugees from different countries fought with each other, and with local residents.<sup>508</sup> In 2012, the Shousha transit camp in southern Tunisia still housed almost 3,000 refugees, typically sub-Saharan Africans who hope to resettle in a third country but have been rejected by the countries they applied to for resettlement.<sup>509, 510</sup> Resettlement procedures and physical departures will likely continue into 2013.<sup>511</sup> Continuing unrest in the Middle East and Africa could easily escalate into new mass migrations—a few Syrian refugees have already reached Tunisia.<sup>512</sup>



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Refugees leaving Libya



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Armed guards

### *Border Security*

Illegal migrants are only one of several challenges for those administering Tunisia’s borders. Smuggling is a traditional economic activity in the Sahara, and Tunisia’s southern desert borders with Algeria and Libya are difficult to control. The rise in arms trafficking since the Libyan civil war led Tunisia to declare its Saharan territory a closed military zone in 2012.<sup>513, 514</sup>

Soft borders attract international terrorists. Al-Qaeda claimed

<sup>503</sup> *Forced Migration Review* 39 “Proud to be Tunisian,” June 2012, <http://www.fmreview.org/north-africa/eyster-et-al.html>

<sup>504</sup> Reuters Foundation, “Italy Quarrels with EU Partners Over Libyan Migrants,” 11 April 2011, <http://af.reuters.com/article/libyaNews/idAFLDE73A12U20110411?sp=true>

<sup>505</sup> BBC News Europe, “EU Demands Tunisia Do More to Stop Illegal Migration,” 12 April 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-13055153>

<sup>506</sup> Talea Miller, “Humanitarian Crisis Grows on Libya-Tunisian Border,” PBS Newshour, 1 March 2011, <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/2011/03/crisis-on-libya-tunisia-border-as-huge-crowds-flee.html>

<sup>507</sup> Ban Dhayy, “A Young Man Flees to Tunisia and Finds Hope in Wake of Libyan Violence,” UNICEF, 12 April 2011, [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/Tunisia\\_58284.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/Tunisia_58284.html)

<sup>508</sup> Priyanka Pruthi, “Tunisia: Families Who Escaped Violence in Libya Face new Dangers in Tunisian Camp,” UNICEF, 31 May 2011, [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/Tunisia\\_58715.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/Tunisia_58715.html)

<sup>509</sup> Elizabeth Eyster, Houda Chalchoul and Carole Laleve, “Proud to be Tunisian,” *Forced Migration Review* 39 (June 2012), <http://www.fmreview.org/north-africa/eyster-et-al.html>

<sup>510</sup> Amaya Valcarcel, “Resettlement is Needed for Refugees in Tunisia,” *Forced Migration Review* 39 (June 2012), <http://www.fmreview.org/north-africa/valcarcel.html>

<sup>511</sup> Guido Ambroso, “Bordering on a Crisis,” *Forced Migration Review* 39 (June 2012), <http://www.fmreview.org/north-africa/ambroso.html>

<sup>512</sup> Hend Hassassi, “Demonstration to be Held in Support of the Syrian People,” *TunisiaLive*, 15 June 2012, <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2012/06/15/demonstration-to-be-held-in-support-of-the-syrian-people/>

<sup>513</sup> Magharebia, “Tunisian Airstrike Hits Traffickers in Tataouine,” 21 June 2012, [http://magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en\\_GB/features/awi/newsbriefs/general/2012/06/21/newsbrief-01](http://magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/newsbriefs/general/2012/06/21/newsbrief-01)

<sup>514</sup> Magharebia, “Tunisian Sahara Declared ‘Closed Military Zone’,” 1 July 2012, [http://magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en\\_GB/features/awi/newsbriefs/general/2012/07/01/newsbrief-05](http://magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/newsbriefs/general/2012/07/01/newsbrief-05)

responsibility for the 2002 bombing near a synagogue on Djerba Island, and the 2008 kidnapping of foreign tourists at the Tunisia-Algeria border.<sup>515</sup> In 2006–2007, state security forces engaged a militant group (with ties to the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat in Algeria) in street battles around Tunis, killing 12. (Other group members were later sentenced to death or life in prison.)<sup>516, 517</sup> Since the 2011 revolution, several armed incidents in the country have been blamed on al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and Tunisia has approached the United States for more help to fight AQIM.<sup>518, 519, 520</sup>

In 2009, Tunisia reported that it had cleared minefields that were installed in 1976 and 1980 along Libyan and Algerian borders. However, World War II mines remain in the country's south, center, north, and northwest.<sup>521</sup>

### Water Security

Tunisia faces several water problems. First, water is unevenly distributed.<sup>522</sup> The north has 80% of the water resources for the entire country, including the only year-round river and the freshest (least salty) aquifers. Spring water fills the cisterns in the north, but the south more often relies on less frequent rainwater to fill cisterns. Second, water is naturally (and humanly) polluted by salty rocks and mismanaged sewage.<sup>523</sup> Third, total water demand may soon outstrip supply. Analyses and projections predict a serious stress on water resources by the year 2030.<sup>524, 525</sup>



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Dry earth

<sup>515</sup> Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Tunisia: Country Specific Information,” 4 June 2012, [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1045.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1045.html)

<sup>516</sup> Craig S. Smith, “North Africa Feared as Staging Ground for Terror,” *New York Times*, 20 February 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/20/world/africa/20tunisia.html?pagewanted=all>

<sup>517</sup> Jane’s, “Security, Tunisia,” in *Sentinel Security Assessment—North Africa*, 30 January 2012.

<sup>518</sup> Associated Press, “Tunisia: Armed Cell is Tied to Al Qaeda, Official Says, as 12 Members are Held,” *New York Times*, 13 February 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/14/world/africa/tunisia-armed-cell-is-tied-to-al-qaeda-official-says-as-12-members-are-held.html>

<sup>519</sup> Mounir Ben Mahmoud, “Confronting Proliferating Jihadists in the Maghreb,” *Al-Monitor*, 26 June 2012, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2012/06/tunisia---the-jihadist-danger-a.html>

<sup>520</sup> Houda Trabelsi, “Tunisia Solicits Foreign Help to Counter al-Qaeda Threat,” 22 June 2012, [http://maghreb.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en\\_GB/features/awi/features/2012/06/22/feature-02](http://maghreb.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2012/06/22/feature-02)

<sup>521</sup> Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, “Tunisia,” 2 November 2011, [http://www.the-monitor.org/custom/index.php/region\\_profiles/print\\_profile/597](http://www.the-monitor.org/custom/index.php/region_profiles/print_profile/597)

<sup>522</sup> Jane’s, “Natural Resources, Tunisia,” in *Sentinel Security Assessment—North Africa*, 30 January 2012, [https://www.intelink.gov/Reference/janes/display.html?type=S&nav=C\\_12&sn=nafrsu&ed=nafrsu29&docid=0058a0d7733031a6dba5e6ad8b82e2c5](https://www.intelink.gov/Reference/janes/display.html?type=S&nav=C_12&sn=nafrsu&ed=nafrsu29&docid=0058a0d7733031a6dba5e6ad8b82e2c5)

<sup>523</sup> Encyclopedia of Earth, “Tunisia,” 12 June 2012, <http://www.eoearth.org/article/Tunisia>

<sup>524</sup> National Research Council, “The Water Resources and Water Management Regimes in Tunisia,” in *Agricultural Water Management: Proceedings of a Workshop in Tunisia (Series: Strengthening Science-Based Decision Making in Developing Countries)* (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2007), 82–83, [http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record\\_id=11880&page=82](http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=11880&page=82)

<sup>525</sup> United Nations Development Programme, “Arab Development Challenges Report 2011: Towards the Developmental State in the Arab Region,” 2011, [http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/HDR/UNDP-ADCR\\_En-2012.pdf](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/HDR/UNDP-ADCR_En-2012.pdf)

## Looking Forward

Tunisia’s revolution was one without a leader or an established protest organization. After Ben Ali’s departure, long-time opposition figures released from prison and returned from exile are trying to guide the country into the unknown waters of Islamist democracy. As instigators of the 2011 “Arab Spring,” Tunisians now have the opportunity (some would say, the responsibility) to set an example of peaceful, productive change for other countries in the region.



©helder da Rocha  
Sidi Bou Said by night

Tunisians want higher living standards for everyone, across geographical regions, age groups, educational levels, and genders. They also want to end corruption and repression, and to enjoy freedoms of speech and access to information. How long they must wait for economic improvements may determine how often and how strenuously they turn to protests.

Even if Tunisia can address its internal problems, the country will remain vulnerable to European economic downturns and to unrest in Palestine. From a security perspective, the country is likely to combine a neutral stance on many international issues with a dependence on larger powers—France, Italy, the United States—for help in crises.



## Chapter 5 Assessment

1. In 2011, Tunisia struggled to accommodate hundreds of thousands of people displaced by political violence in North Africa.

**True**

Hundreds of thousands of refugees strained the capacity of border facilities and transit camps. Additionally, the return of Tunisian migrant workers from Libya reduced remittance revenues and increased unemployment.

2. Because terrorist incidents have been rare in Tunisia, combating terrorism has not been given the highest priority.

**False**

Ben Ali prioritized combating terrorism to repress political dissent. Now Tunisia seeks international help to counter arms smuggling from Libya and calls to revolt from al-Qaeda .

3. The U.S. supported the Tunisians' largely peaceful demonstrations and the government's transition to democracy after the overthrow of President Ben Ali.

**True**

The U.S. provided millions in military aid. It also assisted the Tunisian government's economic recovery and government reform efforts.

4. Tunisia has a large military that accounts for a significant portion of the country's budget.

**False**

The Tunisian military is relatively small compared to other countries in the Arab world and accounts for only about 1% of GDP.

5. High unemployment was a major cause of the Tunisian revolution.

**True**

Strong public demand for more jobs is a major challenge for the new government.

**FINAL ASSESSMENT**

1. Tunisia's neighboring countries are Libya and Egypt.  
**True / False**
2. Tunisia's only perennial river flows through the dry south.  
**True / False**
3. Most of Tunisia's people are rural farmers and nomads.  
**True / False**
4. In summer, southern salt lakes often dry up, and water shortages are common in rural areas.  
**True / False**
5. Tunisians consider Kairouan an Islamic holy site.  
**True / False**
6. Several dynasties of Berber Muslims ruled Tunisia from the 7th to the 16th century.  
**True / False**
7. The Personal Status Code (PSC) of 1956 introduced Islamic shari'a law into the Tunisian constitution.  
**True / False**
8. The al-Nahda ("Renaissance") political party was founded after the Tunisian revolution of 2011.  
**True / False**
9. Although France granted Tunisia independence in 1956, it did not become a republic until 1957.  
**True / False**
10. In 1987, Prime Minister Ben Ali ousted President Bourguiba in a bloody coup.  
**True / False**
11. Phosphate products are a major Tunisian export.  
**True / False**
12. The import of foreign currency and export of the dinar are tightly controlled.  
**True / False**
13. Libya is Tunisia's major trade partner in the Maghreb.  
**True / False**
14. Corruption in Tunisia has often been attributed to nationalization.

**True / False**

15. The standard of living in Tunisia is relatively low compared to all of Africa.  
**True / False**
16. Virtually all of Tunisia's population speak Arabic.  
**True / False**
17. Al-Chabbi, Tunisia's national poet, was jailed for his rap song criticizing President Ben Ali.  
**True / False**
18. Tunisia's dominant "Arab-Berber" ethnic group descends from a mix of Berber, Phoenician, Roman, Arab, Spanish, and Turkish ancestors.  
**True / False**
19. Under the constitution of Tunisia, shari'a (Islamic law) is the basis of all national legislation.  
**True / False**
20. In Tunisia, where the Personal Status Code (PSC) legislates gender equity, women dress and behave as they please in public with no fear of reprisal.  
**True / False**
21. Army General Rachid Ammar was tried and convicted for the role of the military in the deaths of protesters during the 2011 revolution.  
**True / False**
22. Libya's civil war brought increased security threats to Tunisia.  
**True / False**
23. Religious extremists known as Salafists engineered the 2011 revolution, and control the majority political party of al-Nahda, the interim government.  
**True / False**
24. Tunisia's internal security forces are led by the Directorate of State Security, the domestic intelligence agency.  
**True / False**
25. Tunisia and Algeria share a positive, stable relationship.  
**True / False**

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