

Tunisian Women at the Crossroad:

Between a Feminist Spring and an Islamist Winter

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Based upon the demands for equality and dignity, the Tunisian revolution materialized thanks to the deep solidarity between men and women, away from religious considerations. The revolution raised the hopes of Tunisian women to bring about reforms aimed at reinforcing gender equality and amending the personal status code, which invoked *shari'a*. Tunisian women provided an example to women in Egypt, Libya, and Yemen who would also stand up to dictatorships in their respective countries. Tunisian women also evoked a sense of freedom for other Arab women, notably in Saudi Arabia where Manal al-Sharif dared to violate the law banning women from driving¹ and where other activists tackled the issue of Saudi women's status. Thanks to these women in Tunisia, a wave of Arab revolutions would be the first indicator of a feminist spring. Then came the rise of Islamism that was amplified by a series of factors, namely the release of Islamist prisoners held in Ben Ali's jails. This included the return of those in exile, identity politics promoted by Islamists during the elections, and attempts to draft a new constitution based on *shari'a*. These factors announced an alarming regression and threat to women and their rights.

Islamism and revolution, notably a revolution carried out on behalf of equality and freedom, do not complement each other, as Islamism implies conservatism that is irreconcilable with a revolutionary spirit and democratic principles. Feminism and revolution may also have a problem coexisting. This conclusion is drawn from the French and Russian revolutions by the philosopher Geneviève Fraisse (2012) and the historian Omar Saghi (2011) who revealed the misogynist facet of these revolutions whereby feminists were either executed, like Olympe de Gouges and Madame Roland in France, or expelled, like Alexandra Kollontai in Russia.

If a feminist tendency was foreseeable in a revolution in which women, who were considered both educated and liberated, played a key role with respect to the struggle against dictatorship, Islamism was completely unforeseeable in Tunisia, a country that had been deemed to be relatively secular. These two contradictory tendencies that marked the Tunisian revolution rendered it a complicated movement of alternating regression and progression, and raise a series of questions that I will explore

throughout this paper. My research will draw not only on my own experience with the revolution, but also on numerous analyses done by politicians, historians and sociologists who followed the process of the Tunisian revolution. In order to deepen the understanding of these two tendencies as well as their resulting paradoxes, it is imperative to return to the eras of Bourguiba and Ben Ali in order to consider their policies with regard to women, Islam, and islamists.

I. Bourguiba and Ben Ali: State Feminism and the Façade of Secularism

Viewed as the liberator of women and the founder of the secular Tunisian state, Bourguiba and his successor Ben Ali reaped, until the outset of the revolution, the support provided by the West that turned a blind eye to the abuses perpetrated by their regimes. In her article published on January 21, 2011 in *Le Monde*, Jovelyne Dakhliya wrote, "In the eyes of well-informed French people, the basis of Bourguiba's greatness and of Tunisia's good fortune was the status of women and secularism" (Dakhliya, 2011). As for Henri Gaino, he defined Ben Ali's regime as "a kind of dictatorship," and stated that, "ever since Bourguiba, Tunisia has been the country that made the greatest exertions for women's education and liberation" (Gaino, 2011). Without question, after Ennahda's rise to power and the significant threats weighing on women and their rights, Tunisians, notably women, invoked Bourguiba and demanded the revival of his feminist legacy. However, the division that emerged during the revolution stemmed, without a doubt, from the contradictions within his policy that had been increasingly deepened during Ben Ali's regime.

Highly influenced by the Age of Enlightenment, Bourguiba sought to establish a modern state and introduced fundamental reforms, including severing relations with the legal and the religious institutions from the era of the Beys. Once in power, he promulgated the new personal status code on August 13, 1956, then dismantled the mosque and university of Ez-Zeitouna and replaced them with state-owned, secular institutions. He actively embarked on promoting secular values with regard to work and development to the detriment of religious values and practices that were obstacles in the country's path towards progress. In spite of implementing those measures, Bourguiba did not intend to separate religion and politics in establishing a secular state. In fact, the constitution, in its preamble, made a reference to God and stipulated that Islam was the state religion of Tunisia. Moreover, Bourguiba relentlessly resorted to religious figures and symbols in his speeches as a means to legitimate his politics. The historian Augustin Jomier explained that Bourguiba wanted the "subjugation of religion and bureaucratization of worship" (Jomier, 2011) within the state.

The personal status code reinforced the liberation of women. It abolished different facets of *shari'a* such as polygamy, the repudiation of marriage, and the matrimonial guardian, while it institutionalized monogamous marriage and egalitarian divorce, and legitimized contraception. By virtue of this code, women were granted numerous rights, including but not limited to the right to work, to move freely, to vote, and to stand for election. This code was part of "a program to advance women, designed to catch up with the status of women in Western countries, in an authoritarian and voluntarist manner" (Jomier, 2011). This being so, it could be viewed as state feminism. Drafted with the assistance of religious scholars and founded on a well-informed

interpretation of Islam, the personal status code did not question religion and, even less so, patriarchy and ethics. This policy, deemed as modernist and feminist, lost momentum over time, fluctuating according to the political status quo. In the 1970s, Bourguiba, determined to suppress left-wing opposition, began praising the value of Tunisia's Islamic heritage and simultaneously supported religious parties before ultimately altering his discourse in the late 1980s when he began to address Islamist opposition.

At the hands of Ben Ali, the paradoxes of the Bourguiba's policy deepened so intensely that they sometimes gave rise to unsustainable contradictions. Intent on thwarting the Islamists, Ben Ali, at first, came closer to them before violently suppressing them, taking the veil as his prime target. Ben Ali made use of Islamic symbols and metaphors to a much greater extent than Bourguiba. He delivered speeches on the Arab Muslim identity and defeated the influence of Islamic mass media through the establishment of Zitouna radio station. Then, he proceeded with the Islamization of power. Dipping into Bourguiba's modernist feminist legacy, Ben Ali contributed to the gradual deterioration of that legacy, while maintaining a façade of modernism vis-a-vis the West.

Although Ben Ali made a handful of additions to the personal status code, major demands by feminists were not met. Feminist activists registered a continuously widening divergence between the law and its implementation that had long been subject to police control. The prevailing status quo thus compelled the massive mobilization of women that had been manifest since the outset of the revolution.

II. Mobilization of Women and Feminist Demands: Secularism and Parity

The mobilization in question engaged not only elite feminists interested in politics during the rule of Ben Ali, but also women with no political affiliation who realized the importance of their role in re-establishing their country. This also involved women who were concerned with the arrogance of Islamists who, upon Ben Ali's departure, took advantage of the public space. Their mobilization manifested in various forms such as meetings, demonstrations, the establishment of new feminist associations and the creation, within the parties' structures, of a Committee of Reflection¹ that aimed to incorporate women's rights into the new constitution. Opening up new possibilities, the revolution empowered Tunisian women with a new energy and determination to reconsider and redefine their place in a future Tunisia.

Dependent on the prevailing political status quo, the liberation of women in Tunisia ebbed and flowed. For example, after having been allowed, a circular issued in 1973 abolished interfaith marriage; such marriage without conversion of the spouse to Islam was deemed null and void. Equality of rights with regard to inheritance had not yet been achieved.² Sana Ben Achour threw light on the divergence between the law, containing no reference to the religion, and its implementation at the hands of judges, who involved religion even when it was not mentioned in any law.

These factors elucidate the self-determination shown by Tunisian women, as well as the importance they place on secularism, the sole guarantor of their rights. As the author of *L'automne des femmes arabes* [The Autumn of Arab Women], Djemila Benhabib

(2014), said: “there are two inter-dependent movements, namely the liberation of women and the separation between political and religious powers. This is vital. To start with, the religious referent in constitutions should be removed” (Benhabib, 2014).

The members of the Committee of Reflection assessed women’s condition in the country. Based on the findings of their assessment, they drew up a list of the required gender-sensitive improvements to be inserted into the personal status code, as well as the rights that women wished to include in the new constitution. In cooperation with a large number of associations, these committees successfully formed a front of women and wrote a manifesto where they stated their major demands. This manifesto would serve as the basis for the constitution drafted by women in February 2012, with the assistance of legal experts, and then proposed to the Constituent Assembly. Secularism and parity in electoral lists were the main demands outlined in the manifesto. Parity in electoral lists was eventually approved and came into effect by virtue of a law enacted in May 2011. Secularism, however, misunderstood and mistaken for atheism, aroused the hostility of Islamists who utilized it to accuse women and democrats of being atheists and affiliated with the West. Moreover, the front of women carried out a wide spectrum of activities for social and educational purposes. Caravans were driven through towns to raise awareness of women rights, to explain the principle of democracy, and to give aid to families in need, including Libyan refugees and their host families.

This feminist momentum that marked the outset of the revolution was manifest in articles written by followers of the Ennahda Party, including Soumaya Ghanoushi, who firmly associated the revolution with the liberation of women:

The Arab revolutions are not only shaking the structure of despotism to the core, they are shattering many decades-long myths. Foremost among these is the perception of the Arab woman as powerless and enslaved, forced into a cage of silence and invisibility by her jailor society. That is not the type of woman that has emerged out of Tunisia and Egypt in the last few weeks. (Ghanoushi, 2011)

Ennahda won the election due to it being, as Djemila Benhabib (2014) said, “a political power and a modern organization” that “has persistently tormented the society over the years [...], received enough money to pour over everybody,” and “moved forward with closed ranks whereas the opposition was torn apart” (Benhabib, 2014).³ This victory was undoubtedly due to the reassuring image of a moderate Islam presented during the electoral campaign. Whereas Egyptian Islamists printed pictures of flowers instead of women’s faces on campaign posters, Ennahda members applied the principle of parity in elections. They were committed, at all cost, to observe the personal status code.⁴ One of their female candidates, Souad Abderrahim, was unveiled and had a “modern” appearance.

Owing to doublespeak, Ennahda members managed to simultaneously reach conservative and secular electorates. The former was captivated by their identity and religious discourse within a modernist framework, whereas the later believed in their capability to reconcile Islam and modernity, as well as to moralize public life. However, once in power, Ennahda showed a totally different image.

III. Victory of Ennahda: The Revolution and Women Taken Hostage by Islamists

As a result of Tunisia's first-ever free elections in October 2011, Islamists obtained a relative majority that would permit them to run a transitional, coalition government. The victory of Islamists in Egypt, and notably in Tunisia, provoked waves of great confusion and sharp disappointment among democrats, at home and overseas, who talked about "a betrayed revolution [...] a revolution that has given birth to an Islamist, conservative and liberty killing monster" (Dakhli, 2013).⁵ Due to this victory, the capability of Arab countries to achieve democracy was brought into question and women were terrified. Egyptian and Tunisian women continued to be persecuted first by the police officers of Ben Ali and Mubarak and then by soldiers and Salafists after the regime change.

During the revolution, women suffered from sexual harassment and physical violence. The repression launched against female protesters in Tunis and other regions of Tunisia resulted in violations by the police. In Egypt, these violations were also committed collectively by protesters, as reported by Mona Eltahawy, an Egyptian journalist who was also victimized. Women protesters were also subjected to virginity tests by the Egyptian military. According to the philosopher Geneviève Fraisse, this frequent harassment in times of conflict and social unrest was magnified with Ennahda's seizure of power and took different moral, physical, and sexual forms.

From the very beginning of the revolution, Salafists relentlessly assaulted female protesters who called for secularism and equality. The blogger Lina Ben Mheni and the director Nadia El Fani, whose film, entitled "*Ni Allah ni maître*"⁶ [Neither Allah, nor master] was shown in CinemAfricArt, resulted in a clash between the Salafists and the public where they were threatened and insulted. Upon the Troika's ascent to power, this trial of strength was sharpened and nurtured by the inactivity of the government, if not its complicity. Eventually, Ennahda stopped concealing its project aimed at the Islamization of the country; its deputies to the National Assembly demanded that *shari'a* be the main source of law in the constitution.

Women were subjected to verbal and sometimes physical violence at the hands of the Islamists, who deemed their outfits indecent or were simply annoyed by their presence in the public sphere. In schools, universities, and popular areas where Quranic schools proliferated, Islamists imposed the *hijab* on women and occasionally on girls as young as three years old. In the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at the University of Manouba, north of Tunis, a group of Salafists staged a sit-in, demanding the imposition of the *niqab*, normally banned in classrooms in Tunisia, and accused the dean of assaulting two students wearing the *niqab*. The case that illustrates best this violence is that of Meriem Ben Mohamed, a young woman raped by soldiers while she was with her fiancé in a car. She was accused of "indecentcy," as her aggressors said they saw her in an "indecent posture." In regard to the purpose of these assaults, Djemila Benhabib said: "What is being played proves to be a political pressure and, at the same time, an instrumentalization of judicial powers and police so as to muzzle women and eject them from the political scene" (Benhabib, 2014).

"Women's issues" were brought into question. Polygamy was represented as a "solution" to the problem of too many single women and customary marriage

reemerged and was practiced by some Islamists. Middle East preachers invited by Salafists praised excision (female genital mutilation), unknown in Tunisia, and euphemistically called it “cosmetic surgery.” In debates reported by the media, some Salafists proposed to reduce the hiring of women in order to alleviate unemployment, whereas others asked to lower the marriage age to 13 years for girls.⁷ Moreover, Ennahda deputies proposed in Article 28 of their draft constitution, submitted to the Constituent Assembly, to replace the principle of equality between men and women by the principle of complementarity.⁸

In the meantime, a smear campaign against feminists invaded the internet. All feminists were lumped together, looked upon as being affiliated with UNFT (the Tunisian Women’s Union, which was a close ally of the toppled regime), and accused of having been manipulated by Ben Ali, his wife and Islamophobia. The excerpt below provides an idea of the nature of statements as well as the accusations recorded in this regard:

A number of movements [...] want to get control of the redaction of the future Tunisian Constitution [...] to insert a lot of judicial provisions whose nature is not constitutional [...]. Conversely, the current demands of Tunisian, feminist movements (sic) do not apparently suit the social status quo of the Tunisian people who have suffered from the consequences of state secularism during the rule of Ben Ali (sic) [...]. Back then (sic), the Tunisian power established State feminism that was institutionalized for political purposes in service of the repression that had been exerted on Tunisian people for 23 years. Accused of Islamic fundamentalism, fanaticism, obscurantism and Islamic terrorism, thousands of Tunisian citizens were jailed and tortured (Ben Aisha, 2011).⁹

In other instances, Mounir Ben Aisha, the above-cited author, endeavored to argue that the Tunisian inheritance law granting women half the share of men is, by far, more favorable to women than French law.

The most striking aspect in this regard is the fact that no political official has truly stood up for women’s rights. The Minister of Women’s Affairs, Sihem Badi, who was supposed to serve the feminist cause by virtue of her position and the long years she spent in France, made a contradictory, demagogic speech. When asked about customary marriage, she applauded it as “an individual freedom” (2012a).¹⁰ Badi then deemed it to be “a real danger that threatens the stability of the family as well as the rights of women and children,” in answers submitted to Monde Fr on the occasion of International Women’s Day on March 8, 2012. In the same interview, she reiterated the necessity of improving the personal status code and defended the idea that *shari’a*, which she linked to “universal values,” should be the main source of legislation (Badi, 2012b).

Far from surrendering to this regressive movement and wave of violence that threatened both women and democrats, Tunisians rose up. Supported by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), they engaged in a fierce battle against the Islamists.

IV. Women’s Battles and Reclaiming the Revolution

Women’s rights and the violations of their freedoms triggered a wide spectrum of individual and collective reactions that confirmed the hypothesis put forward by a

large number of Arab-Spring analysts - a hypothesis suggesting that a revolution can only be achieved with women's participation.

The most striking individual reaction was that of Amina Sbouï¹¹ who posted a photo of herself online while topless with a caption that read, "My body is mine and not the source of anybody's honor." Not only did this action cause great anger among the Islamists, but it also shocked innumerable Tunisians, including feminists. Deemed by some women to be a vain provocation, this reaction was considered by others as a struggle against Islamism. According to the sociologist Smain Laacher (2013), this act was a "major event" because Amina Sbouï and Aliaa Magda Elmahdy from Egypt were the first-ever young Arab women to partly or totally show their naked bodies in public. He added:

These bodies are bodies that refuse to be submissive and happen to refuse politics, too. It is a body that takes action against the violence perpetrated by men and men-governed institutions, whether armed or not. It is a body that shows resistance. In other words, it engages in politics against the "Sovereignty," be it divine or earthly, the ordinary tyrants and millions of religious ethics entrepreneurs. (Laacher, 2013)

This resistance took more direct, effective forms through collective action conducted by women and NGOs who rose up against Islamization and the regression of women's rights in the country. This was the case when the deputies of Ennahda demanded that *shari'a* should be mentioned in the constitution and adopted as a source of legislation, and that the principle of complementarity between men and women should replace gender equality. All these measures were sharply denounced and led to a mass movement of protests that forced Ennahda to restrain itself. The remarkable demonstration of August 13, 2012, to commemorate the day the personal status code was promulgated, was held in the middle of the month of Ramadan after breaking the fast - a demonstration that proved to be significant.

Fearing Ennahda's rapid growth, the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women (ATFD)¹² drafted a constitution in February 2012 where they reflected, "an alternative vision of the Tunisian Constitution" (Revue du Crédif, 2012), according to Sana Ben Ashour, legal expert and former ATFD president. This draft called for the separation between politics and religion and defended the economic, social, cultural, ecological, and association rights of women, based on equality between men and women, the principle of parity in representative bodies, and the rejection of any form of gender-based discrimination. A number of persons gathered in front of the National Constituent Assembly to support this draft.

Tunisian women closely followed the actions taken by members of FEMEN, in addition to Amina Sbouï and Meriem Ben Mohamed. Meriem, the young woman who had been raped by the police, was defended by a number of feminist lawyers. Deemed as a taboo for long, the crime of rape was narrated in detail on TV stations and by the victim herself in gatherings and demonstrations that had been organized by women. As a result of these actions, the court sentenced the policemen to fifteen years in prison.

The assassination of Chokri Belaid on February 6, 2013 and that of Mohamed Brahmi on July 25, 2013 compelled their wives, Besma Belaid and Mbarka Brahmi, to make their entrance onto the political and public scene. They carried the torch of their late husbands and became leading figures and bitter opponents of the Islamists whom they accused of assassinating their spouses. Considering their courage, engagement, perseverance, and eloquence, they gained respect and became a part of a locus of power under which the country's democratic forces gathered and organized in the summer of 2013 to resist Ennahda. A sit-in was led by the opposition deputies who withdrew from the National Assembly and occupied the Bardo, demanding the Assembly's dissolution and the resignation of Prime Minister Ali Laarayedh whom they accused of failing at the security, political, and economic levels. In the summer of 2013, the sit-in widened and proved to be successful thanks to the involvement of women.

Women of all ages, young and old, veiled and unveiled, took to the streets, participated in protests, and chanted slogans against violence and Ennahda. The Hrayer Tounes Coalition¹³ under whose umbrella were gathered feminist associations, organized a march on August 13, 2013 from the gate of Bab Saadoun to the Bardo, demanding a civil state and a right to diversity. Thousands of Tunisians, women and men, joined in the march and chanted, "Here is she, here is she, the Tunisian woman!"

Other than Besma Belaid and Mbarka Brahmi, numerous feminist figures emerged in the course of the revolution, playing key roles in the transitional phase. Maya Jribi, Secretary-General of the al-Joumhouri Party,¹⁴ marked the political scene. Wided Bouchamaoui, the president of UTICA (Tunisian Union of Industry, Commerce and Crafts), was a member of the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet that was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2015. Tunisian women also excelled in the domain of syndicates and associations; some of these women were at the head of syndicates pertaining to male-dominated sectors, such as the Prisons and Correctional Institution Syndicate (Olfa Ayari), the Syndicate of Tunisian Judges (Raoudha Labidi), and the journalism sector (Najiba Hamrouni). Women were also significantly active in civil society. Associations founded and chaired by women proliferated during the transitional phase. Amongst these were the Association of Tunisian Judges, chaired by Kalthoum Kannou, the Association of Young Lawyers, chaired by Imen Bejoaoui, and notably the Constituent Assembly watchdog NGO, Al Bawsala [The Compass], chaired by Amira Yahyaoui.¹⁵ These associations played a key role in the control and regulation of the democratic process. In order to increase women's visibility and allow them to access decision-making arenas, Olfa Tounsi founded a radio station, Cap FM, which made its mark in the Tunisian media landscape. Moreover, Amel Mzabi launched a newspaper, Ecojournal, specializing in economics. According to these women, it was not enough to amend the law in order to guarantee gender equality; indeed, mentalities should be revolutionized as well.

This long, fierce battle resulted in the following: a constitution that respects women's and men's rights, as well as legislative elections whereby Nidaa Tounès, a secular party, won with women receiving 31 seats, compared to 23 seats in the 2011 elections. Kalthoum Kannou, chairperson of the Association of Tunisian Judges, stood for the presidential election. Therefore, the feminist key in the Tunisian hand, according

to Mathieu Guidère, has been operationalized.¹⁶ Not only did the revolution topple a dictatorship and dismantle a political system, but it also launched the process of changing Tunisian society and the status of women. The revolution so intensely pushed the course of time forward that it interrupted the cycle of seasons. The Arab Spring undoubtedly paved the way to an Islamist winter that was promptly followed by a feminist spring.

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ENDNOTES

1. His speeches abounded with references to religion through Quranic intertextuality and religious metaphors. It is worth mentioning that the personal status code was based on a modern interpretation of Islam.
2. The center-left Ettajdid party, currently known as al-Massar, was the first party to introduce a committee of reflection that comprised not only the party's followers but also a large number of independents.
3. According to Djemila Benhabib, the same reasons lying behind the victory of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Tunisian elections apply to the Egyptian ones.
4. Vincent Geisser and Michael Béchir Ayari (2011) reveal the complexity of relations between the Arab Spring revolutions and the Islamists. They point out that the integration of Islamist movements comforts a large number of citizens.
5. In this context, we refer to an article written by Dakhli (2013) where she mentions that "most commentators portray the election of the Islamist party Ennahda after the elections of October 2011 as a betrayal," because "the youth revolution, freedom, and justice loving, have given birth to an Islamist, conservative, and liberty killing monster" and "the first post-revolutionary free elections have given power to the enemies of democracy and freedom."
6. The film was first released on June 26, 2011 in the frame of the event "Touche pas à mes créateurs" [Don't touch my creators] organized by the collective of associations "LamEchamli" in CinemAfricArt. The Salafists of Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation), being not allowed to enter, wreaked havoc in the showroom and assaulted the director and canceled the film projection. As a result of that violent controversy, Nadia El Fani opted to change the provocative title "Ni Allah ni maître" [Neither Allah, nor master] and re-titled the film "Laïcité Inch'Allah" [Secularism, Inshallah]. The film was awarded Le Grand Prix International de la Laïcité [the International Prize for Secularism] in 2011.
7. The Chair of the Party for Openness and Fidelity (POF), Bahri Jlassi, notorious for his obscurantist and shocking ideas, has called, in his TV interviews, to lower the marriage age for girls to 13 years.
8. According to Farida Laabidi, deputy of Ennahda who chaired the Tunisian Committee on Rights and Liberties, this article was adopted by 12 votes (nine from Ennahda, one from the parliamentary group of "Liberty and Dignity," one from the Wafa Movement and one from the Congress Party for the Republic (CPR)).
9. A statement by Mounir Ben Aïsha (2011), who considers women as the tools of the Ben Ali regime to suppress Islamists, accuses them of being the allies of Leïla Ben Ali.
10. The minister affirmed that "Customary marriage is a long-dated practice within the Tunisian society and there is a kind of engagement between two persons that is a part of individual freedom" (Badi, 2012). Nonetheless, she does not mention that this practice is forbidden by the law and those who adopt it are liable to imprisonment.
11. She is also known as Amina Tyler.
12. Among whom were Radhia Nasraoui, Saida Garrash and Bushra Belhaj Hmida.
13. On August 13, the following associations closed ranks to form the Hraïer Tounes Coalition: the National Commission of Working Women, the Tunisian General Labor Union, the National Union of Tunisian Women, the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women, the Association of Tunisian Women for Research on Development, the coalition for Tunisian Women and the Tunisian League for the Defense of Human Rights. The Coalition also comprises the association "Mousawat" [Equality], the civil society network "Destourna" [Our Constitution], the association "Women and Leadership," the association "Bayti" [My Home], the Association for the Promotion of Arab Women, Amnesty International, the National Chamber of Women Entrepreneurs, the association "Citizenship and Democracy" as well as the association "the Voice of Woman."
14. An opposition party under the rule of Ben Ali and the Troika, al-Joumhourî was formerly known as the "Progressive Democratic Party" (PDP). Nejib Chebbi, its founder, had served as its Secretary-General until 2006.
15. In 2014, the association was awarded the Jacques Chirac Prize for "its conflict prevention action in Tunisia."
16. In the second chapter of Guidère (2012), he discusses "the keys to understand the Arab World." The author attempts to enumerate the "key[s] to understanding" the different states of the Arab League in order to "better comprehend the challenges and the balances of power." He associates Tunisia with the feminist key.

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