

Fathia Mzali, Minister of the Family and the Promotion of Women

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Fathia Mokhtar Mzali is the **Minister for the Family and the Promotion of Women** in the Tunisian government since November 1983. She is married to Mohammed Mzali, Tunisia's prime minister, who is groomed to be President Bourghiba's successor one day. Mrs. Mzali has also been the president of the National Union of Tunisian Women since August 1973.

Born on April 6, 1927 in Tunis, she studied French, Arabic and English in school and graduated in philosophy from the Sorbonne University in Paris. Mother of 6 children, she worked as a secondary school teacher, headmistress of the Teacher's College in Tunis and as inspector of secondary schools in the country. Before Tunisia's independence, Fathia enrolled in the **Destourian party** in Tunis and then in the Socialist Destourian party in Paris where she was studying. She participated in all the demonstrations (1950-55) that led to the independence of the country.

After independence, in 1956, Fathia became one of the founding members of the **Union of Tunisian Women** and later, its president in 1973-1976 and 1981. Before that she was vice-president, and secretary-general.

Mrs. Mzali also worked as a councillor in the **Municipality of Tunis** from 1957-1960. She was vice-president and then president of the **National Women's Club** in 1963-1966 and was a founding member of the **Secondary Teacher's Destourian Cell** and one of the founding members of the **Family Planning Association** and its vice-president from 1968 to 1978. She was the first woman in Tunisia to give a conference on birth control in 1959, with special permission from President Bourguiba. She then became President of the **International Family Planning Association (IPPF)** for the Middle East and North Africa (1974-1978).

In 1979 and 1981, Mrs. Mzali became a member of the **Political Bureau of the Destourian Socialist Party**

and was elected deputy at the General Assembly in 1974 and 1981 for the regions of Kairouan, Tunis and Bizerte.

For four consecutive years (1980-1984) Mrs. Mzali was elected **Vice-President of the National Assembly** and she now presides over the ad hoc **Commission on Population and Development** in parliament. She is also a member of the National committee for Culture set up by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and is also a member of the Committee for the **Control of Theatre Plays in Tunis**.

On the Arab scene, Mrs. Mzali is **President** of the follow-up committee of the conference, **Women, Family and Development** for Arab and Moslem countries held in October 1983 and was a member of the official delegation accompanying President Bourguiba on his tour of the Middle East in 1965. Mrs. Mzali has been the head of the Tunisian delegation for the **UN Mexico Conference for Women** in 1975, the **Mid-Decade UN Conference for Women** in Copenhagen (1980) and this year's **UN Nairobi Conference for Women**.

She has also been a member of the Tunisian delegation to the **Bucharest Conference on Population** in 1974 and the **Mexico Conference on Population** in 1984.

Mrs. Mzali has participated in a number of United Nations conferences on Human Rights, Anti-Apartheid and has been invited officially to the U.S., Great Britain, Sweden, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. She has also been a member of the **International Committee of Parliamentarians on Population and Development** since its inception.

The Tunisian Minister of the Family received the UN Human Rights Prize, in 1978, in the name of the National Union of Tunisian Women. She has also received a number of national and international decorations from France, Finland and Senegal.