

R12 The EU responsibility to support the Tunisian civil society

Proposer: écolo j, les jeunes ecologistes, PROTESTS,
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 (JVS/JGS)
Agenda item: 1. Resolutions

Motion text

1 In July 2021, the Tunisian president Kais Saied triggered Article 80 of the
2 Tunisian constitution¹, a coup de force that led to the dismantling of the
3 institutions resulting from the post-2011 transition of the Tunisian people's
4 uprising against the regime of the former dictator of Tunisia, Zine el-Abidine
5 Ben Ali, also known as the Jasmine Revolution.

6 The actions undertaken by the Saied regime, such as freezing and then dissolving
7 the Parliament, full powers by decree, ratification of a new constitution in
8 2022 with an extremely low participation rate and the legislative elections in
9 December/January 2023 with an even lower participation rate, racist outbursts
10 against Black Africans, persecution of political opponents and NGOs, draws up a
11 record that leaves no room for doubt about the undeniable authoritarian and
12 populist turn taken by the Saied regime in Tunisia.

13 Tunisia's new constitution, which entered into force in August 2022, removes
14 many checks and balances from the 2014 constitution and firmly centralises power
15 in the hands of the President, for example he now has the power to unilaterally
16 appoint the Prime Minister and can no longer be impeached for serious violations
17 of the constitution. As described by Amnesty International, "the adoption of the
18 new constitution comes after a year marked by a regression on human rights
19 protections in Tunisia"², leading to the weakening of human rights safeguards
20 and the rule of law. In addition to the constitutional changes, the judicial
21 system, until now independent from presidential power, is being further attacked
22 and dismantled in order to ensure that the presidential control is maintained.
23 In particular, with the support of the Ministry of Justice, which has been
24 completely under the control of the presidential power since its reform³, as
25 well as the use of the military justice system⁴, and the total impunity granted
26 to the security forces and the Ministry of the Interior. All this in a context
27 of dramatic socio-economic crisis and risk of default.

28 It is important to put in context the deterioration of the rule of law and

29 individual freedoms in Tunisia with the state of its economic situation. The
30 fragility of the Tunisian economy has been strongly impacted and weakened by the
31 two consecutive external shocks, the pandemic of COVID-19 and the outbreak of a
32 full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Widespread shortages of food and their
33 rationing, shortages of medicines but also of fuel have been commonplace in
34 recent months.

35 The Tunisian state is struggling to pay for its imports and is in the midst of
36 negotiations with the IMF and the World Bank to receive \$1.9 billion in
37 financial support, while the political situation is moving towards a
38 dictatorship that is repressing political opponents and minorities. The European
39 Union, through the fascist Italy of Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and her
40 Minister of Foreign Affairs, Antonio Tajani (former President of the European
41 Parliament), is more concerned about the arrival of migrants in Europe via the
42 Tunisian coast than anything else.

43 With Turkey, Morocco and Libya, Tunisia is one of the European Union partners
44 supporting the externalisation of its borders in a "Fortress Europe" that is
45 increasingly conciliatory with the anti-migration policies of the far-right. The
46 number of victims and missing persons on the Tunisian coast from January to
47 October 2022 is 544,241⁵. For many organisations, these shipwrecks are
48 "consciously provoked" off the coast of Tunisia: While the European Union is
49 steadily increasing its financial support to the Tunisian government in
50 protecting and developing its coastline to avoid tragedies related to
51 Mediterranean crossings, there is mounting evidence of the involvement of the
52 Tunisian coast guard in dangerous manoeuvres that have cost the lives of many
53 migrants. For the last decade, Italy has allocated 47 million euros to Tunisia
54 to control their borders and migratory "flows", in parallel with a readmission
55 agreement that allows Italy to expel Tunisian nationals at a rate of up to 4
56 charters per week. The EU has released 30 million euros from the Emergency Trust
57 Fund for Africa to implement an "integrated surveillance" system for maritime
58 borders⁶.

59 It is important to denounce the reinforcement of hate speech by the Tunisian
60 president himself towards Black African migrants/refugees and asylum seekers in
61 the country which has intensified xenophobic and racist sentiment and acts of
62 violence against these populations on the basis of conspiracy theories⁷. These
63 words and acts of violence are also reused and integrated into the racist,
64 xenophobic, anti-migrant and conspiracy theories of far-right movements and
65 political parties in Europe... While far-right ideas are already at the heart of
66 our institutions and gaining more and more power in our societies, this support
67 from both sides of the Mediterranean is dangerous and threatens the safety of
68 migrants and asylum seekers.

69 With this resolution FYEG:

- 70 • Condemns the violence, racism and systemic discrimination in Tunisia
71 against the Black African populations present in the country.
- 72 • Supports the Tunisian civil society being targeted and controlled by a
73 regime which is becoming more authoritarian, using the Ministries of
74 Interior and of Justice (now fully subordinated to the President) as well
75 as military institutions to shrink the democratic and human rights spaces
76 in the country.
- 77 • Strongly denounces and is concerned about the resurgence of conspiracy and
78 racist theories within European societies and the progression of fascist
79 and far-right ideas and theories in the European Institutions.
- 80 • Calls on the European Union and its representatives to firmly and
81 officially sanction the Tunisian president and his government for
82 undermining the democratic values and processes established after the 2011
83 Revolution.
- 84 • Calls the European Union to immediately stop the externalisation of the EU
85 border with Tunisia via the funding through European funds of the Saied
86 regime to stop migration corridors.
- 87 • Reiterates the importance of the statements made in the resolution No
88 Discrimination on Migration to develop an European humanitarian framework
89 focusing on saving and welcoming refugees through safe corridors.

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