

Tunisia: Legitimacy crisis and popular mobilization

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For the majority of Tunisians, the current government is no longer legitimate. But at the same time the establishment of an alternative popular regime is not immediately on the agenda.

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In the same way, the Front populaire [Popular Front] has already become the third biggest political force in the country. But it does not yet in itself represent a credible alternative to the two dominant political forces, the Islamist (and neoliberal) Ennahdha, and the neoliberal Nidaa Tunes party.

The result is a situation of great complexity accompanied by tensions inside the Tunisian left groups which came together less than a year ago to form the Front populaire.

It remains to be seen how the policies followed by the Front populaire and its components will facilitate the mobilisations. To a great extent that will decide the fate of the continuation of the revolutionary process begun in December 2010.

The “clearing out” of Ennahdha

In an interview on July 18, 2013 [[1](#)]Ahlem Belhadj, a member of the Ligue de la gauche ouvrière (LGO - Workers’ Left League) and the Front populaire, summed up the situation as follows: “The current government no longer has any legitimacy. Legitimacy cannot result solely from having won the elections in October 2011. The Assembly was elected to realise objectives and for a very determined period. The objectives have not been realised, and the period is over. Increasingly, there is a climate of insecurity and the economic situation gets worse every day. The government has failed totally at the economic and social level. It is directly involved in the development of violence going as far as political assassination. Some youths have been arrested over a rap song. A member of Femen has been arrested after having done absolutely nothing... What legitimacy are we talking of? A revolutionary process is underway, and the sole legitimacy is revolutionary legitimacy”, Belhadj concluded.

In nine months, the question of the “clearing out” of the Islamist government has been at the centre of political debate on four occasions:

1. The repression of the uprising in Siliana (late November 2012), followed by the attack on the UGTT headquarters by Islamist militias (December 4, 2012);
2. The assassination of the Front populaire leader Chokri Belaïd (February 6, 2013);
3. The overthrow of Egypt’s Islamist president Morsi (July 3, 2013);
4. The assassination of the Front populaire leader Mohamed Brahmi (July 25): the problem of the “clearing out” of the government is henceforth posed on a mass scale as a very immediate question.

There have been a series of missed opportunities. In an interview on July 12, 2013, a Front populaire spokesperson said:

- On October 23, 2012, the theoretical date of the end of the term of the constituent national assembly, “there was no popular mobilisation, on the one hand, and the political forces which proclaimed the end of the legitimacy of the government had prepared nothing on the ground in order to demand the departure of the ruling Troika”.
- “The date of December 4, 2012, the day of the attack on the UGTT headquarters in Tunis, was not in my view sufficiently exploited so as to raise certain demands such as notably the dissolution of the militias (linked to Ennahdha)”.
- “On February 6, 2013, the day of the killing of the martyr Chokri Belaïd, certainly, Tunisians were in the street in their hundreds of thousands (...). But on February 8, the day of the burial of the martyr, we were not ready on the political or organisational levels to overthrow the Troika. The Prime minister went, but his government remained”. [2]

There was a massive desire not to let the opportunity to get rid of the Ennahdha government pass once more. In an interview on July 31, 2013, a trades unionist and activist of the PPDU-Front Populaire points to two significant differences with the past: “After the murder of Chokri Belaïd, prime minister Jebali succeeded in demobilising the population by announcing the dissolution of his government so as to put in place a government of “technocrats”. It was only a week or two later that the people realised that this initiative by Jebali was no more than a palliative to reduce the mobilisation. Also, some parties, like Joumhouri, which were initially in agreement with the Front Populaire, entered at the time into the proposals of Ennahdha. The situation is different now. The majority of Tunisians have drawn the lessons of this episode: you cannot be fooled twice in the same way.

“Today, faced with the proposals of Ennahdha, the popular movement will continue until it obtains: the dissolution of the current government; the setting up of a new government, independent of the parties, on the basis of a discussion with the Front de salut, UGTT and so on; the dissolution of the LPR (militias linked to Ennahdha); the setting up of a commission of personalities reviewing the nominations to key state posts. In the event that Ennahdha clearly accepted this and then did not implement it, I think that the mobilizations will get larger”.

The positions of the three main forces

These to a great extent set the context in which the other debates take place.

1. Ennahdha is hanging on to power. As after the killing of Chokri Belaïd, the only proposal that Ennahdha seems ready to envisage is the replacement of some ministers and the renaming of the executive as a “government of national unity”. The dissolution of the national assembly is for Ennahdha the second red line which is not to be crossed.

2. UGTT is seeking a midway position. With the launch of its initiative of June 18, 2012, the UGTT sought to unite all the political and social forces to find a consensus. In line with this logic, it does not call for an end to the government, or the constituent assembly. It now draws a negative balance sheet of the two meetings which it organised for this purpose on October 16, 2012 and May 16, 2013.

During the meeting of its national administrative commission on July 29, 2013, it made a step towards opposition by crossing one of the red lines drawn by Ennahdha: it is now effectively calling for the government to be replaced by a “government of national salvation”, made up of independent personalities from the different parties. The UGTT has fixed a list of tasks which the latter should undertake within a given period.

But among the delegates speaking at the said meeting, only around a third were ready to cross the second red line fixed by Ennahdha: the dissolution of the national assembly. The result is a position mid way between the demands of the demonstrators and those of Ennahdha. We also find supporting this position Ettakatol (a social democratic party involved in the ruling Troika), the UTICA (employers organisation), the LTDH (Ligue tunisienne des droits de l’Homme - Tunisian Human Rights League) and so on.

3. Nidaa Tunes wants to get rid of Ennahdha, but like the latter it wishes to pursue the neoliberal policies in force since the time of Ben Ali. Essebsi does not hide his desire for a rerun of the period from March to October 2011:

— a provisional executive power comparable to the government of which he was Prime Minister,

— a provisional legislative power comparable to the “Higher body for the realisation of the objectives of the revolution”.

Ahead in the polls, he hopes his coalition will win the elections, with himself being candidate to the presidency. Meanwhile he had a meeting in Paris on August 15, which was supposed to be secret, with the President of Ennahdha.

The context of the struggle for the “clearing out” of Ennahdha

Numerous elements have to be simultaneously taken into consideration. Here are some of them:

1. If the government is no longer legitimate, the emergence of an alternative power resting on the self-organisation of the people is not yet a reality.

2. The urgency of a government breaking both with the type of society that Ennahdha and neoliberalism wish to impose, necessarily authoritarian and represented both by Ennahdha and Nidaa Tunes, is more pressing than ever. But the Front populaire is not yet in a position to incarnate this alone.

3. The organisations identifying with revolution and Marxism are no longer marginal: together with other currents, they are inside the Front populaire which has become the third biggest political

force in the country. But the Front populaire is heterogeneous and for now only has a limited base.

4. The Front populaire calls for the resignation of the Islamist government, but the only party capable of replacing it as a government in an electoral framework remains Nidaa Tunes.

From this complex situation emerges a series of debates focused on the type of relations the Front populaire should have with Nidaa Tunes. Advanced since October 2012, and reaffirmed in December 2012, the position of the Front populaire in this area was made clear after the killing of Chokri Belaïd. On February 22, 2013, Ahlem Belhadj summed up this orientation thus: "We begin by discussing a minimum programme and we only then see who has the capacity to implement it. Hence the proposal of a "government of national salvation" responsible for applying the measures decided on previously by a "congress of national salvation". I think that this position can gather support. It takes the most appropriate route." [3].

In its statement of February 12, the Front populaire proposes, beyond a series of political tasks, a certain number of emergency social and economic measures to be taken by such a crisis government:

- halting the liquidation of national enterprises and the main resources of the country;
- suspending the payment of the debt and the establishment of a committee of audit on this matter;
- recovering state duties linked to tax evasion;
- installing an emergency wealth tax;
- supporting and encouraging small and medium farmers and exempting them from payment of debt;
- a price freeze to protect the purchasing power of the people and encourage consumption;
- activation of the decree concerning a ban on sub-contracting (interim) and the regularisation of site workers;
- reducing unemployment and considering the establishment of an unemployment benefit;
- modifying and restructuring the industrial and agricultural minimum wage;
- reducing imports of luxury products and the spending of the public administration.

The implementation of the policy of the Front populaire

Already in February 2013, following the killing of Chokri Belaïd, a "Coordination to save Tunisia" including Nidaa Tunes had been set up. At the National Council of the Front populaire on June 1-2, in Sousse, it was stated that "the official decision is not to set up an electoral coalition, but to work punctually around well defined tasks." [4]

A participant at this meeting presented one of the decisions adopted thus: "Proposing to all the revolutionary, progressive and democratic forces, parties, associations, and personalities, the organisation of a congress of national salvation to define an emergency programme. Setting up a government of salvation made up of volunteers does not depend on any party to implement it." [5]

The following position, defended notably by the Watad révolutionnaire of Jamel Lazhar, was in the

minority. Abdesslem Hidouri sums it up thus: “total rejection of any alliance with Nidaa, because these are enemies in the same way as the Islamists. Even if it is possible to come together punctually in the street, it is not possible to make an agreement with Nidaa at the level of programme, at the level of a common programme or at the level of the organisation of mobilisations.” [6]

Since the meeting in Sousse, the leaders of the Front populaire have repeatedly said that there was no question of an alliance between the Front populaire and the UPT. On July 11, its spokesperson specified that “divergences with the UPT, especially with the party Nida Tounès, concern its economic programme.” [7]

Simultaneously, a series of meetings have taken place between the Front and various organisations, including the UPT. At the request of the UPT, such a meeting took place on June 21. Following this a permanent commission of contact and coordination was set between the two organisations. This process accelerated following the overthrow of the Egyptian president Morsi. On July 9, the Front populaire invited all the parties, associations and components of civil society who agreed with a series of objectives including:

- “the call for the dissolution of the government (...) and the establishment of a government of national salvation, formed of bodies whose mission would be to manage current affairs, prepare and organise free and democratic parliamentary and presidential elections on the basis of a democratic Constitution representing all Tunisians”.
- “the dissolution of the constituent national assembly and the establishment of a commission of experts to complete the Constitution and accelerate the election of the new ISIE (Instance supérieure indépendante des élections - Higher independent election body).” [8]

The final document of the July 9 meeting called for the organisation of a national congress of salvation with all forces in agreement with these objectives. Beyond the Front populaire (including the Parti des travailleurs, PPDU, LGO, and Baath movement), the first signatories were Nidaa Tounès and two of its allies (Al-Massar and the Parti socialiste), as well as twelve other organisations including the UGET (Union générale des étudiants de Tunisie - General Union of Tunisian Students), the Union des diplômés-chômeurs (Union of Unemployed Graduates), the UNFT (Union nationale de la femme tunisienne - National Union of Tunisian Women), and the FTCT (led by Tunisians from France).

The creation of the Front de salut national (July 26)

Following the killing of a second leader of the Front populaire, less than six months after Chokri Belaïd, the Front du salut national (National Salvation Front) was created. The Front populaire leadership was happy with the content of the founding text of this body:

- * the call to the Tunisian people for “civil disobedience” seeking the dissolution of local authorities and their replacement by “popular authorities”.
- * the replacement of the national assembly by a “Higher national commission of salvation, representative of the national political parties and the components of civil society”. This commission would be basically responsible for fulfilling two tasks which the assembly has proved incapable of fulfilling:

1. “with the aid of experts in constitutional law, to complete within a period of two months the drawing up of the Constitution and to submit it to a referendum”;

2. "to form a government of national salvation made up of a reduced number of voluntary members who will not be contesting the next elections and led by an independent national personality accepted by all parties, capable of taking emergency security, political, social and economic measures as well as the preparation of democratic, just and transparent elections." This provisional government would be in place for less than 6 months. Ennahdha sees in this text a call for the overthrow of the existing government.

The daily "La Presse" noted on August 19: "The statements of all confirm that the Front du salut is relying on the implosion of the governmental coalition and an isolation of the Islamist party." [9] Among the first signatories in addition to the Front populaire were Nidaa Tunes and various human rights and women's associations. The leaders of the Front considered that there was no objection to the presence of Nidaa Tunes among the signatories to the extent that this party said it agreed with the text of the appeal. A common press release was moreover signed on August 3 between the Front populaire and Nidaa Tunes.

Nizar Amami, LGO coordinator and member of the council of general secretaries of the Front populaire, says: "It isn't a turn by the Front towards Nidaa, but on the contrary Nidaa coming over to positions long held by the Front populaire. This policy gives the possibility for organisations situated between the Front and Nidaa to draw closer to the Front populaire. The presence of Nidaa in the Front du salut is counterbalanced by that of a series of partners, like for example the associative network Destourna or youth organisations, who would for sure have rejected finding themselves in alliance with the Front populaire alone." [10]

Following the supposedly secret meeting in Paris between the President of Nidda and that of Ennahdha, some observers think that, being forced to simultaneously flirt with everybody, Essebsi will finally implode the Union pour la Tunisie and his own party.

A period of turbulence for the left

As Ahlem Belhadj noted on July 18, "some Front activists are worried about the setting up a permanent framework of coordination between the Front and the UPT." [11] Certainly, Nidaa Tunes, like the Front populaire, states that it opposes the policies of Ennahdha based on the omnipresence of religion, attacks on liberties and women's rights, as well as the recourse to political violence. But Nidaa is undoubtedly now the main party of the bourgeoisie. Like Ennahdha, it represents continuity with the economic and social policies of Ben Ali - when he was prime minister Essebsi remained totally subject to the diktats of the IMF and repressed demonstrations. He has no intention of breaking with such an orientation.

The presence of cadres from the party of Ben Ali in Nidaa Tunes makes it an unacceptable partner for some activists. Nidaa also has material resources far superior to those of the Front. The risk exists then that the Front's voice is not heard in such a context, as has been noted by the participants in sit-ins before the national assembly.

Those who sup with the devil must use a long spoon, and it remains to be seen how long the Front's spoon is, and inside the Front that of those who want a genuine break with the Ben Ali era, notably at the economic and social level. In Tunisia as in the émigré community, activists and sympathisers of the Front populaire record nuances, doubts or disagreements with the policies it is following, since its identity has been largely based on placing an equals sign between Ennahdha and Nidaa Tunes.

LGO activist Anis Mansouri states: "The risk exists of letting the liberals take the lead, whereas they

follow the same economic policy as the Islamists, and that can only lead to social and democratic regression (...). The Front de salut is a debatable formula, because it raises the prospect of a lasting strategic alliance whose sole losers would be the revolutionary left and the popular layers. So the revolutionary left should defend the conjunctural and tactical nature of this alliance, which should not stop the Front populaire from intensifying its support for social struggles. It should end as soon as possible, with the fall of the government and the dissolution of the assembly.” [12]

The opposition to the orientation followed is notably expressed by the currents which since the foundation of the Front have wished to radicalise it leftwards. Among the themes habitually advanced by them appear notably distrust towards participation in elections or in conferences of dialogue organised by the UGTT. And rejection of any actions, even punctual, with Nidaa Tunes in opposition to Islamist violence.

For the Parti Watad révolutionnaire of Jamel Lazhar, for example, the constitution of the Front de Salut national is a “domestication” of the Front populaire by Nidaa Tounes. The question of the Watad révolutionnaire remaining inside the Front populaire is now posed. Jalel Ben Brik Zoghlami sees participation in the Front de salut national as “the final act of the reformist process”. He has left the LGO and called on the activists of this party to join him in forming a new organisation.

The mobilisations underway

The continuation of the revolutionary process initiated in December 2010 depends on the conjugation of a great number of factors including:

- the development of mass struggles and the strengthening of their social dimension,
- the development of self-organisation,
- the involvement of left forces in the implementation of these two aspects.

On July 26, 2013, following the killing of Mohamed Brahmi, the Front populaire called for the “organisation of sit-ins before the seat of the Constituent Assembly until its fall and the fall of the government and presidencies linked to it.” [13] More than 60 deputies, fifty of them not in the Front populaire, have refused to take their seats, and the social democratic president of the assembly, whose party is in the government, announced on August 6 the suspension of its work.

The weak point of this mobilisation at the Bardo is that the right wing of the Front du salut often succeeds in imposing its conditions: many of the boycotting deputies are linked to the Union pour la Tunisie, the Front populaire having less than ten deputies. Nidaa Tunes also has the financial resources to pay for amplification of the square and a security team. Thus the revolutionaries often find it difficult to make their voices heard.

But the key undoubtedly lies in the regions and notably those where the revolution began in December 2010. This is one of the key points the Front populaire is making.

In its July 26 press release, the Front populaire notably called for:

- organising sit-ins before the offices of regional and local government;
- installing self defence committees in the neighbourhoods, villages and cities;

In the same way, the founding text of the Front de salut national, published the same day, called for

“civil disobedience”, reflected in the regions by the creation of “local salvation coordinations”.

Jilani Hammami of the Parti des travailleurs says: “Given the failure of the Troika government to manage the affairs of the country at all levels, the Front has decided to carry out acts of peaceful civil disobedience in all regions of the country and surround the offices of local and regional government by the organisation of sit-ins. (...) a regional, local and popular authority will be set up to manage the affairs of the country » [14]

The LGO sees in this process “a beginning of a taking of control by the revolutionary vanguards of the centres of local power in the regions as well as the nuclei of revolutionary popular power. Supporting the local and regional popular councils, guaranteeing their establishment on the ground and their rank and file representative democratic nature and allowing a coordination between these structures not only as instruments of self-organisation of the masses in revolt will ensure the radicalisation of the popular movement and will serve as a safety valve to meet all attempts to divert it, but also as nuclei of the future revolutionary regime.” [15]

Amami adds : “The key is the continuation of the mobilisations, and notably the creation of dual power in the regions. Advancing the slogan of the government of national salvation facilitates the mobilisation and creation of local committees. In the region of Sidi Bouzid, for example, the regional government as well as nearly all local government offices are paralysed. Officials can no longer enter their offices and discussions are ongoing to replace them by popular commissions. The movement in the regions is the implementation of what the Front de salut calls the “movement of disobedience.” The latter seeks to “remove the delegates, the governors, the higher management of the public institutions and central administration who have been installed on the basis of their political loyalties” [16]

Popular self-organisation nonetheless is currently lacking. One of the reasons seems to be that the people only had a limited experience in 2011: rapidly, the structures emerging from the mobilisations gathered only a reduced number of persons and so were incapable of structuring themselves nationally. Thus they were never able to appear as a global political alternative.

For the activists and sympathisers of the Front populaire who express doubts or oppose the latter’s orientation, the cohabitation of the Front populaire with Nidaa Tunes inside the Front du salut restrains popular mobilisation and self-organisation. Meanwhile, the prime minister sees the “Irhal” campaign launched by the Front du salut as a call for “rebellion, anarchy and violence”. And Rached Ghannouchi, the President of Ennahdha, adds: “adventurist calls for the overthrow of the government and the replacement of state institutions at the regional and local levels by so called committees of popular management smack of anarchy.” [17]

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“Clearing out” the local authorities in the regions

Concerning Sidi Bouzid, the daily newspaper “La Presse” says: “A regional coordination of salvation will be formed as a revolutionary alternative to the current local and regional authorities’ according to a press release published on July 26 at the end of a working meeting held at the head office of the UGTT regional union in Sidi Bouzid.” [18]

“The coordination, which will be responsible for taking appropriate decisions and measures to guarantee the good management of the affairs of the region, undertakes to work in common with the different organisations, structures of civil society and political and progressive forces for the immediate dissolution of the constituent national assembly, considering that the powers which emanate from it, including the provisional government and the presidency of the Republic, are illegitimate,” said the same source.

“The same press release published by the components of civil society, the political parties and the social organisations of Sidi Bouzid, after two days of consultations, stresses ‘the need to make the peaceful civil disobedience decided on by the Union régionale du travail succeed, while ensuring citizens of basic social services’.”

Whereas nationally the employers’ organisation UTICA is not a member of the Front de salut national, its representatives in Sidi Bouzid participate at local level. Activists say this kind of situation is not unusual.

On July 30, the daily *La Presse* noted a similar phenomenon in the Sfax region: “The local salvation coordination, made up of progressive and democratic political parties, and components of civil society in El Hencha have exerted a strong pressure on the delegate of the region, forcing him to leave the delegation office, without any physical threat, say sources from the progressive movement and human rights activists in the town...”

“The same sources announce an open sit-in until the realization of the objectives of the coordination, namely the fall of the government and the dissolution of the constituent national assembly. According to Ali Ben Abdallah, coordinator of the Front Populaire and Hédi Sellami, a human rights activist in El Hencha, a meeting was held yesterday to examine the possibility of setting up a local management commission which would substitute for the local authorities and monitor the continuity of the functioning of the activity of administration and public commodities. In which case, the initiative would be synonymous with civil disobedience.”

Political forces in Tunisia

There are more than 150 political parties in Tunisia, and many of them are continually splitting, merging or changing names. More than a third of the deputies elected in October 2011 “have changed party and thus no longer represent the voters who sent them to the Palais du Bardo on the basis of the promises of their initial parties.” [19]

The three biggest blocs are the Troika (led by Ennahdha), the Union pour la Tunisie (Union for Tunisia - under the hegemony of Nidaa Tunes) and the Front populaire (Popular Front). The UGTT trade union federation is also present on the political field.

1. The Troika has been in power since late 2011. It is led by the Islamist party Ennahdha which won 41 % of the seats in the Constituent National Assembly in October 2011. Ennahdha was in free fall in the polls at the end of July with 13% of voting intentions (as against 19.7 % in June), behind Nidaa Tunes and ahead of the Front populaire.

Ennahdha is surrounded by two smaller parties, also currently experiencing difficulties:

— the CPR (Congrès pour la République - Congress for the Republic) which holds eleven ministries as well as the Presidency, held by Moncef Marzouki,

— Ettakatol, the former FDTL, section of the Socialist International since January 2011, which also holds several ministries and the Presidency of the National Assembly, held by Moustapha Ben Jafaar.

2. Union pour la Tunisie (UPT) is the only credible candidate for government in the current electoral context. Its biggest component by far is Nidaa Tunes, a neoliberal party set up in June 2012, around a member of the former regime, Beji Caïd Essebsi (BCE), who was also prime minister from March 2011 to late 2011. Set up six months after the elections of 2011, Nidaa Tunes only has 5% of the deputies in the assembly. But this party, with 20.3% of voting intentions, was at the end of July ahead in the polls, beating Ennahdha by 7.3 % and the Front populaire by 12.8 %. Nidaa Tunes represents a part of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie adhering to secularism, some former leaders of Ben Ali's party, and some small centre-right or centre-left currents.

Also present in the UPT:

1. A centre-right party (Al-Joumhourî / Parti républicain, the former PDP), which oscillates between Ennahdha and the opposition, accelerating the decomposition of a party which nonetheless rose in the polls from 2% in June to 4.6 % at the end of July 2013;

2. Three small parties of more or less leftist origin : Al-Massar (partially originating from the former Tunisian Communist Party), the Socialist Party (the former PSG, a 2006 split from the Marxist-Leninist PCOT party, now called the Parti des travailleurs) and the PTPD (originating from a split from one of the groups of the Marxist-Leninist movement, Patriote démocrate/Watad).

3. The Front populaire has activists who have for a long time played an important role inside the trade union and associative movement as well as in the mobilisations. But with 7.5% of voting intentions in the polls in late July, it is some distance behind the two biggest blocs. Its material resources are moreover much weaker than the latter. The Front notably includes parties from the Marxist-Leninist tradition — the Parti des travailleurs (Workers' Party, the new name of the PCOT, considered one of the two main forces on the left and led notably by Hama Hammami), the PPDU and Watad révolutionnaire (the other main force on the left) - or the Trotskyist tradition (such as the LGO), several Arab nationalist parties, the Green party, the association RAID (Attac & Cadtm), as well as those with no party affiliation. The Front populaire was launched on October 7, 2012 and has around 4 % of the seats in the national assembly.

4. The UGTT (Union générale tunisienne du travail - Tunisian General Labour Union), is the only trade union confederation with a real base. Matrix of the national movement at the time of colonisation, the UGTT has always felt it has the right to review the functioning of Tunisian society as a whole. But the UGTT is not a candidate for government and sees itself as a counter-power. Its orientation, systematised in June 2012, is to favour the emergence of a consensus between all political and social forces, including those currently in power. The leadership of the UGTT has, since December 2011, moved to the left, but it wishes to remain independent of any political party. It includes members belonging to practically the whole political spectrum and its orientation rests on the seeking of an internal consensus acceptable to all of them.

5. Among forces of lesser importance, but sometimes disposing of significant resources and effective networks, are:

— Several "destourien" currents originating from the parties of Bourguiba and/or Ben Ali, including that of Kamel Morjane (Ben Ali's former foreign minister), and that which Hamed Karoui (Ben Ali's

former prime minister) is attempting to set up.

— Tayyar Al-Mahaba (the “current of love”!), founded by a wealthy employer originating from Sidi Bouzid but living in London, a former Islamist who became an ally of Ben Ali! His party of the time, Al Aridha Echaâbia / La pétition populaire, came third in the 2011 elections.

— The Alliance démocratique of Mohamed Hamdi and Mehdi Ben Gharbia, formed on July 3, 2013, has around a dozen deputies, 9 of them originating from the centre-right party Joumhourî.

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This article has been written in collaboration with activists residing in Tunisia, France, Belgium and Switzerland.

P.S.

* Translation International Viewpoint. <http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/>

Footnotes

[1] See on ESSF (article 29417), [Tunisia: What next after the failure of the Ennahda government?](#).

[2] www.lapresse.tn/12072013/69856/il-e...

[3] See on ESSF (article 28022), [La Tunisie aux lendemains de l’assassinat de Chokri Belaïd](#).

[4] See ESSF (article 29417), [Tunisia: What next after the failure of the Ennahda government?](#).

[5] Interview with LGO activist Abdesslem Hidouri, June 20, 2012.

[6] *ibid.*

[7] <http://www.letemps.com.tn/article-7...>

[8] <http://www.letemps.com.tn/article-7...>

[9] www.lapresse.tn/20082013/71351/on-n...

[10] Interview, July 31, 2013.

[11] ESSF article 29417.

[12] ESSF (article 29580), [Tunisie : l’épreuve de force](#).

[13] ESSF (article 29358), [Tunisie : Appel du Front Populaire suite à l’assassinat de Mohamed Brahmi](#).

[14] www.lapresse.tn/29072013/70529/une-...

[15] Interview with Nizar Amami, July 31, 2013

[16] www.lapresse.tn/14082013/71149/dema... ; www.lapresse.tn/17082013/71263/tens...

[17] www.lapresse.tn/16082013/71195/enna...

[18] www.lapresse.tn/28072013/70529/une-...

[19] <http://www.lapresse.tn/01072013/693...>