

Tunisia: The debate on being part of the Salvation Front at the Congress of the LGO

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Everyone who spoke agreed on the need to remain in the Popular Front. They also stressed that the decision to enter the Salvation Front was taken collectively during the meeting held the day after the murder of Mohamed Brahmi.

On the other hand, a wide range of positions was expressed on the balance sheet of this tactic and the appropriateness of maintaining this orientation. This debate resulted in a vote of 81.1 per cent to leave the Salvation Front.

First Position: to remain in the Salvation Front (10.8 per cent)

"We must take into account the relationship of forces in Tunisia and internationally. We must put more emphasis on the danger posed by the Islamists, who practice terrorism and political assassination. If tomorrow Ennahdha wins the elections, it will mean the destruction of the revolutionary forces, which will be directly attacked."

"The LGO is not a political force which starts from a bookish position, but is oriented towards the masses. At present the enemy of the masses is Ennahdha, and we must position ourselves in relation to that."

"We therefore have to fight around democratic tasks, which we will later have to link with transitional demands. This is one reason why the conference of the Popular Front on June 1-2 was turned towards democratic demands." "This June conference also wanted to influence the forces of the centre and right. Nidaa is basically an electoral party and does not have a coherent programme.

The Popular Front has not deviated to the right. On the contrary it had a clear programme and its tactics have been a success: firstly, the initiative of the Popular Front has dislocated the Union for Tunisia (UPT) formed around Nidaa Tounes, secondly the Salvation Front is dominated by the Popular Front.

The initiative of the UGTT was accepted because the dissolution of the National Constituent Assembly was not credible." "The fact that the spokesperson of the Front has met with the U.S. ambassador is linked to the fact that Ennahdha and Essebsi are plotting with foreign embassies. It is therefore necessary for the Popular Front also to have diplomatic relations." "The forces of the LGO are limited and there is a risk of it finding itself isolated.

We must overcome the past opposition between Trotskyists and Maoists. Sectarianism is a destructive logic. We must on the contrary open up to the other parties of the Left.

If we decide to leave the Salvation Front, we must say what we will do then. "To sum up," "The tactic followed was correct. The LGO is a revolutionary organization, but this should not prevent it from taking tactical positions. Criticizing the Salvation Front is a leftist deviation which does not take into account the present balance of forces."

Second position: to leave the Salvation Front (81.1 per cent)

Some people believe that this position was wrong from the beginning:

“Participating in the Salvation Front is a real disaster.”

“I do not understand how we can find ourselves side-by-side with former members of the RCD [1]. It is out of the question to find ourselves alongside Nidaa Tounes and Beji Caid Essebsi, who was the initiator of the counter-revolution.”

“Our goal is to change the regime. The Salvation Front only wants to change the government, is that a goal for us?”

“We should be against any meeting and discussion with the present government.”

Several delegates intervened to explain that this tactic was justified in the wake of the assassination of Mohammed Brahmi.

“Participating in the Salvation Front was right, but only if the Popular Front had been the locomotive. This was not the case.” “Because of our organizational weakness, the LGO was unable to influence the Popular Front so that it stayed on this road.”

Another delegate said: “I agreed with the participation of the LGO in the Salvation Front, but my position has changed. We can make mistakes, it is time to take a fresh look at the situation.”

Several delegates therefore proposed the following guidelines:

- Working with the liberal forces is not possible for the continuation of the revolution. It is therefore necessary to withdraw from the Salvation Front.
- We must have a position that is independent of Ennahdha and Nidaa Tounes.
- The working class does not need inter-class alliances. The LGO must maintain its class independence from the “modernist” bourgeoisie and continue the struggle.
- We need to focus on the radicalization of the social movement with the UGTT.
- We must radicalize the programme of the Popular Front by putting economic and social issues to the forefront. What is the present economic programme of the Popular Front? The Popular Front says periodically that it will hold a press conference on this subject, but it does not do it.

Some delegates felt that “the Popular Front had drifted to the right.”

“The fact that the spokesperson of the Popular Front has met the U.S. Ambassador poses us with a problem. Inside the Popular Front, the LGO should have expressed its disagreement with that.”

“At the Bardo sit-in, we tail-ended the UPT and Nidaa Tounes, who had a lot of money. All this creates a lot of problems among the activists. Meanwhile, in the regions, there have been very important confrontations. Activists have been attacked, and we were being asked: where is the Front?”

The Popular Front is now absent from the media, whereas Nidaa is very much present. ““There is very great anger among grassroots activists of the Popular Front at what is happening. There is a gap between the leaders and the rank and file. There is a problem with respect to how decisions are made”.

Third position: freeze participation in the Salvation Front (8.1 per cent)

"Participating in the Salvation Front was not a mistake; we were obliged to do it.

If there had been no Salvation Front, there would not have been thousands of people in the street.

A front is necessary to bring down Ennahdha: you cannot say no to an RCDe who is acting in the same direction as us.

Even if we find ourselves together with bourgeois elements, revolutionaries must take part in it in order to impose revolutionary tasks.

We must give a revolutionary, class, and feminist meaning to this front. Such a link is not automatic, but it must be a dialectic."

Interviews by Dominique Lerouge

P.S.

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

Footnotes

[1] The RCD (Democratic Constitutional Rally) was the party of Ben Ali. Following his overthrow, it was dissolved in March 2011.