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Cilt 3, Sayı 3, Kasım 2011

Misafir Editör: Prof. Bogdan SZAJKOWSKI

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INTRODUCTION

Guest Editor: Prof. Bogdan Szajkowski

This special issue of *Alternatif Politika* is devoted to the Arab revolts of 2011 –the series of dynamic social and political developments not seen in the Arab world for over fifty years. Throughout 2011 the Middle East, the Gulf region, Arab Peninsula and North Africa have witnessed social and political turmoil that has fundamentally impacted not only on these regions but also on the rest of the world.

In a wide comparative framework these events can be seen as a delayed phase of renaissance and age of enlightenment that had begun late in the Ottoman era and led to the Arab armed revolt of 1916-1918 against the Ottoman empire. These revolts originated in the heart of Arabia and were directed against foreign powers. The discoveries of oil and gas which over the past six decades have generated enormous revenues gave rise to an “arrangement” between Salafi-Wahhabi religious institutions, local tribal elites and their foreign sponsors. These “arrangements” constituted a chronic impediment to Arab reform.

The Arab revolts of 2011 have not been directed against foreign powers but primarily, if not exclusively, against the Arab regimes. The protesters’ complaints included long lists of economic grievances headed by issues such as the unfair distribution of wealth concentrated in a clan-class controlled system and a chronic and ever increasing unemployment - particularly among the youth which constitutes between 44 and 65 per cent of the respective societies.

Significantly, however, the protesters’ political demands proved more important than economic petitions. They centred on the abuse of power, lack of democracy, absence of representation, lack of accountability and transparency, widespread corruption, disrespect of human rights and the theft of public wealth that to a varying degree has been clearly apparent in most contemporary Arab societies. Paternalistic power relations triggered mass political revolts against the rentier oligarchical state.

The Arab revolts of 2011 differ fundamentally from the Arab revolts in the 1950s and 1960s. The current wave is entirely “profoundly state-focused” and is not a “pan-Arab movement.” While the spirit of revolution has crossed borders, people have not been fighting for their counterparts in other countries. The only state to intervene in another country has involved Saudi, Emirati and Kuwaiti military support for the ruling minority in Bahrain.

At the time when this special issue of *Alternatif Politika* goes to print the regimes in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya have collapsed as a result of popular revolts; a UN Security Council resolution has asked Yemen's President Ali Abdullah Saleh to relinquish his post; Syria has been threatened with expulsion from the Arab League; Moroccans have approved a new constitution; protests in Jordan have led to the sacking of two successive governments; Oman has seen a government reshuffle, economic concessions and the granting of law-

making powers to elected legislature; massive economic hand-outs have been ordered by King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia as well as an announcement of approval of women's participation in voting and participating in the next Shura Council and municipal elections in 2015; resignation of the cabinet in Kuwait; lifting of the 19-year-old state of emergency in Algeria; and GCC military intervention to save the ruling family in Bahrain. These are not insignificant consequences of the Arab revolts thus far. Moreover it is worth remembering that from now onwards it will prove very difficult, if not impossible, for the Arab regimes not to carry on further political and economic reforms guaranteeing respect of human rights, greater popular participation in the decision-making process, and more accountability and transparency.

The Arab revolts have not been a monolithic movement but protests about good governance, accountability and human dignity. They have been the results of mass activism and by mainly young and frustrated protesters. Although naturally Islamic elements have been present among the demonstrators, these protests were not, on the whole, inspired by Islamic political ideology or fundamentalist leaders.

This special issue of *Alternatif Politika* presents analytical material to some of the aspects of the Arab revolts of 2011. It is not meant to be an exhaustive coverage but merely an introduction to further issues of this journal which will be devoted to examining the ongoing developments in the Arab world.

Prof. Bogdan Szajkowski

TIMELINE OF THE ARAB REVOLT: DECEMBER 2010 – JUNE 2011

Bogdan SZAJKOWSKI*

December 17, 2010

Tunisia - Mohamed Bouazizi, a 26-year-old unemployed, sets fire to himself in the central Tunisian town of Sidi Bouzid, protesting at the confiscation by police of his fruit and vegetable cart. He suffers third-degree burns across his entire body and is subsequently treated in the Traumatology Centre for Severe Burns in the town of Ben Arous.

His self-immolation sparks demonstrations in which protesters burned tyres and chanted slogans demanding jobs. Protests soon spread to other parts of the country including the towns of al-Ragab and Maknasi in central Tunisia, and later the capital, Tunis. Videos of the Sidi Bouzid demonstrations are online soon after the protest began and the Twitter website carries extensive commentary of the protests.

December 19, 2010

Tunisia - Protests spread to Kairouan (holy city located in north-central Tunisia), Sfax (city 270 km southeast of Tunis), and Ben Guerdane (town in south-eastern Tunisia, close to the border with Libya).

December 20, 2010

Tunisia - Mohamed Al Nouri Al Juwayni, the Tunisian development minister, travels to Sidi Bouzid to announce a new \$10m employment programme. But protests continue unabated.

December 21, 2010

Tunisia - President Ben Ali carries out limited cabinet reshuffle and warns that protesters would be punished if rioting continued in the country.

December 22, 2010

Tunisia - Lahseen Naji, a 22-year-old commits suicide in the midst of another demonstration over unemployment in Sidi Bouzid by climbing an electricity pylon and electrocuting himself on the cables, after shouting out “No to misery, no to unemployment!”

Ramzi Al-Abboudi, under the burden of business debt, ironically made possible by the country's micro-credit solidarity programme, commits suicide.

December 24, 2010

Tunisia - Mohamed Ammari, an 18-year-old is killed by a bullet in the chest when police opened fire in the town of Menzel Bouziane, 240km south of the capital Tunis.

Chawki Belhoussine El Hadri, a 44-year-old man, is among those shot by police at the same protest. He dies on 30 December 2010.

Hundreds of protesters rally in front of the Tunisian labour union headquarters over rampant unemployment, clashing with Tunisian security forces in the central towns of al-Ragab and Miknassi. Skirmishes break out when security forces stage overnight crackdown campaigns.

December 25, 2010

Tunisia – Protesters in Kairouan, Sfax and Ben Guerdane again stage demonstrations.

An interior ministry spokesperson says police were forced to "shoot in self-defence" after shots in the air failed to disperse scores of protesters who were setting police cars and buildings ablaze.

December 27, 2010

Tunisia - Mass rally is held in Tunis.

December 28, 2010

Tunisia - President Ben Ali warns in a national television broadcast that protests are unacceptable and will have a negative impact on the economy. He criticises the "use of violence in the streets by a minority of extremists" and says the law will be applied "in all firmness" to punish protesters.

Rally in the town of Gafsa organised by the Tunisian Federation of Labour Unions is blocked by security forces.

Some 300 lawyers stages protests close to government headquarters in Tunis.

The governors of three provinces: Sidi Bouzid, Jendouba, and Zaghouan are dismissed.

Al-Arabiya TV news channel reports the sacking of the ministers of communication, trade and handicrafts, and religious affairs for reasons related to the uprising.

Ben Ali and the Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi hold a telephone conversation.

December 29, 2010

Tunisia - Protests continue. Police break-up protests in Monastir and demonstrations in Sbikha and Chebba.

Nessma TV, a private news channel, becomes the first major Tunisian media outlet to cover the protests, after 12 days of demonstrations.

December 30, 2010

Tunisia - Assam El Hadri, shot by police six days prior, dies of his injuries.

President Ben Ali dismisses the governor of the region Sidi Bouzid, Mourad Ben Jalloul.

December 31, 2010

Tunisia - Lawyers across Tunisia respond to a call to assemble in protest over the arrested lawyers and in solidarity with the people of Sidi Bouzid.

Authorities react to the protests with force, and lawyers say they were "savagely beaten".

January 2, 2011

Tunisia - The hacktivist group "Anonymous" announces Operation Tunisia in solidarity with the protests by hacking a number of Tunisian state-run websites and temporarily shutting down the websites of the presidential palace, prime minister, ministry of industry, ministry of foreign affairs, the stock exchange, and the presidential elections site. In a manifesto posted on the prime minister's website the group stated: "Anonymous is willing to help the Tunisian people in this fight against oppression," the statement said. "Cyber attacks will persist until the Tunisian government respects all Tunisian citizens' right to free speech and information and ceases the censoring of the internet".

Several online activists report on Twitter that their email and Facebook accounts were hacked.

January 3, 2011

Tunisia - Protests in Thala over unemployment and a high cost of living turned violent. Police fired tear gas injuring at least nine people. In response protesters set fire to tires and attack the office of Constitutional Democratic Party.

Algeria - Sporadic rioting is reported in Algeria during the first days of January 2011, when the price of many food products increased sharply. The price of flour, cooking oil and sugar have doubled in the past few months. The official unemployment rate stands at about 10%, although independent organisations say it is closer to 25%.

January 4, 2011

Tunisia - The Tunisian Bar Association announces a general strike to be staged January 6 in protest over attacks by security forces against its members.

January 5, 2011

Tunisia - Mohamed Bouazizi dies in hospital in Ben Arous. He was buried in Sidi Bouzid.

January 5-6, 2011

Algeria - Protest in Algiers intensify. Riots spread to Bab el-Oued, a working class district of the capital that was at the centre of the protest movement in 1988, at the beginning of a period of unrest that led to an Islamist insurgency in the 1990s.

According to the official APS news agency, Overnight, protesters ransacked government buildings, banks and post offices in "several eastern cities", including Constantine, Jijel, Setif and Bouira.

Demonstrations take place in Tizi Ouzou, the main city of Algeria's Kabylia region, about 90km east of Algiers. Fresh violence is reported in Algeria's second city of Oran.

Independent reports say that five people died in the riots linked to food price increases and unemployment in Algeria.

January 6, 2011

Tunisia - Abderrazek Kilani, chairman of the Tunisian Bar Association states that 95 per cent of Tunisia's 8,000 lawyers joined a strike, demanding an end to police brutality against peaceful protesters.

January 7, 2011

Tunisia - Authorities arrest a group of bloggers, journalists, activists and a rap singer in a crackdown on dissent. The arrests come in the context of a "cyber war" between the Tunisian authorities and web activists, who have been struggling to break through the country's extensive censorship wall. Hamada Ben-Amor, a 22-year-old rapper released a song on the internet titled "President, your people are dying".

Algeria - Police fire tear gas and use water cannon on stone-throwing youths following Friday prayers in Algiers.

According to AFP, clashes also erupt for the first time in Annaba city in the north-eastern corner of Algeria near the river Seybouse and the Tunisian border, about 550 km east of the capital, where hundreds of people threw stones at police deployed outside government offices.

January 8, 2011

Algeria - At least six protesters are reportedly killed and six others wounded in clashes with police in Tala, 200km southwest of the capital Tunis, near the border with Algeria. Another three people were killed in similar clashes in the Kasserine region.

In Tala, witnesses said police fired their weapons after using water cannons to try to disperse a crowd which had set fire to a government building. The crowd has also thrown stones and petrol bombs at police.

Tunisia - The Tunisian General Union of Labour (UGTT), the country's main union, condemns the authorities for their heavy-handed response to protesters.

January 9, 2011

Tunisia - Two protesters, Chihab Alibi and Youssef Fitouri, are shot dead by police in al-Miknassi.

January 10, 2011

Tunisia - In a message to the nation Ben Ali thanks Muammar Gaddafi for "strong" support. He describes demonstrations as "terrorist acts", attributing them to "hooded gangs who attack public buildings by night". He announces several political and socio-economic measures, vowing personally to create 300,000 jobs over the next two years to reduce the number of graduate unemployed.

The Tunisian government orders an indefinite closure of all schools and universities.

In a brief statement the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon calls for restraint and dialogue.

Algeria - In the Algerian town of Bordj Menail, 26-year-old Aouichia Mohamed set himself on fire in protest against the government.

January 13, 2011

Tunisia - The Paris-based International Federation for Human Rights reports that 66 persons have died since the protests began. At least 13 people were killed in the past two days alone. The government's official toll stands at 23 after several weeks of clashes.

President Ben Ali makes a televised address, announcing unprecedented concessions and promising not to seek re-election in 2014. He also pledges to introduce more freedoms into society, institute widespread reforms and investigate the killings of protesters during demonstrations. Ben Ali orders state security forces not to fire at demonstrators and vowed to cut the prices of staples such as sugar, bread, and milk.

Almost simultaneously, the government appeared to lift its heavy hand from the media, allowing opposition figures onto television and lifting bans on formerly censored websites such as YouTube. The French daily *Le Monde* suddenly becomes available on the internet. Taoufik Ayachi, an opposition figure, and Naji Baghourri, a former journalists' union chief, appeared on television.

Algeria - Mohsen Bouterfif set himself ablaze in Algeria's Tebessa province when a town's mayor failed to secure him a house.

January 14, 2011

Tunisia - President Ben Ali imposes a state of emergency and fires the country's government amid violent clashes between protesters and security forces. In an attempt to quell the mass protest he also promises fresh legislative elections within six months.

State media reports that gatherings of more than three people have been banned and "arms will be used if orders of security forces are not heeded".

Kamel Morjane, the foreign minister, states that Ben Ali is prepared to hold new legislative elections before the 2014 poll. Speaking to France's Europe 1 radio, Morjane said that Ben Ali has decided that presidential and legislative elections will not be held at the same time anymore, and that "in so doing, he accepted the principle of elections before the presidential poll."

In a sign of a deepening political stand-off thousands of protesters converged in front of the interior ministry building chanting slogans such as "Ben Ali, leave!" and "Ben Ali, thank you but that's enough!".

Ben Ali flees Tunisia. He is refused entry into France and several other countries. In the early hours of 15 January his plane lands in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where is granted permission to stay. With him were his wife, a 53-year-old former hairdresser, their son Mohammed, six, their daughter Halima, her fiancé, their butler and two maids. Subsequently an unnamed senior air force official recounted the final moments of the president and his wife on Tunisian soil. As Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali refused to board the plane his wife words were reported as: "Get on imbecile. All my life I've had to put up with your screw-ups." According to the eye-witness account Ben Ali stood on the tarmac in Tunis airport with a small briefcase, wringing his hands and saying: "Leave me, I don't want to go, I want to die here for my country." At his wife's side was Ali Seriati, the president's hated political police chief, who pushed him on to the steps, shouting: "For —'s sake, get on!"

Mohammed Ghannouchi, the 69-years-old Tunisian prime minister (since 1999) and a close ally of Ben Ali, cites chapter 56 of the Tunisian constitution and becomes the interim president. Chapter 56 of the Tunisian constitution, under which Ghannouchi took power, reads: "In the event the president of the republic is incapable of discharging his duties temporarily, he may order for his powers and authorities be delegated to the first minister, save the right of dissolving the parliament. During this period of temporary incapacity, the government shall remain standing until such state of incapacity is eliminated, even if the government is chastised. The president shall inform the speaker of the parliament and the chairman of the Advisers Board of the temporary delegation of his powers."

Ghannouchi's decision is nullified by Tunisia's Constitutional Council which hands the presidency to the Speaker of Parliament.

Jordan - In Jordan hundreds of protesters chanted slogans against Prime Minister Samir al-Rifai in the southern city of Karak.

January 15, 2011

Tunisia - Fouad Mebazaa the speaker of parliament is sworn in as Tunisia's interim president; he orders creation of unity government.

Saudi Arabia officially announces that it is hosting Ben Ali and his family for an unspecified period of time. After their arrival in Saudi Arabia the Royal Court in Riyadh

issues a statement saying: “The government of Saudi Arabia understands the exceptional situation that the people of Tunisia are facing and hopes that stability and security will return to this beloved Arab and Muslim country. On this basis of this and of its support for action that aids the wellbeing of the Tunisian people, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia welcomed President Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali and his family to the Kingdom. Saudi Arabia while also announcing its full backing for the people of Tunisia, hopes for greater cooperation between Tunisians so they can surmount this difficult phase in their history.”

Security vacuum left by the departure of Ben Ali is exploited by looters and violent gangs.

January 16, 2011

Tunisia – Tension and uncertainty grip Tunisia as military forces attempt to restore order.

WikiLeaks releases a four-part series of US diplomatic cables that shows the United States knew about the extent of corruption and discontent in Tunisia and chose to support Ben Ali regardless.

Ben Ali holds telephone conversation with Muammar Gaddafi.

Libya - Muammar Gaddafi and Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak discuss the Tunisian political situation on the telephone.

Muammar Gaddafi deplores developments in Tunisia. In a televised address beamed to Tunisia he states that Tunisian people have suffered a great and irreparable loss, shedding blood and pushing their country into turmoil. He criticized the media campaign following the riots, and said the reported cases of corruption and other vices in the government were unfounded. He wondered why the media would be reporting such vices in a country like Tunisia, where resources are limited, instead of focussing attention on countries where billions were looted and sold to the West and the East. The Libyan leader condemned the leaking of official documents, including incitement to hatred, by Wikileaks and various other websites. He said that “these leaks are aimed at destabilizing the region and plunging it into disorder and social unrest under agendas established by foreign intelligence services.”

Algeria - Civil protection officer attempts self-immolation in the town of Oum El Bouaghi in eastern Algeria.

January 17, 2011

Tunisia - Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi appoints opposition figures to a new coalition government, aiming to establish political stability after protests.

Sudanese foreign ministry issues a statement: "the government of Sudan welcomes the choice of the people of Tunisia to determine the political future of their country".

Morocco - Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation issues a statement: "The Kingdom of Morocco, which has followed with great concern the major events and dramas that have occurred in recent days in sisterly Tunisia, expresses deep and sincere feelings of solidarity with the people of Tunisia as a whole, in this delicate and crucial period in its history."

Egypt - Abdouh Abdel Moneim – age 48, sets himself on fire outside Egyptian parliament. An interior ministry source said the man was the owner of a small restaurant and was protesting about his poor living standards. Self-immolation as a method of protest is uncommon in the Arab world, where many associate it with protesters in the Far East or the Indian subcontinent. But Egyptian women in rural or poor urban areas have been known to set themselves on fire to protest violent husbands, abusive parents or an unwanted suitor.

Ahmed Hashem el-Sayed, a 25-year-old unemployed man, sets himself on fire in the Egyptian city of Alexandria. He dies in hospital the following day.

Mohammed Farouq Mohammed el-Sayed, a lawyer, sets himself alight outside the prime minister's office in Cairo and is rushed to hospital with minor burns.

Mauritania - In an echo of the incident that sparked the events in Tunisia a 42-year-old Mauritanian sets himself on fire in front of the Presidential Palace in Nouakchott. On his Facebook page, Yakoub Ould Dahoud said that he was protesting the political and economic conditions in the country. He described himself as a "simple citizen who is claiming legitimate rights". Ould Dahoud's online declaration called for "the release of rights activists who are fighting against slavery from civil prison" and demanded lower prices for rice, wheat, oils, sugar and milk. He also called for election oversight and a constitutional amendment banning current and former military figures from seeking the presidency. "Isn't it yet time for the Mauritanian people to freely and seriously choose who to govern them and manage the wealth that suffices them, away from handouts of foreign sabotage governments?" Ould Dahoud asked.

Algeria - In Algeria, a man named Senouci Touat doused himself in gasoline and set himself on fire in the city of Mostaganem, 350 km west of the capital Algiers.

January 19, 2011

Arab League - Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa warns Arab leaders gathered at economic summit in Sharm El-Sheikh that the hardships of ordinary Tunisians that sparked a popular uprising were linked to "unprecedented anger" in the region. He calls on them to "move forward in the development of our societies in terms of human development, technology, economy and society". In their final communiqué the Arab leaders state that "the developmental challenges are no less important than the political challenges facing the region".

January 21, 2011

Tunisia - Demonstrations held in front of the headquarters of the Constitutional Democratic Rally party in Tunis; shots are fired in the air by the army.

Tunisia's caretaker administration approved a general amnesty at its first meeting and declares three days of national mourning for victims of unrest that toppled the previous government.

Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi makes emotional television plea for patience. He promises to retire from public life after the elections, and pledges that all "anti-democratic laws" would be repealed by the transition cabinet. He also announced that the state would provide compensation to those who died during the uprising, as well as their families.

January 22, 2011

Algeria - Anti-government demonstration, organised by the Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD) in the centre of the Algiers is broke up by police. Several protesters are injured and a number are reported to have been arrested. Demonstrations are banned in Algeria because of a state of emergency in place since 1992, and the government had warned people not to attend the demonstration called by the RCD in central Algiers.

Tunisia - Thousands of protesters, including police officers, lawyers and students take to the streets of Tunis to demand the resignation of the cabinet. They are joined by members of the National Guard and fire departments.

Hundreds of Tunisians defy a night-time curfew and set on a march from Menzel Bouzaiane to Tunis in what they call a "Liberation Caravan".

Yemen - Anti-government demonstrations are reported in Yemen's capital of Sana'a. Some 2,500 people take part in the protests. Dozens of activists are arrested. Protests were also held in the southern port city of Aden, where calls for Saleh to step down were heard

along with the more familiar slogans for southern secession. Police fired on demonstrators, injuring four, and detained 22 others in heavy clashes.

Tawakul Karman a prominent female human rights activist is arrested in the middle of the night in Sana'a and accused of organising the anti-government protests. Her arrest sparks further protests in the capital and the town of Taiz the following day. Karman is the president of Yemen's Women Journalists without Chains and a member of the Islamist opposition party, Islah.

Mauritania - Yacoub Ould Dahoud who set himself on fire on January 17 dies in a clinic in Morocco.

January 23, 2011

Yemen - thousands of protesters including students, activists and opposition groups gather inside the University of Sana'a in Yemen to chant slogans against President Ali Abdullah Saleh who has been in power for 32 years. It was the first demonstration to directly confront the rule of Yemen's president, something that had been a red line few dissenters dared to challenge. The demonstrators clearly drew inspiration from the recent ouster of Tunisia's long-time leader, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. "Oh, Ali, join your friend Ben Ali," the crowds chanted. Police fired tear gas at the demonstrators, whose grievances include proposed constitutional changes that would allow the president to rule for two additional terms of ten years. Saleh's current term in office expires in 2013.

In the evening Yemeni television broadcasts President Ali Abdullah Saleh delivered early to military officers. Saleh announces the raise of salaries for those serving in the army apparently in an attempt to ensure the army's loyalty in the face of the rising challenges. He denies claims by his opponents that he plans to install his son, Ahmed, who commands the Republican Guard and special forces, as his successor. "We are against succession. We are in favor of change ...and these are rude statements, they are the utmost rudeness." After the Tunisian turmoil, Saleh also ordered income taxes slashed in half and instructed his government to control prices. He also deployed anti-riot police and soldiers to several key areas in the capital, Sana'a, and its surroundings to prevent riots.

The "Caravan of Liberation" protest of thousands reaches Tunis.

January 24, 2011

Tunisia - Tunisian Army Chief of Staff Rachid Ammar an impromptu speech to hundreds of demonstrators who gathered near the Prime Minister's Office in Tunis. He vows to "defend the revolution" and warns: "Our revolution, your revolution, the revolution of the young, risks being lost....There are forces that are calling for a void, a power vacuum. The void brings terror, which brings dictatorship... The national army is the guarantor of the Revolution. The army has protected and will protect the people and country... We are faithful to the Constitution. We protect the Constitution."

Police fired tear gas after protesters surged through a security picket and into the compound of Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi. Several windows in the Ministry of Finance were also broken.

The Associated Press reports that some 80,000 have logged their support for "the day of revolution against torture, poverty, corruption and unemployment" in Egypt.

Yemen - Tawakul Karman is granted a conditional release that stipulates that she is not to engage in any unlicensed protest demonstration. Hours after being released, Tawakul Karman returned to the demonstrations and vowed to continue fighting to oust President Saleh.

January 25, 2011

Egypt - Mass protests take place in Egypt on Police Day (commemorating Egyptian police officers who refused to surrender to British military forces in Ismailia). Demands include the firing of the Minister of Interior, the cancelling of the perpetual State of Emergency that suspends civil liberties, and a term limit on the Presidency to end the 30-year rule of Hosni Mubarak. Several cities are affected including Aswan, Mansura, Tanta, Alexandria, Zagazig, Suez, Assiut, Mahalla el-Kubra, Kafr El Sheikh, Balteem, Ismailiya, and Quweisna. Some 20,000 people protest in Cairo.

Demonstrators try to storm the parliament. Three people (Gharib Abdelaziz Abdellatif, 45) die in Suez after being hit by rubber bullets. A police officer is killed in Cairo as a result of a stone hitting his head. An Egyptian human rights organisation, the Arab Network for Human Rights Information, says more than 400 people were detained.

The protests are being co-ordinated on a Facebook page where the organisers said they were taking a stand against torture, poverty, corruption and unemployment.

Twitter confirms that it had been blocked inside Egypt from 1600 GMT.

The "Anonymous" hacker's collective closes down the website of the Egyptian Ministry of Information.

Overnight, police fire tear gas at thousands of protesters in central Cairo to demand Mubarak's ousting and calling for reforms.

Algeria - A fireman in the town of Oum El Bouaghi in eastern Algeria tries to commit suicide by pouring lighter fuel on himself and setting it on fire.

January 26, 2011

Tunisia - Tunisia issues an international arrest warrant and requests Interpol to detain former president Ben Ali his wife Leila and other family members. They are being sought for "illegal acquisition" of assets and "illicit transfers of funds abroad".

Protests in Tunis continue. The demonstrators - mainly young men and teenagers - are demanding the resignation of the interim government led by Prime Minister Mohammed Ghannouchi. A peaceful march is staged by the Tunisian Union of Agriculture and Fisheries demanding the right to form a free and independent trade union.

Lazhar Karoui Chebbi, Justice Minister, in the national unity government, states that in the disorder that followed the fall of Ben Ali, about 11,000 prisoners had escaped from Tunisian jails. According to him 2,460 prisoners had been released since Ben Ali was ousted from power. It was not clear how many of them were political prisoners.

Egypt - Thousands of people demonstrate in Egyptian towns, despite a strict ban imposed by the authorities. Egyptian police fire tear gas at protesters.

The Egyptian pound hits a 6-year low against the dollar. The stock market loses more than 4% of value --- an estimated \$21 billion --- in the first 15 minutes of trading.

Around 500 people stage protests on the steps and roof of the lawyers union in central Cairo, chanting anti-government slogans, with another 500 listening and watching from the street. Police use water cannons and tear gas on protesters. Scattered protests are reported in Alexandria.

According to a statement from the Egyptian Interior Ministry around 500 protesters had been arrested over the past 24 hours in an effort to clamp down on the public unrest.

In unusually blunt remarks, the US secretary of state, Hilary Clinton, states that widespread anti-government protests over poverty and government repression in Egypt represent an opportunity for the 30-year administration of President Hosni Mubarak to implement "political, economic and social reforms to respond to the legitimate needs and interests of the Egyptian people."

Syria - Hasan Ali Akleh from the city of Al-Hasakah in north-eastern Syria, sets himself on fire.

January 27, 2011

Tunisia - Tunisia's foreign minister, Kamel Morjane, announces his resignation, as authorities attempt to quell unrest by protesters who want to oust other members of deposed former President Ben Ali's ruling party.

In the evening Prime Minister Mohammed Ghannouchi announces major cabinet reshuffle replacing 12 ministers including the defence, interior and finance ministers, who all had served under Ben Ali.

Egypt - The Egyptian stock exchange suspends trading temporarily after a sharp drop within minutes of opening.

Large protests take place in the cities of Cairo, Suez and the industrial city of Ismailiya. In Suez people congregated to demand the release of those detained, and clashes broke out between demonstrators and security forces. A fire station was set alight by demonstrators - police fire rubber-coated bullets, tear gas and water cannon. In Ismailiya, hundreds of protesters fought with police, who used batons and tear gas to disperse them.

Lawyers stage protests in the Mediterranean port city of Alexandria and the Nile Delta town of Toukh, north of Cairo.

A Bedouin protester is shot dead in the Sinai region, bringing the week's death toll to seven.

Facebook, Twitter and Blackberry Messenger services are disrupted.

The White House warns the Cairo government and protesters they have an "obligation" to avoid violence. The European Union calls on Egypt to respect the right to protest.

Nobel peace laureate and Egyptian opposition politician Mohamed ElBaradei arrives in Cairo.

Yemen - Thousands of Yemenis demonstrate in the capital Sana'a, calling on president Ali Abdullah Saleh to step down.

January 28, 2011

Egypt - Banks and financial institutions are closed throughout Egypt.

Internet and mobile phone text message users in Egypt report major disruption to services.

Anti-regime protests come to a head after Friday prayers. In Cairo riot police fire tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse tens of thousands of protesters. Eleven civilians are reported killed in Suzez and 170 injured. In Alexandria the governorate building is torched. At least 1,030 people get injured countrywide.

Mohamed ElBaradei joins at least 2,000 people in Friday prayers in Cairo, a day after returning home and saying he is ready to "lead the transition."

Internet services in Egypt go down.

President Hosni Mubarak imposes a dusk-to-dawn curfew and calls on the army to assist beleaguered police in enforcing it.

Protesters set fire to the headquarters of the ruling National Democratic Party in Cairo. The riots continue throughout the night.

Key ally the United States, Britain and Germany express concern about the violence, with Britain saying the protesters had "legitimate grievances."

Jordan - In the Jordanian capital Amman large crowds gather at the city's main downtown mosque, chanting slogans and demanding the dismissal of the prime minister. Some protesters wave the green flags of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Syria – An evening demonstration takes place in the city of Ar-Raqqah in north central Syria against the killing of two soldiers of Kurdish descent.

January 29, 2011

Egypt - Overnight, president Mubarak makes his first appearance to announce that he is sacking his cabinet. Protesters throw stones as riot police try to enter Tahrir Square in central Cairo. Egypt's cabinet meets to formally submit its resignation.

Egyptian state television announces that the curfews imposed in Cairo, Alexandria and Suez have been extended to run from 4pm (2pm GMT) to 8am (6am GMT).

Tens of thousands of protesters flood Cairo streets, ignoring an extended curfew, also applied in Alexandria and Suez. Three people killed in the capital while a mob in Rafah kill three police; the nationwide death toll since 25 January reaches at least 51; the army calls on Egyptians to protect themselves against looters. Dozens of shops ransacked in Cairo; the resignation of the government, promised by Mubarak, is announced; the banned Muslim Brotherhood, the best-organized opposition group, calls for a peaceful transfer of power through a transitional cabinet; Egyptian intelligence chief Omar Suleiman sworn in as vice-president, the first such post to be held in Mubarak's 30-year presidency.

President Hosni Mubarak holds telephone conversation with King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. According to *Arab News* during the conversation president Mubarak reassured the king that the situation in Egypt is stable. "What have been seen by the viewers in the world outside are merely attempts of some groups who do not want stability and security for the Egyptian nation. These groups seek to achieve weird and dubious objectives." The Saudi Press Agency issues a statement quoting King Abdullah as saying: "Egypt is a country of Arabism and Islam. No Arab and Muslim can bear that some infiltrators into the brotherly Egyptian people are attempting to destabilize that country's security and stability in the name of freedom of expression, and they have been exploiting the public and spawning hatred and driving them to engage in destruction, arson, looting — terrorizing them and inciting sedition... the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its people and government declares it stands with all its resources with the government of Egypt and its people."

Associated Press reports peaceful protests in Tahrir Square with few police in the crowds, soon followed by news of police opening fire near the interior ministry. A number of people are wounded by gunshots.

Egyptian state television reports that looters have broken into the Egyptian Museum and destroyed two ancient mummies. Demonstrators form a human chain around army tanks in Tahrir Square as they help to protect the museum.

President Mubarak appoints former air force commander Ahmed Shafiq prime minister. Egypt's intelligence chief, Omar Suleiman, is appointed vice-president – the first to hold this office since Mubarak took power in 1981.

In a joint statement Nicolas Sarkozy, Angela Merkel, and David Cameron declare: 'The Egyptian people have legitimate grievances and a longing for a just and better future ... We urge President Mubarak to embark on a process of transformation reflected in broad-based government and free elections.'

Algeria - In Algeria more than 10,000 people stage protests against authorities in the northeastern city of Bejaia (Berber-speaking Kabylie region). Organizers say that the latest rally is inspired by events in Tunisia.

Saudi Arabia - Saudi web activists launch an online campaign calling for political reform in the kingdom.

January 30, 2011

Egypt - Thousands of convicts break out of prisons; Egyptian warplanes make deafening low passes over protesters; Mubarak visits central military command; opposition

charges ElBaradei with negotiating with the regime; Obama voices support for "an orderly transition to a government that is responsive to the aspirations of the Egyptian people"; the six days of nationwide protest have left at least 125 people dead; police ordered back onto the streets as the curfew is extended.

Egyptian authorities order the closure of the pan-Arab satellite channel Al Jazeera offices in Cairo following the network's nonstop coverage of the massive protests against the government. Al Jazeera's separate live channel is removed from its satellite platform by the Egyptian government in the morning, the telephones to its Cairo bureau cut and the signal of its main news channel also interfered with.

Reuters reports that 34 members of the Muslim Brotherhood, including seven leaders, escape from prison, after relatives storm the jail north-west of Cairo.

ElBaradei arrives in Tahrir Square to address the crowd, right. He tells them: "You have taken back your rights and what we have begun cannot go back ... We have one main demand – the end of the regime and the beginning of a new stage, a new Egypt."

Israeli PM Binyamin Netanyahu expresses concern about 'stability and security' in the region. The Rafah border crossing between the Gaza Strip and Egypt has been closed.

Several countries, including the US and India, announce plans to organise evacuation flights from Egypt.

Tunisia - Rachid Ghannouchi, the leader of Ennahda, Tunisia's main Islamist movement, returns home after 22 years in exile in London. Up to 10,000 young men and veiled women packed the arrival hall and car park at the airport. According to Reuters news agency, alongside his supporters was a small group of secularists with banners reading: "No Islamism, no theocracy, no Sharia and no stupidity!" In 1989 Ennahda came second to the ruling party in elections, officially winning about 17% of the ballot. However allegations of fraud marred the vote and according to some estimates Ennahda's tally was as much as double the official figure.

Sudan - Hundreds of students protest in the Sudanese capital Khartoum demanding the resignation of the government. Armed riot police surrounds the entrances of four universities in the capital, firing teargas and beating students at three of them.

Some 500 young people also stage protests in the city of el-Obeid in North Kordofan (central Sudan) some 600 kilometres west of the capital. Riot police used tear gas to disperse a large group of demonstrators.

In the Sudan groups have emerged on social networking sites calling themselves "Youth for Change" and "The Spark." "Youth for Change" has attracted more than 15,000 members. "The people of Sudan will not remain silent anymore," its Facebook page said. "It is about time we demand our rights and take what's ours in a peaceful demonstration that will not involve any acts of sabotage."

January 31, 2011

Egypt - Tens of thousands of protesters defy police curfew and demonstrate throughout Egypt.

President Mubarak announces cabinet reshuffle replacing the widely despised Interior Minister Habib al-Adly.

Egypt's army vows it will not use force against the tens of thousands of people protesting for the removal of the regime of president Hosni Mubarak. The statement carried on Egyptian media says: "To the great people of Egypt, your armed forces, acknowledging the legitimate rights of the people... have not and will not use force against the Egyptian people." This announcement is absolutely critical because it takes away a huge measure of uncertainty from the mind of any potential demonstrator.

Vice President Omar Suleiman says that Mubarak had asked him to open dialogue with all political parties on constitutional reform.

The US state department special envoy to Cairo, former ambassador to Egypt Frank Wisner, arrives in the country. His mission is to urge Egyptian leaders to embrace political change.

Yemen - President Ali Abdullah Saleh announces a new package of incentives for young Yemenis. In an attempt to defuse the angry unemployed graduates, Saleh instructs the government to expand social security network to encompass additional 500,000 needy families.

EU foreign ministers meeting in Brussels urge "the Egyptian authorities to embark on an orderly transition to a broad-based government with full respect for the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms."

Syria - *The Wall Street Journal* publishes an interview with the Syrian president Bashar al-Assad. According to the president the protests in Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen are ushering in a "new era" in the Middle East, and that Arab rulers would need to do more to accommodate their people's rising political and economic aspirations. "If you didn't see the need of reform before what happened in Egypt and Tunisia, it's too late to do any reform." In

the interview Assad said he would push through political reforms this year aimed at initiating municipal elections, granting more power to nongovernmental organizations and establishing a new media law. His government already made adjustments to ease the kind of economic pressures that have helped fuel unrest in Tunisia and Algeria: Damascus this month raised heating oil allowances for public workers—a step back from an earlier plan to withdraw subsidies that keep the cost of living down for Syrians but drain the national budget.

February 1, 2011

Egypt - Mass anti-government rallies are held throughout Egypt, with some 200,000 people protesting on Tahrir Square in the centre of Cairo, in an effort to force president Hosni Mubarak from power. Thousands take to the streets in Suez, Mansoura, Assiut and Luxor.

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan sides with the people of Egypt as protests sweep their country. "No government can survive against the will of its people... The era of governments persisting on pressure and repression is over... As Turkey, we believe that the Arab people don't deserve this... Turkey will remain on the side of the Egyptian and Tunisian people."

Mohamed ElBaradei tells satellite channel Al Arabiya that Hosni Mubarak must step down by 4 February.

Fifty Egyptian Human Rights groups call on Mubarak to step down to save Egyptian's blood.

The UN human rights chief, Navi Pillay, says 300 people may have been killed across the country since the protests began on 25 January.

The US state department orders all non-emergency US embassy and government personnel to leave Egypt.

Senator John Kerry, chairman of the US Senate committee on foreign relations, calls for President Mubarak to recognise that it's time to leave office. "The people of Egypt and events in Egypt have, in their own power and in the simplicity of their spontaneity, moved beyond president Mubarak and his regime and I believe it is vital for president Mubarak to help to transform this moment into the new Egypt and the new future for Egypt."

US Ambassador to Egypt, Margaret Scobey, holds telephone conversation with Mohamed ElBaradei.

US officials confirm that the US state department special envoy to Cairo, Frank Wisner, has met President Mubarak in the morning to discuss the country's political crisis. It is reported that he conveyed President Barack Obama's message that the US sees Mubarak presidency at an end.

In a late night television address to the nation president Hosni Mubarak pledges to step down at the next election due in September 2011. Mubarak attacked those responsible for protests that had been "manipulated by political forces", caused mayhem and chaos and endangered the "stability of the nation". "In the few months remaining in my current term I will work towards ensuring a peaceful transition of power," Mubarak said. "I have exhausted my life in serving Egypt and my people. I will die on the soil of Egypt and be judged by history".

US President Barack Obama holds a 30-minute telephone conversation with President Mubarak after his television address to the nation. Subsequently president Obama made a statement at the White House in which he praised the protesters and called for the transition of power to begin immediately. "What is clear, and what I indicated tonight to President Mubarak, is my belief that an orderly transition must be meaningful, it must be peaceful and it must begin now," said Obama.

Clashes between anti-government and pro-Mubarak protesters in Alexandria.

Jordan - Following street protests King Abdullah of Jordan dismisses his government and appoints a new prime minister led by Maarouf Al Bakhit, a career military man with a reputation for maintaining order and stability. The new government of is told to take "practical, swift, and tangible steps to launch a real political reform process, in line with the king's vision of comprehensive reform, modernization and development."

Tunisia - UN mission sent to Tunisia reports that at least 219 people were killed and 510 injured in the unrest that led to the fall of the Ben Ali regime.

Libya - Jamal al-Hajji, who has dual Libyan and Danish nationality, is in Tripoli shortly after he issued a call on the Internet for demonstrations in support of greater freedoms in Libya.

February 2, 2011

Egypt - Internet services are partially restored in Egypt.

Early afternoon thousands of pro-Mubarak supporters attack pro-democracy supporters in central Cairo. Some ride in on horses and camels (1.24pm). Many brandish iron

bars and baseball bats and they also throw rocks and rip up bits of pavement to create weapons. The battles continue well into the night.

Tony Blair speaking to CNN describes Mubarak as “immensely courageous and force for good”.

The US State Department discloses that Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, has been in direct contact today with Egyptian vice president Omar Suleiman.

Associated Press reports that Frank Wisner, the US special envoy sent by Obama to talk to Egypt's government, is on his way back to the US.

Fighting continued around Tahrir Square past midnight, with both sides building barricades and pro-government supporters throwing molotov cocktails, setting fire to cars and buildings while the army refused to intervene.

Yemen - In Yemen ahead of a planned protest, President Ali Abdullah Saleh declares that he won't seek re-election in 2013.

Syria - Human Rights Watch reports that a group of 20 people in civilian clothing had beaten and dispersed 15 people who had been holding a candlelight vigil in Bab Touma, Old Damascus, in support of demonstrators in Egypt.

February 3, 2011

Egypt - In Cairo following a dramatic night of fighting on streets and rooftops around Tahrir square and the Egyptian museum, violence continues to rage well after dawn.

The Egyptian health ministry says five people have been killed and 836 taken to hospital since pro-government demonstrators attacked pro-democracy protesters on 2 February.

The British telecommunications company Vodafone is forced by the Egyptian government to send out text messages urging pro-Mubarak supporters to "confront" protesters. Under the emergency powers provisions of the Telecoms Act, the Egyptian authorities can instruct the mobile networks of Mobinil, Etisalat and Vodafone to send messages to the people of Egypt. They have used this since the start of the protests. Vodafone Group has protested to the authorities that the current situation regarding these messages is unacceptable. They have made it clear that all messages should be transparent and clearly attributable to the originator.

A retired Egyptian general tells the BBC that the troops stand ready to fire at pro-Mubarak supporters, if they attack protesters today. The general claimed the army could turn on Mubarak as early as tomorrow.

Pro-democracy protesters say they have detained 120 people with IDs associating them with the police or the ruling NDP party.

Reuters reports that Egypt's vice president Omar Suleiman has held a dialogue with the country's political parties and national forces in a bid to end the protests.

The leaders of the Britain, French, German, Italian and Spanish governments issue a statement calling for "quick and orderly transition to a broad-based government." It just stops short of calling on Mubarak to resign.

Egyptian vice-president Omar Suleiman speaking on state television blames the violence on "some other opportunists carrying their own agenda. It might be related to outside forces or other domestic affairs... I blame some sister countries that have unfriendly TV stations, which incite youth against us."

Hosni Mubarak tells Christiane Amanpour of ABC News "I told Obama: 'you don't understand the Egyptian culture and what would happen if I step down now'."

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton condemns the attacks on protesters. "I urge the government and a broad and credible representation of Egypt's opposition, civil society and political factions to begin immediately serious negotiations on a peaceful and orderly transition."

Egypt's Health Ministry says that 13 people were killed and 1,200 injured in last night's clashes between pro- and anti-government demonstrators.

Iranian Foreign Ministry issues a statement supporting protesters in Egypt and declares that these protests would lead to the emergence of "a real independent Islamic Middle East." It calls on people and governments around the world to strongly condemn Israeli and American "interferences aimed at diverting Egyptians' justice-seeking movement, by creating counter-revolt and using rioters." The statement said the protests echo the Islamic state's 1979 Islamic revolution, which toppled the U.S.-backed shah.

Jordan - King Abdullah of Jordan meets leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood in the country and states that the pace of political reforms in recent years had faced hurdles and pledges to fight corruption.

Yemen - Thousands of anti-government demonstrators gather in Yemeni capital Sana'a to take part in a "day of rage" against the government. They claim that president Ali Abdullah Saleh's offer to step down in 2013 was not enough.

Algeria - Algeria's president Abdelaziz Bouteflika announces that state of emergency, enforced for the past 19 years, will be lifted in the "very near future". The president's announcement follows growing pressure from the country's opposition groups, some of whom have been inspired by popular uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia.

February 4, 2011

Egypt - Hundreds of thousands of anti-government protesters gather in Cairo's Tahrir Square for what they have termed the "Day of Departure".

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei describes Egypt's anti-government protests as "an Islamic movement" that could represent a severe defeat for US policies in the region. "The events have special meaning for the Iranian nation... This is what has always been said that an Islamic awakening [could] result from the victory of Iran's great Islamic revolution."

Tunisia - In the Tunisian town of Sidi Bouzid two civilians die while in police custody. Four policemen are arrested the following day in connection with their death.

Jordan - In Jordan hundreds of protesters, drawn mainly from Jordan's powerful Muslim Brotherhood, staged demonstration in Amman against King Abdullah's government reshuffle declaring that it did not meet their calls for political reform. The march in the Jordanian capital is far smaller than previous anti-government protests. Small protests took place in three other towns in Jordan.

Yemen - In Sana'a tens of thousands of Saleh loyalists flooded the central square in a show of support for the embattled president, forcing the opposition to move its planned anti-regime rally to the University of Sana'a.

Syria - A "day of anger" promoted by Facebook and Twitter activists online fails to ignite protests in Syria. According to the Internet World Stats website which monitors Internet exposure worldwide, only 30,000 Syrians or 0.1% have access to Facebook, the lowest ratio in the Arab world. A Facebook-driven solidarity campaign with Tunisia's uprising produced only nine demonstrators outside the Tunisian embassy in Damascus.

Morocco - Morocco's Minister of Telecommunications, Khaled al-Nasiri, states that the country's authorities welcome anti-government protest being planned on 20 February by

the social networking site Facebook. "We intend to reassure those who are organising protests on the internet that this is an entirely normal thing and is part of the democratic life of Morocco."

February 5, 2011 –

Egypt - Thousands of people spent the night in Tahrir Square following another huge rally against Mubarak.

Several leading figures, including Hosni Mubarak's son Gamal, resign from the ruling National Democratic Party. A relative liberal, Hossam Badrawi, is appointed the party's new secretary general.

Financial analysts report that the cost of the disturbances to the Egyptian economy amounts to \$310 million a day.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, speaking at a security conference in Germany, says there must be clear progress toward "open, transparent, fair and accountable systems" across the Middle East not to risk even greater instability.

Egyptian state television announces the resignation of the Executive Committee of the ruling National Democratic Party, including Gamal Mubarak.

President Obama's special envoy to Egypt, Frank Wisner, tells the international security conference in Germany during a video conference from Washington, that president Hosni Mubarak was needed to oversee a transition to democracy. "We need to get a national consensus around the preconditions for the next step forward. The president must stay in office to steer those changes," For the first time since Egypt erupted into political crisis nearly two weeks ago, the United States indicates it may be willing for president Mubarak to remain in office temporarily. The US state department spokesman, PJ Crowley clarifies Frank Wisner's comments - "We have great respect for Frank Wisner and we were deeply appreciative of his willingness to travel to Egypt last week. He has not continued in any official capacity following the trip. The views he expressed today are his own. He did not coordinate his comments with the US government."

General Hassan El-Rawani, the head of the army's central command, speaks to the masses in Tahrir Square urging them to leave the square.

Despite the cold, rainy conditions, anti-government protesters continue to stand their ground at Tahrir Square.

Saudi Arabia - About 40 women stage protest in front of the Interior Ministry in central Riyadh, demanding the release of prisoners held without a trial.

February 6, 2011

Egypt - Thousands of protesters continue to occupy Tahrir Square where they held Muslim and Christian services to remember those who have been killed in the protests.

Opposition groups, including the Muslim Brotherhood, have held talks with Vice-president Omar Suleiman on what happens next in Egypt. The vice president offers a series of concessions including liberalisation of the media and the release of political prisoners

Tunisia - The Tunisian Interior Ministry suspends all activities of the Democratic Constitutional Party (RCD), the political party of ousted president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. The announcement followed violence across the country over the weekend that killed at least three people and wounded more than a dozen others.

Jordan - Jordan's Bedouin tribal elders warn of a mass revolt if King Abdullah does not adhere to a promise to reform the country's political landscape. A letter signed by 36 tribal elders criticises overspending and executive interference in government matters. "Political reform is now an urgent matter that cannot be delayed, holding the corrupt and thieves accountable and freezing their assets, prohibiting them from travelling are all part and parcel of political reform." Queen Rania draws particularly harsh criticism from the tribal figures, who accuse her of stealing from the country and manipulating and interfering in national politics. If powerful tribal figures turn against the royal family and the government, it could spell considerable trouble for Jordan. No less than 40% of the Jordanian population is represented in the tribes, and their support and loyalty to the Hashemite ruling family is crucial to the royals, especially in times of crisis and turmoil.

Algeria - Zohra Drif Bitat, a vice-president of Algeria's upper house of parliament and a prominent member of the ruling elite, launches a scathing attack on the government, saying it had been unable to translate huge energy wealth into a better life for ordinary people. "Are we going to continue to tackle our problems with the same actors who have failed? Don't we need new blood... I hope and expect a radical change in the mode of governance."

February 7, 2011

Egypt - Thousands of protesters stay in Cairo's Tahrir Square for the 14th consecutive day.

Reshuffled Egyptian cabinet meets for the first time and agrees to raise public-sector salaries and pensions by 15%. Finance Minister Samir Radwan allocates about 6.5bn Egyptian pounds (£677m; \$960m) to cover the increases for six million employees.

Human Rights Watch now estimates at least 297 people have been killed since protests in Egypt began.

The online activist and Google executive Wael Ghonim is released from 12-day detention. The Facebook administrator is considered the person that started the protests in Egypt. He said he was snatched off the streets two days after the protests first erupted on 25 January. After he left a friend's house, four men surrounded him, pushed him to the ground and took him blindfolded to state security. He said he spent much of the following days blindfolded, with no news of the events on the street, being questioned. He said his interrogators were convinced that foreigners were backing the movement, but Ghonim asserted it was just young Egyptians "who love this country." He also sought to debunk the government's accusations that the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood, Mubarak's most bitter rival, was involved in planning the protests.

More arrests of activists are reported, including independent film maker Samir Eshra and Abdel-Karim Nabil Suleiman, who blogs under the name Karim Amer. Amer was the first blogger to be prosecuted in the country, when he was jailed for four years in 2007 for insulting Islam and the president.

February 8, 2011

Tunisia - Tunisian authorities declare that some 234 people were killed during the unrest in the country and 510 injured.

Egypt – Vice president, Omar Suleiman, offers more concessions to the protesters. After meeting with Hosni Mubarak he claims the regime has a plan and a timetable for the peaceful transfer of power. He also says the government would not pursue protesters who have been demanding Mubarak to step down now. A committee has been set up to discuss and recommend constitutional changes that would relax eligibility rules governing who can run for president and limit the number of presidential terms.

During a meeting with heads of state and independent newspapers, vice president, Omar Suleiman, warns "we can't put up with" continued protests in Tahrir for a long time - the crisis must be ended as soon as possible.

US vice-president Joe Biden has another phone call with his Egyptian counterpart Omar Suleiman, and calls for "irreversible progress that responds to the aspirations of the Egyptian people."

Police opened fire on hundreds in Kharga who set a courthouse on fire and attacked a police station, demanding the removal of the provincial security chief.

Human Rights Watch names 52 in Alexandria who have died in the protests. It states that least 297 people have been killed since January 28 – 232 in Cairo, 52 in Alexandria and 13 in Suez. According to the HRW “The actual number of deaths will likely be significantly higher than 297, because our count is only based on key hospitals in three cities. We have only included numbers of dead that we were able to verify ourselves.”

The authorities release 34 political prisoners.

Palestinian Authority - Palestinian authority announces that it would hold local elections across the occupied territories on July 9. A round of local elections was originally scheduled for July last year, but was cancelled as a result of the continuing internal strife. The decision finally to hold local elections comes against the backdrop of political unrest sweeping the Arab world.

Iran - Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi, the leaders of the green movement in Iran issue a call for what they have described as "a solidarity move to support the protests in two Muslim countries of Egypt and Tunisia." On his official website, Mousavi has likened the protests in Egypt and Tunisia to those in Iran in 2009. "Undoubtedly, the starting point of what we are witnessing in the streets of Tunis, Sana'a, Cairo, Alexandria and Suez should be seen in the Iranian protests," he said.

February 9, 2011

Egypt – Protesters spill out of Tahrir Square to set up camp outside Egypt's Parliament building. They erect a sign outside the building which reads "closed until the fall of the regime".

US vice-president Joe Biden tells Vice-president Omar Suleiman in a phone call that the US wants "prompt, meaningful, peaceful, and legitimate" reforms. He also urges Egypt to scrap its emergency laws.

A wave of strikes erupts across the economy, including railway workers, public employees and electricity staff.

In the city of Suez, strikes entered a second day. Some 5,000 workers at various state companies — including textile workers, medicine bottle manufacturers, sanitation workers and a firm involved in repairs for ships on the Suez Canal — held separate strikes and protests at their factories.

In the desert oasis town of Kharga, southwest of Cairo, five protesters have been killed in two days of rioting, security officials said. Police opened fire Tuesday on hundreds

who set a courthouse on fire and attacked a police station, demanding the removal of the provincial security chief.

Some 8,000 protesters, mainly farmers, set barricades of flaming palm trees in the southern province of Assiut. They blocked the main highway and railway to Cairo to complain of bread shortages.

Hundreds of slum dwellers in the Suez Canal city of Port Said set fire to part of the governor's headquarters in anger over lack of housing.

Two people, Mustafa Said Bilal and Kitan Abdel Rahman Khadr, are killed by police in Al-Wadi al-Jadid, an isolated town in south-west Egypt.

February 10, 2011

Egypt - President Hosni Mubarak delivers televised address that stuns the crowds massed in Cairo's Tahrir Square and elsewhere by saying he would hand power to his vice-president, Omar Suleiman, but stay on as president until elections in September 2011. In his speech Mubarak reminded Egyptians of his sacrifices as a war hero and his defence of the country's interests in peacetime. "I have lived for this nation," the former air force commander declared, visibly emotional about his own efforts. "I have exhausted my life defending the land and its sovereignty. I have faced death on my occasions. I never bent under foreign pressure. I never sought false power or popularity. I am certain that the majority of people are aware who Hosni Mubarak is... I have delegated to the vice president some of the power - the powers of the president according to the constitution. I am aware, fully aware, that Egypt will overcome the crisis and the resolve of its people will not be deflected and will [inaudible] again because of the - and will deflect the arrows of the enemies and those who [inaudible] against Egypt... I can tell you that I as the president of the Republic I have to respond to your calls but I am also embarrassed, and I will not accept or listen to any foreign interventions... I can tell you before anything else that the blood of your martyrs will not be wasted and that I will not be easy on punishing people who committed these crimes." After a day of fevered speculation that he would announce his resignation, his address has enraged protesters.

Barack Obama issued his strongest censure of Mubarak so far, criticizing the Egyptian government's failure to put forward a "credible, concrete and unequivocal path to democracy". In a written statement the US president said: "Too many Egyptians remain unconvinced that the government is serious about a genuine transition to democracy, and it is the responsibility of the government to speak clearly to the Egyptian people and the world."

Tahrir Square is filled with a huge, angry crowd. Reports of mass protests in Alexandria, Mansoura (120km north-east of Cairo), Qin (hometown of Vice-president Omar Suleiman), and Arish (344km north-east of Cairo).

The Libyan News Agency reports a telephone call by Col Muammar Gaddafi to president Mubarak after the latter television address.

Saudi Arabia – Agencies report that ten intellectuals, human rights activists and lawyers have formed the Umma Islamic Party (Hizb al-Umma al-Islami). The founding group includes: Dr. Ahmad bin Sa'd al-Ghamidi, Professor Sa'ud al-Dughathir, Shaikh Abd al-`Aziz al-Wuhaibi, Shaikh Muhammad bin Husain al-Qahtani, Professor Muhammad bin Nasir al-Ghamidi, Walid al-Majid and Professor Abd al-Karim al-Khadhar.

Iran - The BBC has issued a statement saying that its Persian TV service is being jammed "from within Iran" following the corporation's coverage of the ongoing unrest in Egypt.

February 11, 2011

Egypt - Mass of protesters demonstrate in Tahrir Square in Cairo. Thousands surround state television building in the city and the presidential palace in Heliopolis.

Just after 16:00 GMT vice-president Omar Suleiman announces that president Hosni Mubarak has stepped down and handed over power to the army.

Tunisia - Tunisian authorities detain an armed group, linked to ousted president Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali, which they suspected of involvement in a wave of violence.

Bahrain - The King of Bahrain Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa announces that each Bahraini family is to receive a gift of 1,000 dinars (\$2,650).

Syria - Syria lifts blockade of social networks. This allows, for the first time since 2007, for Syrians to log onto Facebook and YouTube without going through proxy servers abroad.

Palestinian Authority - According to the Palestinian news agency, Maan, several hundred students shouting "Gaza salutes the Egyptians" took to the streets of central Gaza.

February 12, 2011

Egypt - Egypt's military authorities reaffirm the country's commitment to all its international treaties. The announcement, read by a senior officer on state TV, implicitly confirms that the country's peace treaty with Israel will remain intact.

President Barack Obama welcomes Egypt's new military rulers' commitment to civilian rule and respect for all treaties and stresses U.S. support, including financial support, for Egypt.

Obama also calls several foreign leaders including British Prime Minister David Cameron, Jordan's King Abdullah and Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan to discuss the latest developments in Egypt.

Algeria - Defying government's ban, thousands of protesters take to the streets of Algeria's capital and other main cities, including Annaba in the east and Oran in the west, demanding the resignation of the government and president Abdelaziz Bouteflika. In the capital the protesters are overwhelmed by 30,000 strong riot police and brutally dispersed. Some 400 are arrested. Internet providers are shut down and Facebook accounts deleted across Algeria.

Yemen - Protest march in Yemen's capital, Sana'a, calling for president Ali Abdullah Saleh to leave office is attacked by government supporters. Opposition parties pledge to enter into dialogue with President Saleh over a series of political concessions he made last week.

Morocco - A 26-year-old man dies in central Morocco after setting himself on fire in despair at his situation since being dismissed from the army. This is the first reported death in the country from self-immolation.

Palestinian Authority - The Palestinian Authority announces the holding of new legislative and presidential elections by September.

Mauritania - Three main Mauritanian unions organize march followed by a rally in the country's capital Nouakchott, demanding improvements from the government and the opening of negotiations.

February 13, 2011

Egypt - Egypt's new military authorities dissolve parliament and suspend the constitution.

Jordan - Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the U.S. military's Joint Chiefs of Staff, arrives in Jordan for talks with his military counterpart and with King Abdullah. Mullen subsequently visits Israel.

Algeria - Hundreds of stone-throwing demonstrators clashed with police in the eastern Algerian city of Annaba.

Yemen - Third consecutive day of anti-government protests in the Yemeni capital Sana'a. Protests also occur in the southern Yemeni city of Taiz, where 120 demonstrators were taken into custody.

Bahrain - Bahraini riot police break up protests using tear gas and rubber bullets.

Libya - *Tripoli Post* reports that Libyan authorities have released 12 political prisoners during the past few days, a move interpreted as an attempt to quell political opposition.

Iran - Tens of thousands demonstrate across the country in solidarity with Egyptian and Tunisian protesters. At least two people are killed and dozens injured.

February 14, 2011

Egypt - Early in the morning military police move on the Tahrir Square in Cairo to clear the last remaining democracy protesters. However, fresh protesters arrive soon demanding better pay and working conditions from the country's new military rulers. The groups included: hundreds of uniformed and plain-clothes police, bank workers, transport employees, people working in the tourism industry, ambulance drivers. Jon Leyne, one of BBC correspondent in Cairo reports "there appears to be a whole series of mini-revolutions going on in the wake of the removal of Mr Mubarak."

Egyptian authorities ask the United Kingdom government to freeze the assets of some the former Egyptian officials.

Iran - Hundreds of thousands of people march illegally through Iran. Police fire tear gas into protesters. In Teheran the crowd – whose size far exceeded the predictions of most analysts – assembled despite threats by the Revolutionary Guard in recent days to crush any gathering. At least 20 politicians and journalists are arrested before the rally in the capital. Two persons are killed by the police, including a 26-years old, Saneh Jaleh. Several protesters are wounded in clashes with the police and some 1,500 detained.

Yemen - Thousands of anti-government protesters march through Yemen's capital for a fourth consecutive day, demanding political reforms and the removal of president Ali Abdullah Saleh. Police fire tear gas and stones are thrown, with reports of injuries. At least 17 protesters were wounded and up to 165 others were arrested. Protests are also held in the southern city of Taz.

Bahrain - In Bahrain police disperse web-organised protests in the capital Manama and several villages in the country, including: Daih, Nouidrat, Darraz, Karkazan, Sanabis,

Sitra, and Jed Hafs. Police fired teargas and rubber bullets to break up the pro-reform demonstrations and two protesters are killed. The Facebook page which called for the February 14 uprising, inspired by the protests which ousted the regimes in Tunisia and Egypt, had amassed more than 15,000 "likes".

Algeria - Hundreds of youths clash with security forces during protests in the northern Algerian town of Akbou (about 180km east of Algiers).

Palestinian Authority - The Palestinian prime minister Salam Fayyad dissolves his cabinet.

February 15, 2011

Egypt - Hundreds of people clash with police in the Libyan city of Benghazi. The protests began after the arrest of Fathi Terbil, who represents relatives of more than 1,000 prisoners allegedly massacred by security forces in Tripoli's Abu Salim jail in 1996. Privately-owned newspaper Quryna in its online edition reports fourteen people injured, including 10 police officers.

Bahrain - Bahrain's King Hamad bin Issa Al-Khalifa makes a rare television address to the nation and promises to investigate the deaths of the protesters and the continuation of reforms begun in 2002. Following the address, thousands of protesters gathered in Pearl Roundabout in central Manama. The protesters demand: the release of political prisoners; more jobs and housing; the creation of more representative and empowered parliament; a new constitution written by the people; a new cabinet that does not include prime minister Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa, who has been in office for 40 years.

Yemen - Fifth consecutive day of demonstrations in the Yemeni capital Sana'a. Security forces use tear gas and batons to disperse thousands of anti-government protesters calling for president Ali Abdullah Saleh to stand down.

Oman - Oman raises minimum wages by 43 percent for national workers in the private sector. The salary for national workers active in the private sector is increased from 140 rials (\$365) to 200 rials (\$520) per month.

February 16, 2011

Egypt - Labour unrest continues in Egypt despite the ruling military council's call for "noble Egyptians" to end all strikes immediately.

Bahrain - Thousands of people occupy in the centre of the Bahraini capital on a third day of anti-government protests. Thousands of people take part in a funeral for Fadhel Al-

Matrook, a protester shot dead at funeral of another protester on 15 February. Mourners chant slogans calling for the removal of the government. Bahrain's military tightens control of the capital. Riot police fire tear gas at the Pearl Roundabout killing at least three people.

Yemeni president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, has telephone conversation with the king of Bahrain to express his support.

Yemen - Sixth day of consecutive protests against president Ali Abdullah Saleh, is broken up by pro-government supporters bussed in to the capital Sana'a. Up to four protesters are injured, and 2,000 police deployed to break up the clashes. There are also protests in other cities including Taiz where protesters have camped out in a central square for several days. At least two people are killed when police fire shots into the air in the Al-Mansoura district of Aden. The president of Sana'a University is dismissed from office over the escalating protests in the university's campus.

Iran - Iranian television reports fresh clashes during the funeral of Sanea Jaleh, 26-year-old student killed during protests on 14 February. Students and academics are arrested in a raid at a university in Tehran.

Libya - Protests continue into a second day in Benghazi. Heavy clashes between protesters and security forces are reported in the Libyan city of al-Bayda, with police stations set on fire. At least four people are reported killed in the clashes. In Zentan, south of Tripoli, hundreds of protesters march through the streets and set fire to a police station and government offices, before establishing a camp in the centre of the city modeled on Egypt's Tahrir Square. Protests also take place in Rijban and Shahat.

Libyan radio and television broadcasts speech by Col Gaddafi. He makes no mention of the unrest but says that the "revolutionaries" would prevail.

Jordan - Around 1,500 Jordanians demonstrate on in the northern city of Irbid, demanding reforms and denouncing "government corruption." In Amman, a group of young Jordanian university students stage a sit-in outside the royal court and call for King Abdullah II's powers to be curbed.

Anti-government protests are held in the Jordanian southern city of Kut with three people killed in clashes with police. Demonstrations are also reported in the oil hubs of Basra and Kirkuk, as well as other smaller towns. The protesters are angry about a lack of basic services such as electricity and clean drinking water.

Saudi Arabia - Shiites stage a small protest in the town of al-Awamiyah,¹ near the Shiite centre of Qatif in Eastern Province, to demand the release of the three prisoners (Ali Ahmad al Faraj, Ali Salih Abdul Jabbar and Makki Al Abbas), held without charges since 19 March 2009.

Iraq - Kurdish security guards open fire on a crowd of protesters calling for political reforms in Sulaimaniyah in northern Iraq, killing at least two people.

February 17, 2011

Bahrain - Security forces in Bahrain disperse thousands of anti-government protesters in Pearl Roundabout in the centre of capital, Manama. Hundreds of riot police using tear gas and batons move, without warning, on the sleeping protesters in the square at 3 o'clock in the morning. At least five people die as a result of the police operation and 231 are injured. Army takes control of the key parts of the city. Tanks, army patrols and military checkpoints are out on key streets, with helicopters deployed overhead. The country's crown prince appeals for calm and asks protesters to leave the square to begin "dialogue."

Emergency meeting of foreign ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council held in Bahrain in order to discuss protests that have erupted in the kingdom .

Yemen - A seventh day of anti-government protests in Yemen. Several thousand people demonstrate in Sana'a. Clashes between several thousands of demonstrators and the police are reported in Aden where at least three persons are killed and nine wounded. Anti-government demonstrations also take place in Taiz, Ibb, Hodeidah in the west, and Baidah in the east. One protester dies in a grenade attack in the central square of Taiz.

Muslim preachers loyal to Saleh stepped into the political fray in a country where religious and tribal allegiances are often stronger than political ones. They call for a unity government but said Saleh should stay in power.

Libya - Protests continue for a third day in several cities in Libya during what the demonstrators describe as a "day of anger". A number of government buildings are set on fire in the city of Zentan, south-west of Tripoli. AFP news agency reports that six people have been killed in clashes between anti-government protesters and security forces in the city of Benghazi. Demonstrations are reported in al-Bayda, where security forces open fire with live

¹ The town of al-Awamiyah was the scene of protests for several weeks in 2009 after police launched a search for Shiite preacher Sheikh Nimr Bagir al-Nimr, who suggested in a sermon that Shiites could one day seek their own separate state.

ammunition on peaceful demonstrators, Yafran, Derna, Ajdabiya, Shahat, and Rejban. Col. Gadhafi drives through the capital, rallying thousands.

Libya threatens to suspend migration cooperation with the EU "if the EU keeps making statements in support of Libyan pro-democracy protests".

Iraq - Anti-government protests take place in the city of Sulaimaniya in the Kurdish region of Iraq. Hundreds of young men, chanting slogans against corruption and high unemployment, try to storm the local government offices – two protesters are killed.

Iran - During Friday prayers services, thousands of worshipers carry signs that call for the prosecution and execution of opposition leaders.

Algeria - Abdelhamid Mehri, former resistance fighter and later secretary-general of the Front de libération nationale (FLN), calls for sweeping political changes in Algeria in an open letter to president Abdelaziz Bouteflika.

February 18, 2011

Egypt - More than one million people gather for a "Victory March" on Cairo's Tahrir Square, the focal point of the unrest, to celebrate the end of Mubarak's rule and to put pressure on Egypt's military rulers to speed up the reform process. Addressing the crowd, Sheikh Youssef al-Qaradawi, an influential Muslim cleric, calls on Arab leaders to listen to their people. "The world has changed, the world has progressed, and the Arab world has changed from within," he said. He also urged Egypt's ruling Higher Military Council to heed the protesters demands and quickly form a new government, free of any association with Mubarak. During the traditional Friday prayers the 365 people who were killed and over 5,000 who were injured during the nationwide uprising are commemorated.

Egypt's ruling military council says it will not tolerate any more strikes which disrupt the country's economy.

Bahrain - Funerals are held of four protesters killed in violent clashes with the police in the capital Manama on 17 February. In Sitra, a poverty-stricken Shiite area of 150,000 people outside Manama, tens of thousands gather to bury three men killed in clashes early the previous day. Mourners shout "God is great" and "down with Al-Khalifa," a reference to the ruling Khalifa family. Following the funerals protesters march on Pearl Roundabout - riot police fired tear gas and live bullets to disperse the crowd. Protesters retake the public space after soldiers leave. Officials at the main Salmaniya hospital report at least 60 people injured, some with gunshot wounds.

Al Wefaq, Bahrain's largest parliamentary bloc, quits the country's parliament.

US president Barack Obama phones King Hamad condemning the violence and urging restraint after the kingdom's security forces ignored Washington's earlier call for calm and opened fire on protesters demanding reforms. According to a White House statement: "the stability of Bahrain depends upon respect for the universal rights of the people of Bahrain, and a process of meaningful reform that is responsive to the aspirations of all Bahrainis."

King Hamad Isa Al-Khalifa asks his eldest son, Crown Prince Salman, to start a national dialogue to resolve the political crisis.

Crown Prince Sheikh Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa appeals on television for calm. "Today is the time to sit down and hold a dialogue, not to fight."

Yemen - In Yemen during what has been described as nationwide "Friday of rage", four anti-regime protesters are killed and dozens injured in two separate attacks as security forces tried to disperse protesters in the cities of Aden and Taz. Two people are killed in the southern port city of Aden from gunfire as police moved to disperse protesters. In the city of Taiz, one person was killed when a grenade was thrown from a car into a crowd of protesters. In Sana'a, tens of thousands of protesters march through the city chanting anti-government slogans when they are met by riot police and supporters of the president.

Libya - There are renewed clashes between protesters and police in the eastern Libyan city of Benghazi. Protesters set fire to government buildings and police stations on the way back from the funerals. Human Rights Watch reports that Libyan security forces kill 35 people in Benghazi. There are reports of clashes in the neighbouring city of al-Bayda. Protesters set fire to a municipal building and demolish a statute of the so-called "green book". Some 24 people are killed and 200 injured. Reports of violence in Darnah, east of Benghazi. Human Rights Watch estimates that the total number of killed over the past three days has risen to 84.

Al Jazeera's signal is jammed on several frequencies and its website blocked in Libya.

Libyan government blocks internet sites and shuts off electricity to protest areas, including the city of Benghazi, to try to quell rising unrest.

Oman - Men and women gather in Ruwi, a commercial district of Muscat, demanding political reforms and better pay. They shout "we want democracy", and "more pay and jobs." Protesters demonstrate for about one hour and leave the district. There are no reported arrests. In another protest in Muscat protesters demand the limit on ministerial term in office to four years. "The cabinet must be appointed from the Shura Council because the members are elected. We can't have ministers serving 10 to 20 years. It is encouraging corruption."

Saudi Arabia - Authorities arrest all ten founders of the Umma Islamic Party (Hizb al-Umma al-Islami) formed on 10 February 2011. They are ordered to withdraw demands for political reform in exchange for their release.

Jordan - Several people are injured in clashes between pro-and anti-government supporters in the Jordanian capital Amman, the first incidents of violence since protests began there.

Algeria - Hundreds of protesters gather in central Algiers, but security forces stop them from gathering in May 1st Square. Some are able to enter but are beaten up and dispersed.

Djibouti - Thousands of people take to the streets of Djibouti to call for president Ismael Omar Guelleh to step down.

February 19, 2011

Bahrain - Al Wefaq bloc in Bahrain rejects a royal call for dialogue. The "February 14 revolution" youth group sets its own conditions for dialogue: withdrawal of troops from Pearl Roundabout and the allowing of protesters to return to the square, release of all political prisoners, explanation of the fate of missing people, resignations of the defence and interior ministers, the security chief, and the prime minister Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa – the king's uncle and the world's longest-serving prime minister.

In the afternoon, following an order from the Crown Prince, the army withdraws from Pearl Roundabout. Protesters arrive at the square and are confronted by heavily armed riot police, which fire volleys of tear gas and shotgun rounds at the demonstrators. Reports say some 60 people are injured. As the protesters stand firm police pulls out, leaving the square to the jubilant crowd.

Speaking on CNN television Bahrain's Crown Prince, Sheikh Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa apologised for the deaths. "I think there is a lot of anger, a lot of sadness, and on that note I would like to extend my condolences to all of the families who lost loved ones and all of those who have been injured. We are terribly sorry and this is a terrible tragedy for our nation."

Addressing the nation on Bahrain's television, Sheikh Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa states: "I am addressing all Bahraini people. Today [Saturday], we have signs of hope. I would like to thank all of the wise [people] and the leaders who responded to the call for calm, maintaining peace and national unity. Brothers and sisters, now we will start a new

phase: a phase during which we will discuss all of our concerns with honesty. I want to deliver a message that calm is required at this time, so all bodies and parties are able to raise their opinions and concerns and issues in a responsible and productive manner... Today, things started to get back to normal. I emphasize again that it's our duty [as Bahrainis] to maintain peace and stability in order to avoid divisions and reaching a crisis. The more we maintain calm, the easier we can achieve our goals. Bahraini people: I hope that we can cooperate and unite and communicate with all political forces in the country. Help us to calm down that situation in order to declare a day of mourning for those we lost yesterday [Friday]."

Libya - Security forces attack demonstrators in Benghazi and al-Bayda. There are reports that in Benghazi security forces have shot dead at least 20 people when troops reportedly used heavy weapons, including machine guns, on mourners at a funeral of 14 of the protesters shot dead by security forces the day before. Some described scenes of chaos as army snipers shot from the roofs of buildings and demonstrators fought back against troops on the ground. One doctor told the BBC that at least 45 bodies and 900 injured people had been brought to Benghazi's Jala hospital - most of them with gunshot wounds. "Ninety percent of these gunshot wounds [were] mainly in the head, the neck, the chest, mainly in the heart," she said. There are reports that Col Gaddafi's government is bringing in elite forces, as well as foreign mercenaries from sub-Saharan Africa.

Al Arabiya News Channel reports that Libya recruited hundreds of mercenaries from Sub-Saharan Africa to help quell a popular uprising. Eyewitnesses reported the arrival of four airplanes carrying "African mercenaries" at Benina International Airport near Benghazi. Protesters in Benghazi caught a number of "African mercenaries" who were in Libyan military uniforms but spoke French and who admitted that they were ordered by Muammar Gaddafi's son, Khamis Gaddafi, to fire live ammunition at demonstrators. According to Al Arabiya a number of airplanes carrying "African mercenaries" had landed in Mitiga military airport, 11 km east of the capital Tripoli.

Yemen - Riot police opens fire on thousands of protesters marching through the Yemeni capital, Sana'a. One protester is killed and seven wounded. This is the ninth consecutive day of protests in Yemen. In Aden government buildings are attack and set on fire. There are reports that security forces have disappeared from the streets, threatening to plunge the port into chaos.

Algeria - Algerian security forces prevent anti-government protesters from staging a march through the capital Algiers.

Tunisia - Tunisia's interim president Fouad Mebazza signs a general amnesty for political prisoners. Human rights groups estimate Tunisia has about 1,000 political prisoners.

Al Jazeera news channel's signal is sporadically disrupted in several countries including Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, throughout the day.

February 20, 2011

Bahrain - Opposition groups and anti-government protesters in Bahrain list their demands that must be met before they will enter into talks with the authorities. These include: the resignation of the government, release of political prisoners, and investigation of the death of protesters.

Libya - Libyan security forces again open fire on anti-government protesters in Benghazi. Eyewitnesses report that the security forces shot at mourners attending a funeral for protesters killed a day before.

Maj. Gen. Suleiman Mahmoud, the commander of the Libyan army garrison in Tobruk, defects. "I decided to withdraw from the revolutionary army and join the people... My destiny is to be with the people, even if it means dying with the people."

In Benghazi senior officers from the Sathi Tohami Air Force Base declare their support for the opposition in front of the main courthouse.

In a rare public admission of the unrest in Benghazi, Libyan state TV reports that an "armed people's base" in the city had come under attack and had its walls breached.

There are also reports of anti-government protests in other eastern cities, including al-Bayda and Darnah, as well as Misrata further west, about 200km from Tripoli.

Reports are beginning to emerge of protests in the Libyan capital, Tripoli.

Fuel and food supplies are cut to the city of Darnah.

Christian Science Monitor reports that some 50 religious leaders in Libya issue a public plea to security forces. "This is an urgent appeal from religious scholars (faqihs and Sufi sheikhs), intellectuals, and clan elders from Tripoli, Bani Walid, Zintan, Jadu, Msalata, Misrata, Zawiah, and other towns and villages of the western area... We appeal to every Muslim, within the regime or assisting it in any way, to recognize that the killing of innocent human beings is forbidden by our Creator and by His beloved Prophet of Compassion (peace be upon him)... Do NOT kill your brothers and sisters. STOP the massacre NOW!"

Human Rights Watch reports that at least 233 people died in five Libyan and hundreds were injured in clashes between Qaddafi forces and anti-government protesters since 17 February.

The US State Department issues a statement on Libya: "The United States is gravely concerned with disturbing reports and images coming out of Libya. We are working to ascertain the facts, but we have received multiple credible reports that hundreds of people have been killed and injured in several days of unrest – and the full extent of the death toll is unknown due to the lack of access to international media and human rights organizations."

Late in the evening, Sky News television channel reports that "members of a Libyan army unit have told Benghazi residents they have defected and "liberated" the city from pro-Qaddafi forces."

BBC reports: "At least four separate anti-government protests have broken out in the Libyan capital for the first time, witnesses say." Live ammunition and tear gas were used in the Tripoli suburb of Gourghi, while protesters had also gathered in the neighbouring area of Gergaresh.

Fresh demonstrations have been reported in cities including Tobruk, al-Bayda and Misrata.

The Warfla, a major tribe that has maintained a position of neutrality concerning opposition to Muammar Qaddafi, declares its support for the protesters.

Reuter reports that the leader of the eastern al-Zuwayya tribe threatens to cut oil exports unless authorities halt what he called the "oppression of protesters".

Youssef Sawani, the executive director of the Gadhafi Foundation and senior aid to Qaddafi's son Saif al-Islam resigns "to express dismay against violence". The foundation has been Saif's main vehicle for wielding influence.

Yemen - In Yemen the leader of the secessionist Southern Movement, Hassan Baoum, is arrested in Aden and shots are fired at a demonstration in Sana'a as unrest continues for a ninth consecutive day. President Ali Abdullah Saleh renews his offer for a dialogue with opposition groups, but the offer is rejected by the protesters as long as "we are attacked by security forces". President Saleh rejects demands to step down. Several hundred protesters camp overnight in a square in Sana'a, near the city's university.

Morocco - Thousands of protesters take to the streets in Morocco demanding that King Mohammed VI gives up some of his powers, dismisses the government and clamps

down on corruption.² According to the Reuters news agency, at least 10,000 people marched across central Rabat. One banner, very large, says simply in English: "People want change". Large protest marches also take place in Casablanca, Tangier and Marrakech. The demonstrations across Morocco are largely organised by young people using Facebook. Morocco has a parliament and active political parties. But the constitution makes King Mohammed VI both the highest religious authority and the head of state, with powers to dissolve parliament and name ministers and local governors. much of Morocco's wealth is concentrated in the hands of a small circle of powerful businessmen, royal confidantes and royally-owned companies, according to US diplomatic cables leaked last year by Wikileaks.

Jordan - King Abdullah of Jordan urged speedy reforms, comprehensive dialogue and more efforts to battle corruption amid popular discontent and pro-reform protests. "When I talk about reform, it means that I want real and fast reforms," the king told the members of the government and government officials, MPs, senators and members of the judiciary. "Political reforms need to be modern. I am waiting for government recommendations about a mechanism for a comprehensive dialogue to help achieve political development." The king calls on the government and parliament to "move swiftly to deal with any issue related to corruption."

Iran - For a second time in a week, Iran's opposition drew tens of thousands of supporters to the streets across the nation calling for the end to the Islamic Republic's rule. Thousands gather in Tehran's Vanak and Vali Asr squares. Two young men were shot death by the police. Security forces also clash with demonstrators in the city of Shiraz.

Egypt - *The Daily Telegraph* reports that Egypt's military have promised to protect the ousted president, Hosni Mubarak, from prosecution and to allow him to live freely in retirement in his Sharm-el-Sheikh holiday home.

Tunisia - Tunisia formally requests the extradition of ex-president Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali from Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia – Saudi authorities release three Shia prisoners held without charge since 19 March 2011, after riots in the town of al-Awamiyah.

² In Morocco the king is customarily treated with utmost reverence. He is considered the commander of the faithful, the leader of Moroccan Muslims who is said to descend from the Prophet Mohammed. The royal family has ruled Morocco since the 17th century and survived both French colonial rule and independence. Since taking the throne in 1999, King Mohammed VI has earned praise for reforms including a new family code that expands women's rights and a truth commission to investigate abuses committed under his father, Hassan II. A poll in 2009 gave King Mohammed VI a 91 per cent approval rate.

February 21, 2011

Libya - At 1 a.m. in the morning Libyan TV broadcasts a pre-recorded speech by Saif al-Islam Gaddafi. The second-eldest son of Muammar Gaddafi delivers a long and rambling speech blaming everyone - foreigners, exiles, drug addicts, drunkards, thugs, Islamists and the media (including Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya and the BBC) - for the crisis. Troops had opened fire on protesters because they were not trained to handle civil unrest, he argues. He warns that if the protesters continued, the European and American fleets would invade to protect the oil, and the Libyan people would be living under an occupation. He claims that the protests had been started by foreign agitators from Tunisia and Egypt. Saif Gaddafi offers almost unlimited concessions, but warns of civil war if the protests continue. “We are not Tunisia and Egypt – says Muammar Gaddafi, our leader, is leading the battle in Tripoli, and we are with him. The armed forces are with him. Tens of thousands are heading here to be with him. We will fight until the last man, the last woman, the last bullet.”

Protesters take over two of the state-run satellite stations, Al-Jamahiriya-1 and Al Shebabiya.

Nine Libyan ambassadors including the ambassador to China, India, Indonesia and Poland resign.

Mustapha Abdeljalil, Libya’s justice minister resigns over “the excessive use of force”.

Two Libyan Colonels, from the Okba Bin Nafe Air Base near Tripoli, defect to Malta in Mirage F1 supersonic fighter jets and ask for political asylum. The jets, recently refurbished under an agreement signed by Gaddafi and Nikolas Sarkozy, broke out of formation when their squadron was ordered to attack Libyan civilians. The Malta Independent Online reported that the aircraft were armed with rocket pods – a deadly anti-personnel weapon.

Libyan state analogue TV stations report that Col. Gaddafi has received calls of support from the leaders of Nicaragua and Mali.

Two oil companies, Statoil and BP, are evacuating employees while Portugal and Turkey arranged for the evacuation of European nationals.

Bahrain - Pro-government rally in Bahrain draws several thousands. The demonstrators pledge loyalty to the Al-Khalifa royal family and call on ant-government protesters to engage in talks on political reform.

Yemen — Thousands of anti-government protesters rally across the country. Pro-government supporters held demonstrations in Sana'a. Two protesters are killed in clashes in the capital.

February 22, 2011

Libya - Col Gaddafi appears for 28 seconds on state television shortly after 02:00 local time. "I want to clarify for them [people he spoke to] that I am in Tripoli not in Venezuela. Do not believe these channels - they are dogs. Goodbye."

Forces loyal to Col Gaddafi open fire in the capital. Witnesses estimate that more than 50 people have been killed in Tripoli since 20 February.

In the afternoon Libyan TV broadcasts long and rambling speech by Gaddafi that was recorded earlier in front of his bombed-out in 1986 residence in the Bab Al-Azizia Barracks. He referred to the protesters variously as "cockroaches", "rats", "mercenaries" and "traitors" who were "drug-fuelled, drunken and duped". Gaddafi said that protesters deserve the death sentence under Libyan law. He called on supporters to take control of the streets today, adding that Libyans could have whatever constitution or legal system they wanted. "I am not going to leave this land, I will die here as a martyr," he said. "Gaddafi does not have a post to resign from, Gaddafi is the leader of the revolution," he said. "This is my country, I will not leave the land of Libya." He called on "those who love Muammar Gaddafi" to come on to the streets in support of him, telling them not to be afraid of the "gangs". "Come out of your homes, attack them in their dens. Withdraw your children from the streets. They are drugging your children, they are making your children drunk and sending them to hell," he said. He urged young people to form committees "for the defence of the revolution and the defence of Gaddafi". He said they would "cleanse Libya house by house".

Libya's interior minister general Abdul Fatah Younis resigns from his post saying he had "joined the revolution" against Gaddafi. Younis was regarded as the second most powerful man in the country. "Our plan now is to support the youth in Tripoli so that it is liberated like Benghazi was," he said.

Human Rights Watch reports that at least 62 bodies had been taken to hospital morgues in Tripoli since 20 February.

More than 1,000 people have been killed and at least 5,000 injured in Libya since February 17, according to Al Hadi Shallouf, Chief of Justice and Democracy for Libya (JADL) party and member of the International Criminal Court in Hague.

Gulf News reports that five major cities in the eastern part of Libya have been liberated.

Libya's official JANA news agency reports that Muammar Gaddafi called the Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi today to say that his country "was fine". "The brother leader reassured during (the) telephone conversation the friend Berlusconi that 'Libya is fine, its people are ... holding on to its security, stability and national unity'." "Whoever wants to know the truth should closely follow the Libyan media and not turn to the lies and the fabricated information broadcast by the organs of traitors and the depraved," JANA added.

Libya's ambassador to the United States, Ali Aujali, resigns from what he calls a "dictatorship" regime.

The Arab League suspends Libya's participation in the organization.

UN Security council issues a statement on Libya. It deplores the repression against peaceful demonstrators and expresses deep regret at the deaths of hundreds of civilians. The council calls for "steps to address the legitimate demands of the population".

Bahrain - Tens of thousands of Bahrainis join an anti-government rally in the capital, Manama demanding the dismissal of the government, the replacement of the ruling Al-Khalifa dynasty with a constitutional monarchy, the formation of a "national salvation" government, and an immediate, impartial investigation into who was responsible for the killings during earlier protests.

King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa of Bahrain orders the release of a group of some 23 political prisoners held on terrorism counts, pardons two others, including an exiled opposition leader, in a gesture to opposition activists.

Yemen - Anti-government demonstrations continue in Yemen. Thousands rally at a university campus while hundreds continue to camp out in a nearby square. At least two protesters are killed and 21 wounded in a street battle between pro- and anti-government demonstrators at the gates of Sana'a University. This brings to 12 the number of people killed in Yemen since demonstrations began less than two weeks ago. In Taiz, Yemen's second-largest city, thousands of protesters march in the Safir square. In the port city of Aden, schools are closed, most government employees were not working and many shops were closed as hundreds gathered for another round of protests.

Syria – According to *The Guardian* about 200 stage a peaceful sit-in outside the Libyan embassy in Damascus to show support for Libya's protesters. Fourteen people are arrested and several people beaten by uniformed and plainclothes police.

Egypt - Egypt's military rulers swear in a new Cabinet that replaces several Mubarak-era ministers. The cabinet reshuffle excluded prominent members of the National Democratic Party (NDP), but included an opposition member from the El Wafd Party as minister of tourism. The ministers of defense, interior, foreign and finance that remain had been appointed shortly before Hosni Mubarak left office.

Algeria - Algeria's Cabinet approves a plan to lift a state of emergency that has been in place for 19 years, a move is seen as a bid to defuse discontent.

February 23, 2011

Libya - Fears are growing that Libya's state apparatus, once seen as a powerful and coherent entity is facing collapse as key officials quit the government, with some joining the protesters, and as international isolation mounts.

The cities of Zliten and Misrata, close to Tripoli, are reportedly under the control of anti-Gaddafi protesters – the first cities in the west of the country to fall to the demonstrators.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy called for the European Union to adopt "swift and concrete sanctions" and to suspend ties with Libya.

In his first public response to the Libyan crisis president Barack Obama states the "suffering and bloodshed is outrageous and is unacceptable... This violence must stop. " Obama said he was studying a "full range of options" to pressure Qaddafi's regime to halt attacks against Libyans. The United States strongly supports the universal rights of Libyans and all people to enjoy the freedoms of peaceful assembly, free speech and the ability to determine their own destiny, the president continued. "These are human rights. They are not negotiable. They must be respected in every country and they cannot be denied through violence or suppression."

The Libyan ambassadors to Singapore and Brunei became the latest figures to quit in protest at the crackdown on demonstrators.

Mercenaries and militias are reported to be roaming Tripoli, with much of the capital deserted.

Peru becomes the first country to sever diplomatic ties with Libya in the wake of the Gaddafi regime's brutal suppression of demonstrators. Foreign minister Jose Antonio Garcia Belaunde said he would ask the United Nations to impose a no-fly zone over the country. Peru's action sets itself apart from at least one nearby country, Nicaragua, which has offered support to Gaddafi.

Bahrain - Bahrain releases 308 prisoners. Bahrain's Center for Human Rights said about 100 of them were political prisoners. Those released included 25 Shiite Muslim activists who had been accused of attempting to overthrow King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa and his government.

Saudi Arabia - King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia returns home from Casablanca where he was recuperating following two surgeries in New York in December 2010. Prior to his return King Abdullah announced financial support measures for Saudi citizens estimated to be worth SR135bn (\$36bn). These include a 15 percent pay rise for state employees, reprieves for imprisoned debtors, financial aid for students, as well as an increase in the cash available for Saudi housing loans. He also announced other moves, including a year of unemployment benefits for jobless young people, financial help for setting up businesses or getting married.

In Saudi Arabia the so-called "youth" petition is made public. Signed by 46 people and initiated by young journalists, it calls for the convening of a second national dialogue conference in Mecca, an elected parliament, a separation of powers, a review of the Basic Law, and a basic administrative law, among other demands.

King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa of Bahrain arrives in the Saudi capital for talks with King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia.

February 24, 2011

Libya - In a phone call from the town of al-Zawiya broadcast live, Col Muammar Gaddafi tells the state TV that Osama Bin Laden and his followers are behind the protests sweeping the country. Young people were being duped with drugs and alcohol to take part in "destruction and sabotage". The telephone call was said to be an address to the people of al-Zawiya, 50km west of the capital, where there has been renewed gunfire reported in the streets. Col Gaddafi said the protesters had no genuine demands and were being dictated to by the al-Qaeda leader. "Bin Laden ... this is the enemy who is manipulating people. Do not be swayed by Bin Laden... It is obvious now that this issue is run by al-Qaeda. Those armed youngsters, our children, are incited by people who are wanted by America and the Western world... Those inciting are very few in numbers and we have to capture them." He claims that he is merely a figurehead like the Queen in the UK and cannot make rules, only offer advice. Gaddafi vows to fight until his "last drop of blood", and urges supporters to take to streets.

Anti-government militias are in control of Zuara, about 75 miles west of Tripoli.

Despite the visible presence of security forces, checkpoints and patrols, in Tripoli, residents take to the city's streets, gathering to pray and demonstrate against leader Col. Gaddafi. The UN Security Council prepares to discuss imposing sanctions on the Libyan regime.

Saif al-Islam Gaddafi appears on Libyan state TV. He speaks of a conspiracy perpetrated by "Arab brothers" and mentions that the media "spread lies." He asks Egyptians, particularly, not to participate in the "conspiracy". "Life in Tripoli is normal," he says.

Mass evacuation of foreigners from Libya gathers place.

Libyan diplomats at the Libyan embassy in the Moroccan capital announce they are joining "the people's revolution."

The Swiss government announces the freezing of "any possible assets of Muammar Gaddafi".

The pilot of Gaddafi's private jet, 57-year-old Norwegian Odd Birger Johannsen, has fled with his wife and family to Vienna, reports Norwegian TV2.

Highlights from WikiLeaks diplomatic cables on Libya's ruling family: Gaddafi "enjoys flamenco dancing and horseracing". He fears flying over water or staying in upper floors of buildings.

The Guardian and other mass media in the UK publish excerpts of an article written in 2007 by the former director of the London School of Economics, Anthony Giddens, about his meeting with Gaddafi. "As one-party states go, Libya is not especially repressive. Gaddafi seems genuinely popular.... Will real progress be possible only when Gaddafi leaves the scene? I tend to think the opposite. If he is sincere in wanting change, as I think he is, he could play a role in muting conflict that might otherwise arise as modernisation takes hold."

Yemen - Tens of thousands of Yemenis flood the streets of the capital, Sana'a, to demand the resignation of President Ali Abdullah Saleh. There are also protests in Aden and Hodeidah. A bomb explodes during protests in the southern town of Lawdar, Abyan province, killing one person and wounding two. The death brings to 16 the number of fatalities in a wave of nationwide protests against President Ali Abdullah Saleh's 32-year rule in the past week.

Eight MPs from Yemen's ruling party, General People's Congress, have resigned in protest to the violence that anti-government demonstrators have faced as they call for Saleh to go.

Iraq - Thousands gather in Baghdad's Liberation Square to protest against corruption and poor government services. Thousands march on government buildings across the country. The Associated Press reports that in Hawija, police kill three protesters. In Mosul guards fatally shoot three people.

Saudi Arabia - A second Saudi petition entitled "Towards the state of rights and institutions" appears on the internet. It attracts 1,554 signatures before the Saudi authorities block access to it inside the kingdom. The petition calls for far-reaching political and social reforms, including: an elected parliament with full legislative powers, a separation of the offices of king and prime minister, independent judiciary, elimination of corruption and unemployment, the establishment of trade unions and institutions of civil society, freedom of expression and uncensored mass media, and the release of political prisoners. It says that Arab rulers should derive a lesson from the uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya and listen to the voice of disenchanted young people. The group that signed the petition includes leading Saudi intellectuals - renowned Islamic scholars, a female academic, a poet and a former diplomat.

Algeria – Algeria officially lifts a 19-year state of emergency. Ending the emergency powers was one of the demands voiced by opposition groups which have been staging weekly protests in the Algerian capital.

February 25, 2011

Libya - Libyan TV shows Col Gaddafi speaking from Tripoli's old city ramparts overlooking the Green Square. "We shall destroy any aggression with popular will," he says. "With the armed people, when necessary we will open the weapons depots. So that all the Libyan people, all the Libyan tribes can be armed. Libya will become a red flame, a burning coal."

Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, one Col Gaddafi's sons, tells CNN-Turk that his family has plans A,B, C. "Plan A is to live and die in Libya, Plan B is to live and die in Libya, Plan C is to live and die in Libya."

Heavy gun fire reported in the Tripoli districts of Fashloun, Ashour, Jumhouria and Souq al-Jomaa.

Libya's ambassador to the United Nations, Mohammed Shalgham, defects during meeting of Security Council and makes plea to the UN to help to stop bloodshed.

Libya's ambassadors to France, Mohamed Salaheddine Zarem, and its ambassador to UNESCO, Abdoulsalam El Qallali, resign. The entire Libyan mission to the UN in Geneva quits.

Libya's ambassador to Bangladesh, Ahmed A.H. Elimam, resigns. The Libyan delegation to the Arab League in Cairo renounces Gaddafi and condemns his attack on "unarmed citizens".

The entire staff of Libya's embassy in New Delhi renounced ties with Gaddafi's government. "We show our sympathy for the souls of our martyrs who died for the freedom of Libya. We announce our full alignment with the people's revolution, successful revolution of 17th February. We announce that we represent the Libyan people and its civil establishments and we don't represent the former regime which violated the religion and tradition and international conventions and human rights. The blood of Libyan people is very precious and that we would not bargain it at any cost and the revolution will be succeeded on the tyrant. Greeting. All Diplomat members of the Libyan Embassy."

President Hugo Chavez gives a lukewarm backing to Gaddafi. "I can't say that I support, or am in favour, or applaud all the decisions taken by any friend of mine in any part of the world, no, one is at a distance. But we do support the government of Libya."

Egypt - Thousands of Egyptians return to Cairo's Tahrir Square to mark one month since the start of their uprising which toppled president Hosni Mubarak and to press for reforms.

Bahrain - Tens of thousands of Bahrainis have gathered in the capital Manama to demand political reform in the 12th straight day of protests.

The Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen visits Bahrain.

Iraq - At least nine people have been killed in anti-government protests in Iraq as thousands take to the streets in cities across the country for a "day of rage". Protests are held in Baghdad, the northern city of Hawija, Iraq's second largest city of Basra, and the Kurdish city of Sulaimaniya.

Jordan - Some 6,000 Jordanians, including the Muslim Brotherhood, youth groups and smaller political parties march in Amman demanding government reforms and parliamentary elections. It is the biggest pro-democracy rally in eight weeks of protest. Police handed out juice boxes and bottled water, and protesters dispersed swiftly when the demonstration officially ended in the early afternoon.

Yemen - Tens of thousands stage pro- and anti-government protests, in probably the largest marches yet, in the capital Sana'a. Some 10,000 people stage a sit-in in the city of Taiz, 200 km south of the capital, and protests erupt across the port city of Aden.

Mauritania - Hundreds of Mauritanian youth stage anti-government protest in a central square of the capital Nouakchott to demand reforms or the resignation of president Mohammad Ould Abdel Aziz.

Saudi Arabia - In Saudi Arabia peaceful marches take place in the Shia towns of Safwa and Qatif in the Eastern Province. Residents of al-'Awwamiyya, an adjacent small Shia town, hold a silent vigil the same day calling for the release of the so-called "Forgotten Prisoners," nine Shia Saudis detained without charge or trial for over 12 years over unproven allegations of their involvement in the 1996 attacks on US military targets in Khobar that killed 19 Americans.

February 26, 2011

Libya - President Barack Obama signs an executive order seizing assets and blocking any property in the United States belonging to Gaddafi or his four sons or daughter and members of his administration. The US shuts its embassy in Libya and suspends all embassy operations in the country.

There are reports of Gaddafi's forces arming civilians in Tripoli loyal to the regime.

Canada evacuates its embassy staff and suspends its diplomatic presence in Libya.

Britain suspends the operation of its embassy in Tripoli and evacuates its staff. The UK revokes diplomatic immunity of Muammar Gaddafi and his family.

Libya's ex-justice minister Mustafa Mohamed Abud al-Jeleil announces the formation of an interim government based in Benghazi.

Egypt - In Egypt overnight clashes are reported in Cairo between the army and pro-democracy protesters. Subsequently the military posts an apology on its official Facebook page stating that harassments practised against activists by military police was unintentional and that no orders were given to attack any Egyptian national.

Judicial committee appointed by Egypt's ruling military council outlines constitutional amendments . It proposes reducing the presidential term to four years and imposes a two-term limit.

Yemen - Two prominent tribal leaders in Yemen desert president Ali Abdullah Saleh and join the anti-government movement. The leader of the Hashid tribe (the president's own

tribe), Hussein bin Abdallah al Ahmar, announces his resignation from the ruling General People's Congress, and urges others to join protests calling for president Saleh to step down.

In Yemen twenty-four people have been killed since February 17 in daily protests against president Saleh across the country.

Tunisia - Security forces in the Tunisian capital fire tear gas into crowds of protesters outside the interior ministry. The demonstration comes a day after police cleared protesters from the streets demanding the resignation of the interim prime minister, Mohammed Ghannouchi. Three people are killed and a dozen wounded in clashes between hundreds of demonstrators and security forces.

Reuters reports that In Tunisia hundreds of journalists and technicians from the state-run TV broadcaster have gone on strike over what they say is continued government censorship of their dispatches.

Bahrain - Thousands of demonstrators marched on government buildings in Bahrain's capital, Manama. A prominent Bahraini opposition leader, Hassan Mushaima, who leads a Shia group known as Haq, returns from exile and urges the kingdom's rulers to make good on their promises of reform with action. "Dialogue ... is not enough. Promising is not enough. We have to see something on the ground," he said, adding that the Gulf state's rulers "have promised before but they did not do anything."

King Hamad reshuffles his cabinet replacing the ministers of housing, health, cabinet affairs and electricity and water.

Oman - Oman's Sultan Qaboos bin Said reshuffles his cabinet, changing six ministers in "the public's interest," one week after a rare protest calling for political reform. The reshuffle involves the ministries of: commerce and industry, civil service, education, environment, transport, and tourism.

In Oman some 500 protesters demanding democracy and jobs block traffic and break street lights in the largest industrial city Sohar. Protesters chanted: "We want long-term corrupt ministers to go!" "We want the Shura Council to have legislative powers!" "We want jobs!" and "We want democracy!"

Algeria - Reuters reports that the anti-government protests in Algeria are dwindling, with only around 50 people attending a banned rally in the capital, Algiers. The protest in Martyrs Square in the city centre was the third in three weeks and on each occasion the numbers attending have fallen, according to the news agency.

Morocco - Almost 1,000 people rally amid a heavy police presence in Morocco's biggest city Casablanca to demand political reforms and a new constitution. Only an estimated 200 people attend demonstration in Rabat. Efforts to kindle a protest movement in Morocco have met with only limited success.

Mauritania - In Mauritania police disperse a thousand young protesters in the capital Nouakchott who organised a sit-in. They demanded political reforms and the departure of President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz.

Saudi Arabia - A third internet petition is released in Saudi Arabia. "The National Declaration for Reform," signed by more than 330 people, including leading liberal reformers, includes the most detailed reform program. It calls for elections to decision-making bodies on the local, provincial, and national levels, as well as a review of the Basic Law to include rights protections, true separation of powers, and the release of political prisoners, independence of the judiciary, establishment of institutions of civil society, legal and institutional measures to empower women, and anti-discrimination legislation, and the development of national strategy that explicitly recognizes multiculturalism - among other demands.

February 27, 2011

Libya - The UN Security Council votes unanimously to impose sanctions on the regime of Muammar Gaddafi. These involve: travel ban on Gaddafi and his seven sons, a daughter and seven members of his inner circle; the freeze of assets of Gaddafi his daughter and four sons; and arms embargo. Council members also agree to refer the regime's crackdown to the International Criminal Court for alleged crimes against humanity.

UN Security Council resolution 1970 (2011) in Annex I lists the people subject to the travel ban.

1. Al-Baghdadi, Dr Abdulqader Mohammed

Date of birth: 01/07/1950. Passport number: B010574.

Head of the Liaison Office of the Revolutionary Committees. Revolutionary Committees involved in violence against demonstrators.

2. Dibri, Abdulqader Yusef

Date of birth: 1946. Place of birth: Houn, Libya.

Head of Muammar Gaddafi's personal security. Responsibility for regime security. History of directing violence against dissidents.

3. Dorda, Abu Zayd Umar

Director, External Security Organisation. Regime loyalist. Head of external intelligence agency.

4. Jabir, Major General Abu Bakr Yunis

Date of birth: 1952. Place of birth: Jalo, Libya.

Defence Minister. Overall responsibility for actions of armed forces.

5. Matuq, Matuq Mohammed

Date of birth: 1956. Place of birth: Khoms.

Secretary for Utilities. Senior member of regime. Involvement with Revolutionary Committees. Past history of involvement in suppression of dissent and violence.

6. Gaddaf Al-dam, Sayyid Mohammed

Date of birth: 1948. Place of birth: Sirte, Libya.

Cousin of Muammar Gaddafi. In the 1980s, Sayyid was involved in the dissident assassination campaign and allegedly responsible for several deaths in Europe. He is also thought to have been involved in arms procurement.

7. Gaddafi, Aisha Muammar

Date of birth: 1978. Place of birth: Tripoli, Libya.

Daughter of Muammar Gaddafi. Closeness of association with regime.

8. Gaddafi, Hannibal Muammar

Date of birth: 20/09/1975. Place of birth: Tripoli, Libya. Passport number: B/002210.

Son of Muammar Gaddafi. Closeness of association with regime.

9. Gaddafi, Khamis Muammar

Date of birth: 1978. Place of birth: Tripoli, Libya.

Son of Muammar Gaddafi. Closeness of association with regime. Command of military units involved in repression of demonstrations.

10. Gaddafi, Mohammed Muammar

Date of birth: 1970. Place of birth: Tripoli, Libya.

Son of Muammar Gaddafi. Closeness of association with regime.

11. Gaddafi, Muammar Mohammed Abu Minyar

Date of birth: 1942. Place of birth: Sirte, Libya.

Leader of the Revolution, Supreme Commander of Armed Forces. Responsibility for ordering repression of demonstrations, human rights abuses.

12. Gaddafi, Mutassim

Date of birth: 1976. Place of birth: Tripoli, Libya.

National Security Adviser. Son of Muammar Gaddafi. Closeness of association with regime.

13. Gaddafi, Saadi

Date of birth: 25/05/1973. Place of birth: Tripoli, Libya. Passport number: 014797.

Commander Special Forces. Son of Muammar Gaddafi. Closeness of association with regime. Command of military units involved in repression of demonstrations.

14. Gaddafi, Saif al-Arab

Date of birth: 1982. Place of birth: Tripoli, Libya.

Son of Muammar Gaddafi. Closeness of association with regime.

15. Gaddafi, Saif al-Islam.

Date of birth: 25/06/1972. Place of birth: Tripoli, Libya. Passport number: B014995

Director, Gaddafi Foundation. Son of Muammar Gaddafi. Closeness of association with regime. Inflammatory public statements encouraging violence against demonstrators.

16. Al-Senussi, Colonel Abdullah

Date of birth: 1949. Place of birth: Sudan.

Director Military Intelligence. Military Intelligence involvement in suppression of demonstrations. Past history includes suspicion of involvement in Abu Selim prison massacre. Convicted in absentia for bombing of UTA flight. Brother-in-law of Muammar Gaddafi.

Britain freezes the UK-based assets of Libyan ruler Muammar Gaddafi, members of his family and their representatives in accordance with UN sanctions imposed on Libya.

UAE Central Bank Governor Sultan Nasser Al Suwaidi sates that the UAE will comply with the United Nations Security Council's resolution that calls for freezing the foreign assets of Libya's leader Muammar Gaddafi.

Anti-Gaddafi forces widen control with foreign journalists confirming that the town of Zawiya is in the hands of protesters.

Bahrain - Protesters stream through Bahrain's diplomatic area and other sites, chanting slogans against the country's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa.

King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa carries a limited cabinet reshuffle in which four ministers, including two royal family members, are replaced.

Oman - In Oman at least 2,000 people gather for a second day of protests calling for political reforms, in the industrial city of Sohar, 200km northwest of the capital Muscat. Two people are reported killed and five wounded after police fired rubber bullets and tear gas into

the crowd. A police station and the governor's residence are set on fire. Demonstrations also take place in the southern town of Salalah. Police arrest 48 demonstrators.

Sultan Qaboos of Oman orders the government to hire 50,000 Omanis and to pay 150 rials (\$390) a month to job seekers. He also orders the release of the detainees and the withdrawal of the police from the roundabout where hundreds of demonstrators have gathered since about noon on 26 February.

Tunisia - Security forces and anti-government protesters clash in the Tunisian capital, with police firing tear gas and warning shots to disperse stone-throwing youths in a third day of violence.

Late afternoon Tunisian interim Prime Minister Mohammed Ghannouchi announces his resignation on state TV. The departure of Mohammed Ghannouchi, who served under former president Ben Ali since 1999, was a key demand of demonstrators.

Saudi Arabia - King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia orders that state employees on temporary labour contracts be given permanent employment status.

Some 119 Saudi academics and activists join calls made on the internet for King Abdullah to enact sweeping reforms and relinquish many of his powers. There are appeals on Twitter and Facebook for the replacement of the current government with constitutional monarchy and for demonstrations to demand reforms.

Saudi authorities arrest Tawfiq al-Amir, a prominent Shia cleric from al-Hofuf in Eastern Province. Two days before during his Friday sermon he called for a constitutional monarchy and equal rights for Shia.

Yemen - President Ali Abdullah Saleh vows to defend his three-decade regime "with every drop of blood," accusing his opponents of hijacking protests in a ploy to split the nation.

In Sana'a students maintain a sit-in outside Sana'a University, where they have vowed to remain until the fall of Saleh's regime. And in Taz, south of Sanaa, protesters continued their second week camping out in a main square to demand that Saleh stands down.

Iran - Mirhossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karoubi, two Iranian opposition leaders and their wives are moved secretly from their homes where they had been under virtual house arrest for calling on supporters to protest against the government. They are moved to a "safe house" in an area close to Teheran.

February 28, 2011

Libya - Libyan leader Col Muammar Gaddafi tells the BBC that he is loved by all his people and denies there have been any protests in Tripoli.

Witnesses report that pro-Gaddafi forces tried to retake the western cities of Zawiya, Misrata and Nalut but were repulsed by rebels helped by defecting army units.

European Union imposes sanctions including an arms embargo, asset freeze and travel ban on Col Gaddafi and his close entourage.

The US Treasury states that it had blocked \$30bn (£18.5bn) in Libyan assets - the largest sum it had ever frozen.

Qatar's prime minister, Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim al-Thani, calls on Muammar Gaddafi to quit - to take a "brave decision" to avoid more bloodshed and destruction in his country.

Egypt - Egypt's public prosecutor issues a travel ban on former president Hosni Mubarak, his wife Suzanne, their two sons Ala and Gamal and their wives. The order also freezes their money and assets. Three of Hosni Mubarak's former officials have been charged with corruption-related offences: former ministers of interior Habib al-Adly, tourism Zuhair Garana, and housing Ahmed al-Maghrabi.

Oman - In Oman at least one person is killed and 20 wounded during the third consecutive day of violence in the town of Sohar. A supermarket is set on fire by several hundred young men who had gathered in the town's main roundabout, demanding higher salaries, jobs for unemployed youth and the dismissal of some government ministers. About 700 protesters also use several trucks in order to block Sohar's port.

Tunisia - The Tunisian minister of industry and technology, Mohamed Afif Chelbi, resigns. He was one of only two remaining ministers who served in the cabinet under the ousted president, Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali.

Bahrain - Thousands of demonstrators remain camped out on Pearl Roundabout in the capital, Manama, as protests move into a 15th day.

US president Barack Obama expresses his support for the King of Bahrain's affirmed commitment to reform.

Yemen - Yemen's president Ali Abdullah Saleh offers to form a unity government within 24 hours but his offer was swiftly rejected by the opposition. According to Mohammed al-Sabry, a spokesman for Yemen's umbrella opposition coalition, "The opposition decided to stand with the people's demand for the fall of the regime, and there is no going back from that."

Qatar - Prime Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem bin Jaber al-Thani announces that Qatar will soon hold consultative council elections and that legislative reform is being currently prepared. The 2005 constitution provides for legislative power to be vested in a Shura (consultative) Council made up of 45 members, two thirds of whom would be elected and the rest appointed by the Emir. The Shura Council is currently named by the Emir.

March 1, 2011

Libya - Fighting is reported in the town of Zintan, south of Tripoli, where opposition forces managed to repel the pro-Gaddafi military.

Tens of thousands of foreigners flee unrest in Libya. According to the UN some 140,000 people have crossed into Tunisia and Egypt. The situation on Libya's border with Tunisia has reached crisis point with about 2,000 people crossing into Tunisia every hour. Most are Egyptian but there are also significant numbers of Chinese and Bangladeshis.

The UN General Assembly unanimously suspends Libya's membership in the UN Human Rights Council because of violence by Libyan forces against protesters. This is the first time that a Member State has been suspended from the Council.

Yemen - Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh dismisses the governors of the southern provinces of Aden, Lahej, Abyan and Hadhramout and the western province of Houdieda.

Tens of thousands of people demonstrate on the streets of Sana'a demanding the resignation of president Ali Abdullah Saleh. The president tells his supporters: "The events from Tunisia to Oman are a storm orchestrated from Tel Aviv and under Washington's supervision... What is taking place on Yemen's streets is just a copycat attempt, as Yemen is not Tunisia or Egypt and the Yemeni people are different... We want to know why Barack Obama is meddling in the affairs of the Arab countries... Is Obama the president of the United States of America or a president of the Arab states?" Saleh's remarks, unprecedented in their harshness, signal a growing rift with the United States that could hurt a joint campaign against the al-Qaida terror network in Yemen.

Amnesty International reports that the overall death toll in the recent protests in Yemen has now reached 27, with 24 of the deaths occurring in Aden.

In Sana'a opposition parties join hundreds of thousands of people on anti-government protests for the first time.

Iran - Iranian police fired tear gas and use batons to disperse protesters in Tehran demanding the release of two senior opposition leaders. More than 200 people are arrested. Hossein Mousavi and Mahdi Karroubi, have been moved from house arrest to full-time detention along with their wives.

Tunisia - Tunisia's prominent opposition figure quits the unity government, further destabilizing the interim leadership amid renewed uncertainty about the country's direction. Nejjib Chebbi, who founded the opposition Democratic Progressive Party, resigns because he is not happy with the newly named prime minister and government measures he says aimed at keeping him from seeking the presidency.

Tunisian Islamist party banned for more than 20 years is legalized. The Ennahdha party, branded an Islamic terrorist group by Tunisia's deposed leader but considered moderate by scholars, says it will focus on rebuilding and electing a new leader to prepare for upcoming elections.

Jordan - More than 400 Salafis³ demonstrate in front of the Grand Hussein Mosque in central Amman demanding the release of their jailed colleagues. This is the first public protests of this ultraconservative Muslim group which is banned in Jordan.

Bahrain - Thousands of protesters take to the streets of Manama in a third week of anti-regime demonstrations, as Bahrain's Shiite-led opposition reiterated its demands for major reforms.

Egypt - Egypt's Supreme Council of the Armed Forces sets announces provisional date for referendum on the constitution for March 19 as a prelude to a parliamentary election in June followed by a presidential poll.

Oman - In Oman the army clears protesters in the town of Sohar. Later in the capital Muscat, about 200 people gathered in a silent protest in front of the building of the Shura Council, the elected advisory body, asking for jobs and reforms.

March 2, 2011

³ The Salafi movement is banned in Jordan, but has grown in strength in recent years. The Salafists espouse an austere form of Sunni Islam that seeks a return to practices that were common in the early days of the faith. The Salafist rallies are separate from the wave of anti-government protests calling for democratic reforms. During the period covered by this chronology the Salafis held rallies across the country demanding the release of 90 Islamist prisoners, including Abu Mohammed al Maqdessi, the mentor of the former leader of al Qaeda in Iraq, Abu Musab al Zarqawi, who was killed in an air strike north-east of Baghdad in 2006. The group also called for the release of Mohammad Shalabi, better known as Abu Sayyaf, who is in prison after being convicted on terrorism charges following riots in the southern city of Maan in 2002. Salafi Jihadist groups emerged in Jordan in the early 1990s in cities such as Zarqa, Salt and Maan.

Libya - Forces loyal to Muammar Gaddafi move into rebel territory in the east, capturing an oil installation and university in the town of Marsa El Brega (or Brega). The situation in the town remains fluid for most of the day. In the evening the BBC reports that the town "seems clear of loyalist troops... The attempt by Col Gaddafi to move on the eastern rebel-held areas appears for now to have been repulsed and, although this is by no means a final victory, it is an important setback for the Libyan leader."

Gharyan and Sabratha, both near Tripoli, are reportedly retaken by Gaddafi forces.

Amid fears by investors that the unrest in the Arab world is spreading, Saudi Arabia's share market, the largest in the Middle East, falls 3.9%, following a 6.8% slide on 1 March. Qatar's stock index drops 3.1%, Kuwait falls 2.9%, and Dubai 3.6%. Dubai stocks slump to 7-year low. Reuter reports that "Concerns about unrest in North Africa have now migrated to the Gulf, albeit in the smaller countries like Oman and Bahrain... The fear is that there will be a ripple effect into other GCC (Gulf) countries, so there's a lot of panic selling." The price of Brent crude rises towards \$116 a barrel. The gold price, at \$1,434.45 an ounce, is almost at a record high, while silver, at \$34.74 an ounce, is at its highest since early 1980.

Yemen - In Yemen several thousand demonstrators gather yet again in the capital Sana'a for what are now almost daily rallies against president Saleh and denied any links to the US.

The White House issues a statement giving details of president Ali Abdullah Saleh's telephone call to John Brennan (White House counter-terrorism adviser) during which the president "conveyed his regret for misunderstandings related to his public remarks that Israel and the United States have engaged in destabilising activities in Arab countries."

Bahrain - Thousands of anti-government protesters in Bahrain gathered outside the country's interior ministry, the latest in a series of daily protests demanding the resignation of the government.

Government supporters also take to the streets in Bahrain. Tens of thousands gathered at a mosque in Manama to show their support for King Hamad bin Isa. They say that political reforms launched by the king a decade ago have resulted in freedoms and a level of democracy unique in the Gulf Arab region.

United Arab Emirates - UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan orders the investment of Dh 5.7 billion (US\$ 1.6 billion) in the expansion of the water and electricity supply sector in the northern emirates. According to the official Emirati news agency WAM, "the move follows the tour of the northern emirates to study the conditions and needs of UAE

citizens made last month on the instructions of Sheikh Khalifa by General Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces.” Electricity supply is to be provided to buildings and shops belonging to citizens in the northern emirates, with the Abu Dhabi Water and Electricity Authority (ADWEA) being instructed to supply the Federal Electricity and Water Authority (FEWA) with around 1,300 megawatts (MW) of power to meet projected demand. Sheikh Khalifa also issued instructions for the construction of a 100 kilometre main water pipeline from Kalba, at the southern end of the UAE's East Coast, to Dibba, in the north, passing through the cities of Fujairah and Khor Fakkan. Estimated to cost Dh 900 million, the pipeline will supply 23 million imperial gallons per day, MIGD, to Fujairah, 5 MIGD each to Khor Fakkan, Dibba and Kalba and 3 MIGD to Dhadnah. Another 60 km pipeline, costing Dh 300 million, will be built to supply 18 MIGD of water to the Emirate of Umm al-Qaiwain. The water will be supplied from the ADWEA power and desalination plants in Fujairah. Another order provides for the supply by ADWEA of 700 MW to the emirate of Sharjah, construction of a new main transmission station, with a capacity of 400 kV and costing Dh 500 million, in the city of Sharjah and for the supply of an additional 10 MIGD of water to Sharjah, to meet local requirements.

Jordan - Michael Posner, the US assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights and labour, concludes his two day visit to Jordan. According to *The National* “during the visit he met King Abdullah II, prime minister Marouf Bakhit and other Jordanian officials and civil society members that focused on the importance of democratic reform, civil society, women's rights, the role of an independent media, the protection of ethnic and religious minorities and labour... Posner was there to emphasize American support for King Abdullah's call for a sustained, serious, and comprehensive programme of political and economic reform.”

Egypt - Two leading members of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, Khairat al-Shater and Hassan Malik, are released after serving only part of their sentences.

Oman - Rival groups demonstrate in the Omani capital Muscat, with protesters demanding jobs and political reforms for a fifth successive day and government supporters taking part in a long parade of cars.

Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands postpones a state visit to Oman. The monarch was due to begin a three-day visit to Oman on 6 March, accompanied by heir to the throne Crown Prince Willem-Alexander and his wife, Princess Maxima.

March 3, 2011

Libya - For the second day in succession pro-Gaddafi forces launch air strikes on the oil town of Brega. The raid comes a day after 14 people died in clashes between rebels and government troops in the town. The town remains in anti-government hands. Government planes also bomb positions in the town of Ajdabiya.

The chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, states that he will investigate Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, his sons and senior aides for crimes against humanity.

The Libyan government accepts a plan by Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez to seek a negotiated solution to end the conflict in Libya. Leaders of anti-Gaddafi National Libyan Council in Benghazi reject Chavez's offer saying talk of peace is too late and they would not negotiate via Venezuelan president. They are, however, open to talks on Gaddafi's resignation or exile to stop the bloodshed.

The International Organisation for Migration says that almost 200,000 foreign workers have now crossed from Libya into Tunisia, Egypt and Niger.

US defence secretary, Robert Gates, the, indicated that it is unlikely that a no-fly zone over Libya would be established.

The Netherlands confirms that three of its marines have been captured by pro-Gaddafi forces in Sirte while helping to evacuate two civilians.

Egypt - Egyptian prime minister, Ahmed Shafiq, resigns. He was appointed by Hosni Mubarak on 29 January 2011, a fortnight before the president was forced out of office. His resignation was one of the protesters' key demands. Ahmed Shafiq is replaced by Essam Sharaf, former transport minister. His appointment is significant as he spoke out in support of the revolution and took part in the street protests.

Bahrain – More than 100,000 protesters gather in Manama.

Reuters reports that Bahraini opposition groups were ready to enter talks with the government without pre-conditions. However, in a letter sent to the Crown Prince they state that at the beginning of talks they would like a declaration in principle on new constitution and new government.

Sectarian tension flares up between Shias and recently naturalised Sunni Arabs in Hamad Town south of the capital. The clashes left at least 8 injured before police managed to step in and separate the two sides. This is the first reported sectarian violence since anti-government demonstrations started some two weeks ago.

Yemen - Yemeni soldiers opened fire at anti-government protesters in the northern city of Amran, killing three people. In the capital, tens of thousands assembled near Sana'a University calling for president Saleh's resignation.

Yemen's coalition of opposition parties, joined by some tribal and religious leaders, proposed a five-point "roadmap" for President Ali Abdullah Saleh to step down by the end of 2011. Reuters, quoting senior government official, reports that president Saleh will respond "positively" to the plan.

Saudi Arabia – About 100 people, mostly men and one group of women, stage small protests in two towns in the oil-producing Eastern Province. Demonstrations are reported in the small Gulf coast town of al-Awamiyah, as well as in the nearby Shiite centre of Qatif, demanding the release of prisoners held without trial, in some cases, for more than a decade.

Morocco - King Mohammed VI creates the National Council of Human Rights (NCHR), which replaces the purely advisory Council on Human Rights established in 1990 by King Hassan II.

Palestinian Authority - All banks in Gaza are closed for a day in protest at seizure of at least \$250,000 in cash by gunmen allegedly protected by Hamas police.

March 4, 2011

Libya - A fierce battle take place in the key Libyan city of Zawiya, (50 km west of Tripoli) after loyalist forces launched an operation to retake it from anti-Gaddafi forces. Reuters news agency reports heavy casualties with up to 50 people dead. Fierce fighting is also reported in the oil port of Ras Lanuf, while in the capital, Tripoli, security forces fired tear gas to disperse protesters. A Libyan warplane drops bombs on the rebel-held Mediterranean port town of Ajdabiya, narrowly missing a munitions dump. Anti- Gaddafi rebels hold other areas.

Senior Malian official tells the BBC that several hundred mercenaries from the Tuareg community in Mali have just joined Gaddafi forces. "They are being paid about \$10,000 to join up and... they are being told that they will get \$1,000 a day to fight."

Egypt - Egypt's new Prime Minister, Essam Sharaf, addresses crowd of thousands gathered at Cairo's Tahrir Square before Friday prayers. "I will do my utmost to realise your demands... am here because I get my legitimacy from you."

Protesters in the Egyptian city of Alexandria storm the HQ of the state security agency, believing officers were destroying key documents.

Yemen - Tens of thousands of people demonstrate in several cities across Yemen, including the capital, Sana'a, calling for the ouster of president Ali Abdullah Saleh. The main speaker during prayers at Sana'a University, Yahia Hussein Deilami, tells the gathering that "deposing a tyrant is a religious duty." Saleh's supporters stage counter-demonstrations in some major cities, including Sana'a, but they are outnumbered by the anti-regime protesters, according to security sources.

President Saleh rejects opposition coalition's transition plan to democracy that included reforms to the electoral system and the president leaving power by the end of 2011. Xinhua news agency quotes Mohammed al-Mutawaki, the opposition's rotating chairman: "The president rejected the proposal presented to him through religious clerics' mediation two days ago."

At least four people are killed and seven wounded when Yemeni soldiers armed with heavy machine-guns open fire on protesters throwing rocks at their army post in the northern town of Harf Sofyan.

Some 200,000 people protest in the town of Ibb, 200km south of Sana'a calling for president Saleh to step down.

Ali Ahmad al-Omrani, a tribal sheikh from the southern al-Baida province, tells tens of thousands of protesters at a late night rally in front of Sana'a University that he would resign from Saleh's General People's Congress Party (GPC).

Tunisia - Tunisia's interim president Fouad Mebazaa announces details of new elections promised after the overthrow of president Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali. Voting for a council of representatives to rewrite the constitution would be held by 24 July 2011. Nearly two months after the departure of Ben Ali, protesters are still camping beside the prime minister's office in central Tunis, saying nothing has changed.

Bahrain - Tens of thousands march in the Bahraini capital Manama renewing calls for the cabinet resignation and demanding the drafting of a new constitution. Over 50,000 people filled the capital's diplomatic and financial district chanting their demands. At the same time, protesters rallied outside the headquarters of Bahrain's state television building in Madinat Isa, 15km south of the capital.

Jordan - Hundreds of Jordanians march through the Jordanian capital, demanding democratic reforms and an end to official corruption. The mainly Islamist crowd, joined by liberal and leftist activists, marched after Friday prayers to a square in the center of Amman,

shouting: "We want to reform the regime," and "we want to fight the thieves who have robbed the country."

Oman - Hundreds of Omanis demanding jobs and political reforms demonstrated across the Sultanate. Around 200 protesters gather in capital Muscat at the headquarters of the Shura Council, where some had camped out overnight in tents. Similar numbers demonstrated in Salalah, the eastern coastal town of Sur where Oman's liquefied natural gas export facilities are based, and Sohar. The silent demonstrators outside the Shura Council in Muscat held placards saying, "We want an elected cabinet of ministers" and "End corruption and create jobs." Demonstrations in other cities concentrated on jobs, salaries and government support including housing benefits, as well as demands for an investigation into the violence in Sohar. In the capital, Sultan Qaboos' supporters drove around the city in a long parade of cars, waving Omani flags and chanting "long live Qaboos."

Saudi Arabia - Saudi Shiites held two small protests in the kingdom's oil-producing Eastern Province. More than 100 protesters march through the city of al-Hofuf to demanding the release of Shiite cleric Tawfiq al-Amir who was arrested after calling for a constitutional monarchy and a fight against corruption. In the Gulf coast town of Qatif, more than 100 protesters demand the release of Amir and other detained Shiites. The rally is dispersed by the police and 22 persons are arrested. There are also reports of a dozen men gathering at the exit of Riyadh's Al-Rajhi mosque and shouting slogans denouncing "oppression" and the monarchy.

March 5, 2011

Libya - Interim National Transitional Council holds its first meeting in Benghazi. The Council names eight of 31 members. According to the minutes of the first meeting, the Council is headed by Mustafa Abdul Jalil, and was attended by: Othman Suleiman El-Megryahi (Batnan Area), Ashour Hamed Bourashed (Darna City), Dr. Abdelallah Moussa El-Myehoub (Gouba Area), Zubiari Ahmed El-Sharif (Representative of the political prisoners), Ahmad Abdrabah Al-Abaar (Benghazi City), Dr. Fathi Mohamed Baja (Benghazi City), Abdelhafed Abdelkader Ghoga (Benghazi City), Fathi Tirbil and Dr. Salwa Fawzi El-Deghali (Representatives of Youth and Women). The Council declares that it is the sole national representative of Libya with all its social and political strata and all its geographical regions. Its membership is open to all Libyans and so far has received the names of the members of the following cities: Ajdabia, Misurata, Zentan, Zawya, Zwara, Nalout, El-Jabel El-Gharbi (West Mountain), Gaat and Kufra. The names will not be declared for safety

reasons till the liberation of all parts of Libya. The Council is waiting for the names of delegations from Tripoli, the South Region and the Middle Region of Libya to join it.

Fighting resumes in Zawiya, 50km west of Tripoli, after rebels earlier repelled a dawn attack by pro-Gaddafi forces to retake the city.

Opposition forces continue to advance westward towards Tripoli. The rebels say they have captured Bin Jawad, having early taken the oil port town of Ras Lanuf.

Thousands of foreign workers fleeing to Tunisia have to pass through dozens of checkpoints on the way from Tripoli to the border. They say they had been robbed by Gaddafi's security forces.

China Central Television reports that the last batch of Chinese workers in Libya has been flown home. An estimated 30,000 Chinese were working in Libya, mostly in the construction and oil industries, before the revolt.

According to Arbor Networks, a US-based network security company internet traffic from Libya falls to zero. Only about six per cent of Libyans enjoy internet access at the best of times, but the shutdown will likely affect attempts to disseminate information from within the country during this crisis.

Egypt - Protesters force their way into state security's headquarters in Cairo's Nasr City neighbourhood and seize classified documents. They say they were trying to save documents they feared were being destroyed by officers afraid of prosecution.

Seven people are injured after a state security building in the coastal city of Alexandria is set alight.

Bahrain - Thousands of Shia protesters in Bahrain have formed a huge human chain around the capital, Manama.

Saudi Arabia - Saudi Arabia's Interior Ministry announces that it would not allow any demonstrations or sit-in protests in the country that are aimed at undermining the Kingdom's security and stability. "Laws and regulations in the Kingdom totally prohibit all kinds of demonstrations, marches and sit-in protests as well as calling for them as they go against the principles of Shariah and Saudi customs and traditions."

Oman – Workers stage a sit-in at a main oil field in Haima, about 500km south-west of the capital, Muscat, demanding more state investments in the area.

Amid mounting protests throughout the country calling for reforms, Sultan Qaboos bin Said of Oman removes two senior & powerful ministers from the cabinet. He replaces Minister of Diwan of Royal Court, Sayyid Ali bin Hamoud Al Busaidi, with Sayyid Khalid

bin Hilal bin Saud Al Busaidi, and Minister of Royal Office, General Ali bin Majid Al Ma'amari, with Lieutenant-General Sultan bin Mohammed Al Nu'amani.

The Public Prosecution Department (PPD) of Oman issues a warning that stern action would be taken against those who indulge in acts of vandalism and arson. "The Public Prosecution Department followed with concern the events in Sohar and some other wilayats of the sultanate which included setting fire, vandalising and damaging of public and private property, as well as blocking roads and hampering traffic flow, which resulted in grave public and private damage," a statement said, adding: "All these acts are against the laws, the tenets of the Islamic Shariah and the morals the Omani society are known for".

Egypt - Gen. Mansour el-Essawy, a former general who led the antiterrorism drive during the 1990s, is named new interior minister. Groups of protesters storm the state security headquarters to rescue files they believed were about to be destroyed by security agents.

March 6, 2011

Libya - Libyan opposition forces suffer their first major setback in the country's east, on a day when pro- Gaddafi's troops launch fierce counter-assaults on rebel-held towns. Government troops launch major assaults in three towns held by the opposition, with fighter jets, attack helicopters and artillery used to strike in Misrata, Zawiya and the eastern oil port of Ras Lanuf. Pro-Gaddafi forces retake the town of Bin Jawad. Anti-Gaddafi rebels are still in control of Tobruk and Ras Lanuf but there has been fierce fighting in Misrata and Zawiya.

Speaking in Rome, Pope Benedict XVI appeals for peace in Libya, extending his prayers for the victims of a "growing humanitarian crisis". Concerns are growing for tens of thousands of foreign workers attempting to flee the country.

Britain officially confirms that its outstretch mission to the Libyan rebels has come to a rather abrupt and embarrassing end. A team of six SAS troops and two MI6 officers seized by Libyan rebels in eastern Libya are released by the rebels.

Libyan Consul General in Mali resigns his post.

Yemen - Five Yemeni soldiers are shot dead in two separate, al-Qaeda suspected attacks, as protests continue against the rule of Ali Abdullah Saleh. Four soldiers of the elite Republican Guard are killed in the province of Marib, east of Sana'a, when attackers open fire on the soldiers as they pass in a military vehicle. An army colonel is shot dead as he shopped in Zinjibar, capital of the southern Abyan province.

In the south Yemeni city of Ibb, 200km south of the capital, government supporters wielding knives and handguns attacked anti-Saleh protesters, leaving one dead. At least 40 pro-democracy protesters are injured in the clashes.

The US Department of State warns American citizens of the high security threat level in Yemen due to terrorist activities and civil unrest. The Department urges US citizens not to travel to Yemen. US citizens currently in Yemen should consider departing Yemen. The travel warning comes a day after the UK issued similar advice.

Bahrain - Anti-government demonstrators continue to camp out in Bahrain's Pearl Roundabout. A large number of people protested outside the prime minister's office where the cabinet was meeting - the first time a protest had been allowed at the site. The demonstration, which lasted about two and a half hours, was peaceful and broke up before the cabinet meeting ended.

Oman - In Oman the road blockades in Sohar continue. Around 200 staff of Oman Air, the flag carrier of the Sultanate, stage strike demanding higher salaries. The national carrier operates more than 300 flights a week to about 40 destinations in more than 20 countries.

Saudi Arabia - In Saudi Arabia the Council of Senior Scholars, comprising of ten clerics and headed by Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, Abd al-'Aziz al-Ashaikh, declares that calls for demonstrations and petitions demanding reforms in the desert kingdom, are un-Islamic. "The council stresses that demonstrations are prohibited in this country and that the Islamic way of realising common interest is by offering advice... Reform and advice are the Islamic way and would carry benefits and prevent evil, and that does not happen through intimidating and seditious statements on which signatures are collected."

Saudi Arabia frees Sheikh Tawfiq al-Amir , a Shia cleric whose arrest provoked protests in the town of Qatif in Eastern Province.

According to Reuters security forces detain at least 22 Shia who protested last week over what they say is discrimination.

Jordan - Second demonstration of Salafis in Jordan. Attended by 300 people it is staged outside the King's offices and the government headquarters in Amman.

Egypt - Within the past 48 hours Egyptian protesters have stormed the headquarters of the secret police in Cairo, Alexandria and elsewhere.

March 7, 2011

Libya - In Libya the town of Bin Jawad 60 km from Ras Lanuf, previously held by rebels, falls to forces loyal to Col Muammar Gaddafi. Pro-Gaddafi forces advance towards the port of Ras Lanuf.

In the rebel stronghold of Benghazi, much of the euphoria and excitement that victory was close at hand had faded. Some feared that pro-Gaddafi forces had deliberately retreated to around Gaddafi's Sirte, drawing the inexperienced and poorly-equipped rebel fighters forward and leaving rebel-held towns exposed to a possible counter-offensive.

Foreign ministers of the Gulf Co-operation Council meeting in Abu Dhabi take a tougher line against what they termed human rights violations by Col Muammar Gaddafi's regime. "The ministerial council demands that the Security Council take the steps necessary to protect civilians, including a no-fly zone in Libya." They also call on the Arab League to convene an emergency meeting to discuss the Libyan crisis.

In an interview with FRANCE 24, Muammar Gaddafi repeats his claim that al Qaeda was responsible for plunging the country into chaos and denied media reports of mass killings.

According to BBC Monitoring, South African president Jacob Zuma, in a conversation with Col Gaddafi, calls on the African Union to "take decisive action and uncover the conspiracy that Libya is facing."

Oman - Sultan Qaboos of Oman changes his Cabinet for the third time in less than two weeks to appease anti-government protesters who are demanding political reforms and an end to government corruption. The reshuffle includes 10 new ministers including five elected members from the Majlis Ash'shura.

Bahrain - Protests enter third week of demonstrations in Bahrain.

Jordan - Hundreds of Jordanian journalists working in state-controlled media demand an end to government curbs on media freedom, saying they were an obstacle to democratic transformation.

March 8, 2011

Libya - Pro-Gaddafi forces launch a fierce attack on rebels in the town of Zawiya 50km west of Tripoli. Some 50 tanks and 120 pick-up trucks were used in the assault. *The Guardian* correspondent, Peter Beaumont reports: "Residents described a hail of bullets with women and children being killed and families trapped within their homes by the ferocity of the fighting." Eventually the town is retaken by troops loyal to Gaddafi.

Gaddafi warplanes fire missiles on residential areas and near rebel positions in the oil port of Ras Lanuf, in a counter-attack designed to halt the rebel advance on his hometown, Sirte.

The Secretary-General of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, calls on the United Nations to enforce a no-fly zone over Libya, but rejects any intervention on the ground.

The UNCHR reports that more than 215,000 people, mainly migrant workers, have fled Libya.

Yemen - Anti-government unrest continues in Yemen. Policemen and security agents in civilian clothes open fire on protesters in the capital Sana'a wounding at least 50 people. They were trying to stop thousands of people joining a protest camp at the university. Three people are reported dead in a prison riot in support of protests. There were also clashes between demonstrators and security forces in the south of Yemen. Hundreds of schoolchildren join the protests in Aden, chanting "no studying, no teaching, until the president falls." In Ibb province, thousands of people take to the streets to demand action against Saleh loyalists who attacked a protest camp two days before.

Tunisia - The Tunisian interim prime minister, Caid Essebsi, announces a new government, which includes no members of the old regime.

Tunisia's interior ministry announces the disbanding of the State Security Department, under which the secret police operated, and states that it would respect "civic freedoms and rights". The dismantling of the department was a key demand of the opposition.

Oman - Hundreds of protesters gather outside the offices of the state broadcaster in the Omani capital Muscat calling for media freedom and an end to the "misleading of citizens". Demonstrations in support of political reform have been taking place in the Gulf sultanate for weeks and have continued despite the introduction of measures to this effect. The protesters also demand the removal from office of the minister of information, Hamed bin Mohammed Al Rashdi, and advisor to the sultan for cultural affairs, Abdul Aziz Al Rawas.

Egypt - New Egyptian government takes the constitutional oath before Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, the head of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces.⁴

⁴ The interim cabinet includes Yehia al-Gamal as deputy PM; Sayed Meshaal as Minister of Military Production; Hassan Younis as Minister of Electricity and Energy; Faiza Abu Naga as Minister of Planning and International Cooperation; Maged George as Minister of Environment; Mohsen al-Nomani as Minister of Local Development; Mohamed Fathi al-Baradei as Minister of Housing and Urban Development; Abdallah al-Husseini as Minister of

At least one person died in clashes between Coptic Christians and Muslims in Cairo. These erupted when Coptic protesters blocked a highway in the Egyptian capital, protesting against the burning of the church in the province of Helwan.

There are ugly scenes in Tahrir Square in Cairo as hundreds of women attempt to hold a "Million Women's March" to highlight their hopes of playing an active part in building a new Egypt. The women are harassed and intimidated by a counter-protest made up of mainly men objecting to the call for a new constitution allowing women to stand for the Egyptian presidency.

Kuwait - Several hundred Kuwaitis gather in front of a government building and call on the prime minister, Sheikh Nasser al-Mohammad al-Sabah, a nephew of the Emir, to resign. Protesters hand out watermelons to MPs heading into parliament.

Syria - Haitham al-Maleh, a prominent Syrian human rights activist and government critic is released from jail under president Bashar al-Assad amnesty for those convicted of minor crimes and prisoners over the age of 70.

Iran - Iranian security forces fire teargas to disperse anti-government protesters as they try to hold a demonstration in central Tehran.

Former president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani loses his position as the head of a powerful clerical body charged with choosing or dismissing Iran's supreme leader. This development is a major blow to the reformist movement in Iran.

Mauritania - Mauritania police breaks up youth rally in central square of the capital, Nouakchott. The rally was organised via Facebook, amid calls for political, economic reforms.

March 9, 2011

Libya - Libyan government forces launch new air raids on the eastern oil city of Ras Lanuf, while the western town of Zawiya is engulfed in heavy fighting as Muammar Gaddafi's forces attempted to retake it. Subsequently Libyan state TV reports that Zawiya had

Religious Endowments; Samir Radwan as Minister of Finance; Ibrahim Manna as Minister of Civil Aviation; Atef Abdel Hamid as Minister of Transport; Hussein al-Atfy as Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation; Ayman Farid Abul Hadid as Minister of Agriculture and Land Reclamation; Amr Ezzat Salama as Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research; Ahmed Gamal Eddin Moussa as Minister of Education; Maged Othman as Minister of Communications and Information Technology; Ashraf Hatem as Minister of Health and Population; Gouda Abdel Khaleq as Minister of Solidarity and Social Justice; and Samir Sayyad as Minister of Industry and Foreign Trade; Mounir Fakhri Abdel Nour as Minister of Tourism; Mohamed al-Guindi as Minister of Justice; Mansour al-Essawi as Minister of the Interior; Nabil al-Arabi as Minister of Foreign Affairs; Ahmed Hassan al-Borai as Minister of Manpower and Immigration; Emad Abu Ghazi as Minister for Culture; and Mohamed Ghorab as Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources.

been "liberated" from the rebels."Security is at about 95%. There are some rats that could be lying in some alleys and inside some flats. We are capturing them one group after the other."

Col Muammar Gaddafi initiates diplomatic offensive by sending four emissaries to Malta, Cairo, Brussels and Portugal. The Maltese government confirms that prime minister Lawrence Gonzi held meeting at the airport in Valetta with the Libya's under-secretary for international cooperation, Mohammed Taher Siyala. Libya's deputy defence minister, Maj Gen Abdul-Rahman bin Ali al-Said al-Zawi, held talks with Egyptian government officials and the Arab League. Portuguese foreign ministry statement said that foreign minister Luis Amado "had an informal meeting in a Lisbon hotel with a Libyan emissary, on the request of the latter, in order to receive information on the situation in Libya."

The Gaddafi regime announces a reward for the capture of the head of the Libyan Interim Transitional Council, Mustafa Abdul Jalil. Its General Administration for Criminal Investigation is offering 500,000 Libyan dinars (\$410,900 U.S.) "for whoever captures and hands over" the "agent spy" Abdul Jalil, and "another offer of 200,000 Libyan dinars (\$164,300 U.S.) for whoever offers information leading to his actual arrest."

The parliament of Kuwait urges Arab nations to recognise the Libyan Interim Transitional Council as Libya's government.

It is made public that three BBC journalists were detained for 21 hours, beaten and subjected to a "mock execution" by Gaddafi forces after attempting to enter the besieged city of Zawiyah. The men say they witnessed many other detainees who had been tortured and were 'in agony'.

Bahrain - Three parties in Bahrain splinter from the mainstream opposition and call for the creation of a democratic republic. Al-Wafa and Haq, two of the more hardline Shia opposition parties, and the mostly London-based Bahrain Freedom Movement form a "coalition for a Bahraini republic" and call for the peaceful overthrow of the ruling al-Khalifa family.

Morocco - Morocco's King Mohammed VI announces a "comprehensive constitutional reform," which would be drawn up by a committee headed by a constitutional expert. The committee is to consult widely with political parties, youth organisations, intellectuals and others before reporting back in June. A new draft constitution will then be submitted to a nationwide referendum. In a rare live broadcast, the first since thousands of people demonstrated in several cities on 20 February, the king said that the reform would include plans for an independent judiciary, a larger role for political parties, a prime minister

drawn from the majority party and a regionalisation programme to give more powers to local officials.

Egypt - Attackers armed with knives, sticks and machetes clash with pro-democracy activists in Tahrir Square in Cairo. They try to force the activists out of the square.

In Egypt the death toll in Muslim-Christian clashes over the burning of a church rises to 13, with about 140 wounded, the bloodiest clashes in years.

Thousands of Yemenis defiantly demonstrate in Sana'a.

United Arab Emirates - Some 133 UAE prominent academics, activists, lawyers and professionals sign petition addressed to Sheikh Khalifa, the President of the UAE and Ruler of Abu Dhabi, calling for universal suffrage and direct elections of all members of the Federal National Council, the UAE's advisory quasi-parliament. The petition, posted online, cites "rapid regional and international developments that necessitate improving national participation." It also calls for a constitutional amendment that imbues the FNC with broad powers, "which guarantees full legislative and oversight responsibilities".

A Facebook group called "The UAE Revolution" has set March 25 as the date for "a revolution against the era of Sheiks, a revolution against oppression and suppression of freedoms in the U.A.E., a revolution against those who have looted from the people of the U.A.E." It has over 2,700 members but it's not clear how many are Emiratis.

Tunisia - A Tunisian court dissolves the ex-ruling Rally for Constitutional Democracy (RCD) party. Its assets and funds are liquidated.

Saudi Arabia - Prince Alwaleed bin Talal, a nephew of King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia questions the need for a ban on women driving. At present in accordance with strict interpretation of Islamic tradition women cannot drive cars and foreign workers serve as their drivers. He suggests that the lifting of the ban on women driving would be a quick first step to reduce the Islamic kingdom's dependence on millions of foreign workers.

March 10, 2011

Libya - France becomes the first country to recognise the Libyan Interim Transitional Council as the country's legitimate government.

Libyan rebels flee the oil port of Ras Lanuf after sustained attacks by forces loyal to Muammar Gaddafi. "Gaddafi is attacking us with planes, tanks, rockets and heavy weapons, we are unarmed civilians and many families and kids were hit," one Libyan tells the BBC.

The Director of National Intelligence (DNI), James Clapper - US President Barack Obama's top intelligence adviser, predicts that in his view Muammar Gaddafi would prevail

in his battle against opposition forces. "I think the [Libyan] regime has more logistical resources in terms of the equipment they have... So I just think from a standpoint of attrition ... that over ... the longer term that the regime will prevail."

Yemen - Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh announces plans to change the constitution to move to a parliamentary system of government. Speaking, beneath a large portrait of himself, to thousands of cheering supporters gathered in a soccer stadium, Saleh said he wanted to form a unity government to help put in place a new political system. "Firstly we will form a new constitution based on the separation of powers. A referendum on this new constitution will be held before the end of this year." The opposition rejects the plan - "these proposals have been overtaken by realities on the ground... "Had the ruling party offered this six months ago, it would have been different. It's too late now."

Saudi Arabia - At least three people are injured after police in the oil-rich city of Qatif in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia fired in the air to disperse protesters. Around 600-800 protesters, all Shia and including women, took to the streets of the city to demand the release of nine Shia prisoners.

After a three-day meeting in Riyadh, foreign ministers from the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC), announce a \$20 billion aid package for Bahrain and Oman. The job-generating measure will give \$10 billion to each country to upgrade their housing and infrastructure over 10 years.

In a statement issued after their meeting in Saudi Arabia's capital Riyadh, foreign ministers from the GCC called on the Arab League to take measures to stop the bloodshed in Libya and to initiate contacts with the National Council formed by the opposition. "When it comes to Libya I think the regime has lost its legitimacy," said the Qatari prime minister and foreign minister, Hamad bin Jassem bin Jaber Al Thani. "We support the no-fly zone. We also support contact with the National Council in Libya. It is time to discuss the situation with them and the [UN] Security Council should shoulder its responsibility."

Jordan - The Grand Mufti of Jordan and six other religious scholars issue a fatwa warning against demonstrations that "cause more harm than good or disturb public order... Demonstrations and sit-ins should not sow the seeds of discord between society members or undermine Jordan's security or ignite social violence or instigate sectarian and regional discord."

March 11, 2011

Libya - Forces loyal to Libyan leader Col Muammar Gaddafi are reported to have made gains against anti-government rebels. Western journalists in the city of Zawiya, west of Tripoli, confirmed the Gaddafi regime's claims that the city had fallen after days of bombardment. Rebels are reported to have fled from the oil port of Ras Lanuf in the east of the country. Air strikes have been launched against the towns of Uqaylah and Brega.

Yemen - Record number of protesters gathers in several cities in Yemen calling for president Ali Abdullah Saleh to quit and dismissing his offer of reform. Yemenis flooded streets and alleys around Sana'a University in the biggest protest to hit the capital since demonstrations began in January. Estimated 100,000 people stage a sit-in in the capital. Thousands of women participated in these demonstrations. Tens of thousands of protesters also marched in Taiz and Ibb, south of the capital. In the southern port city of Aden, three people were wounded by gunfire and six were overcome by tear gas as police tried to disperse thousands of anti-government marchers. In the central province of Maareb, residents said hundreds of Yemenis demonstrated because they had not been paid for attending Saleh's speech in Sana'a on 10 March. The local newspaper Maareb Press said they been promised 50,000 Yemeni riyals (\$233) and began shouting "the people demand the fall of the regime" when they did not get the money.

Bahrain - Clashes broke out in Bahrain's Sunni Muslim stronghold and home of the al-Khalifa royal family of Riffa, as pro-democracy youths were attacked by rock-throwing pro-government demonstrators. While the mainly Shia Muslim protesters have held nightly rallies at the Pearl Roundabout, and staged demonstrations outside symbolic government buildings across Bahrain's capital, Manama, the clashes in Riffa are the most sensitive yet.

Jordan - Hundreds of Jordanians take to the streets of Amman and other major cities, demanding sweeping political and economic reforms. In Amman small counter protest of around 100 loyalists to King Abdullah is held. Protesters in Jordan have been making their voices heard for nearly two weeks now, but their numbers are slowly declining.

Saudi Arabia - Some 500 protesters demonstrate in the cities of al-Hofuf, al-Ahsa and al-Awamiyah (near Qatif) in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. However, a massive show of force snuffed out a Facebook-based effort to stage unprecedented pro-democracy protests in the capital Riyadh. Security in Riyadh was high-profile and intense, with helicopters hovering overhead and police checks on cars and individuals heading for mosques, where protests were expected after prayers. Rumours were rife in the capital, with anonymous text messages carrying dire warnings of huge fines, loss of nationality and expulsion from the country.

March 12, 2011

Libya - A major new attack by pro-Gaddafi forces is reported near Misrata, thought to be the only significant rebel-held town left in western Libya. In eastern Libya, fresh strikes near Ujala and Brega are reported by Reuters, suggesting that pro-Gaddafi forces were pushing the front line ever further east. The town of Ras Lanuf is lost by rebels.

Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa states during a news conference after a special meeting of the group in Cairo that: "The Arab League has officially requested the U.N. Security Council to impose a no-fly zone against any military action against the Libyan people." The vote for a no-fly zone was opposed by Syria and Algeria.

Yemen- Police in Yemen attack anti-government demonstrators in the centre of the capital, Sana'a, killing up to six people and injuring many more. Reports say hundreds of police moved in, using tear gas, water cannons and live bullets at a protest camp in Tahrir Square. There are also clashes in the southern port city of Mukalla, where a 14-year-old boy is killed by security forces.

Jordan - In Amman some 10,000 Palestinian residents and Bedouin tribesmen stage demonstrations in support of King Abdullah.

Demonstrations take place in the northern Omani town of Ibri (350-km north-west of Muscat). The protests take an employees of the Manpower Ministry hostage.

Algeria - Agence France Presse (AFP) reports that, some 400 anti-riot policemen in central Algiers block around 40 demonstrators who attempted to stage a rally.

March 13, 2011

Libya - Pro-Gaddafi forces advance on rebel-held strongholds in the east of Libya, reportedly recapturing the town of Brega.

Human Rights Watch reports that Libyan security forces controlled by Muammar Gaddafi have launched a wave of arrests and disappearances in Tripoli that has gripped the city with fear. According to Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East and North Africa director at Human Rights Watch, "Gaddafi and his security forces are brutally suppressing all opposition in Tripoli, including peaceful protests, with lethal force, arbitrary arrests, and forced disappearances... Given Libya's record of torture and political killings, we worry deeply about the fate of those taken away."

Yemen - Yemeni police fired live rounds and tear gas at protesters in Sana'a. One person is killed and over 100 wounded.

Bahrain - In Bahrain thousands of anti-government protesters block King Faisal Highway, a four-lane road leading to the financial district of the capital, Manama. The demonstrators drove back police trying to push them from the capital's central square in the most disruptive protests since unrest erupted a month ago. Demonstrators also clash with security forces and government supporters on the campus of the main university in the country.

Oman - In the Omani town of Ibri protesters set the Housing Ministry building and a local sheikh's house on fire which also damaged seven cars. *Gulf News* reports that: "Demonstrations also kept cropping up at different places in Muscat, triggering tail backs that ran a few kilometers. About 30 staff members of the Radisson Blue Hotel marched to the Manpower Ministry in the south MBD area of Ruwi district at around 9am. They raised slogans demanding better pay and treatment for the Omani staff." They were also protests staged by staff at the Muscat Inter-Continental Hotel, Crown Plaza Hotel, the Shangri La Bar Al Jizza Hotel, Petroleum Development Oman, Health Ministry, and Oman International Bank. According to *Gulf News* "protests in private sector firms were spreading like wildfire, with small and big private firms to state-owned companies getting hit by demonstrations by their Omani employees." Private sector workers make about 19 per cent of workers in the Sultanate.

The Oman News Agency (ONA) reports that Sultan Qaboos bin Said has issued a royal decree no.39/2011, granting the Council of Oman "legislative and audit powers as stipulated by the Basic Law of the State and the laws in force." "A technical committee of experts shall be constituted to develop the draft amendment of the Basic Law of the State," and report back in 30 days. The Council of Oman, which previously only offered policy advice, consists of the elected Shura Council and the State Council, made up of members appointed by the sultan himself. The Sultan also issued two royal orders which state: "First: Increase the monthly pensions allocated for families beneficiary of the Social Security Law provisions by 100% with effect from the first of April 2011.

Second: Increase the monthly pension fund for all those covered by the post-service pensions and remunerations law for the Omani employees of the government by a percentage up to 50% of the categories that receive the lowest pension salary. The Civil Service Employee Pension Fund will implement the list regulating these increments."

Morocco - Dozens of people are injured, some of them seriously, in Morocco's biggest city, Casablanca, when police tried to storm the headquarters of a left-wing political

party and cracked down violently on a demonstration for change called for by the February 20 Movement.

Saudi Arabia – More than 200 people stage protests outside the Ministry of the Interior in Riyadh demanding information about prisoners and their immediate release.

March 14, 2011

Libya - The eastern oil town of Brega changed hands several times over the past two days, amid a relentless barrage of air and ground attacks by pro-Gaddafi forces. Ajdabiya, the last major town before the rebel base in Benghazi, comes under heavy aerial attack from pro-Gaddafi forces. In the west, ground forces and tanks begin shelling the town of Zuwara.

Bahrain - Troops from Saudi Arabia and police officers from the United Arab Emirates cross into Bahrain under the aegis of the Gulf Cooperation Council to help quell unrest in the country. They arrive at the request of the Bahrain's government. A convoy of 150 armoured troop carries, ambulances and about 50 other lightly armed vehicles carrying some 1,200 troops enter Bahrain on the 25-km causeway that links the two kingdoms. Later the UAE discloses that it dispatched 500 police officers with the Saudi forces and that other Gulf states would also send troops. The contingent moved towards Riffa, a Sunni area that is home to the royal family and military hospital. The intervention from Bahrain's predominantly Sunni neighbours may deepen the rift between Shia and Sunni Muslims in Bahrain and beyond.

March 15, 2011

Libya - In Libya heavy fighting between government and rebel forces for the oil town of Brega. The town has changed hands several times over recent days. Reports now suggest the rebels are losing control. In the west, government forces appear to have retaken Zuwara and are shelling Misrata city.

Bahrain - King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa of Bahrain declares a three-month state of emergency. At least two people are killed and as many as 200 injured in clashes between anti-government demonstrators and security forces in Manama.

Egypt - Egypt's Interior Minister Mansour al-Issawi dissolves its internal security agency, which had been blamed for decades of human rights abuses. The State Security Investigation Service (SSIS) will be replaced with a new "National Security Force".

Syria - Hundreds of people staged a rare protest in the capital, Damascus, calling for democratic reforms and the release of all political prisoners. A Facebook group, the Syrian revolution against [president] Bashar al-Assad 2011, is said to have called the march.

Oman - Between 400 and 500 private security guards in Oman block the main airport in the capital Muscat in a demonstration to demand higher pay.

Saudi Arabia - About 1000 people stage protests in Qatif calling for the Peninsula Shield Force to be withdrawn from Bahrain. Protests also take place in the town of al-Awamiyah.

Palestinian Authority - Thousands of people demonstrate across the Palestinian territories, calling for political unity between their rival governments.

March 16, 2011

Libya - Libyan government soldiers surround the town of Ajdabiya - the last town before the main rebel-held city of Benghazi. Tanks are also pounding the last rebel-controlled city in the west, Misrata.

Bahrain - At dawn security forces with tanks overrun the Pearl Roundabout in the centre of Bahrain's capital Manama where anti-government protesters have been camped for weeks. At least three civilians were reportedly killed after police fired on mainly Shia protesters. Officials said three police also died. Troops take over the main Manama hospital and smaller health centres treating the wounded. Officials imposed a curfew and banned protests.

Bahrain's health minister resigns in protest against the government's use of force. BBC's Caroline Hawley in Manama reports that Shiia judges have resigned en masse.

The largest Shia opposition group in Bahrain, Wefaq, urges followers to avoid confrontation with authorities.

Iran recalls its ambassador to Bahrain, Mehdi Agha-Jafari, to protest the crackdown, state-run Mehr news agency reports.

Bahrain's stock market announces its closure until further notice. Two of Bahrain's main banks - Standard Chartered and HSBC Holdings close all their branches.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton says that Gulf states were on the "wrong track" in sending in troops to Bahrain. "We find what's happening in Bahrain alarming. We think that there is no security answer to the aspirations and demands of the demonstrators."

Syria - Protests continue in Damascus. About 150 people had gathered near the interior ministry, demanding the release of political prisoners. At least 35 people are arrested

after they defy a ban on demonstrations and protested in the Syrian capital. Among those arrested are a 69-year-old Damascus university philosophy professor and author Tayeb Tizini, and leading human rights activist Suhair Atassi.

Yemen - Dozens of people are injured in Yemen as police tried to break up an anti-government demonstration in the western city of al-Hudaida. Police opened fire and used tear gas after pro-government loyalists attacked protesters with batons and rocks.

Saudi Arabia - Hundreds of protesters take to the streets of Qatif in support of protestors in Bahrain. They also demand the release of Shia prisoners in Saudi Arabia and withdrawal of Peninsula Shield force from Bahrain.

March 17, 2011

Bahrain - In Bahrain riot police fire tear gas to disperse small protests in the Shia village of Daih, west of the capital, which is a key opposition area. Roads to the nearby villages of Sanabis and Jidhafs are blocked by military vehicles.

Navi Pillay, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights states that reports of a military takeover of hospitals in Bahrain was a blatant violation of international law. She writes: "There are reports of arbitrary arrests, killings, beatings of protesters and of medical personnel, and of the takeover of hospitals and medical centres by various security forces... This is shocking and illegal conduct."

Bahraini security forces arrest opposition six leaders. According to a military statement read out on state television "leaders of the civil strife" had been arrested for communicating with foreign countries and calling for the fall of the regime. Those arrested include: Hassan Mushaima, and Abdeljalil al-Singace from the Shiite Haq movement, Ebrahim Sharif, head of the opposition National Democratic Action Society, and Shia activist Abdel Wahhab Huseein and Ibrahim Sharif, who leads a secularists Sunni party.

Sheikh Ali Salman, the leader of Wefaq, Bahrain's largest opposition group calls on King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia to withdraw his forces from the Gulf Arab state. He also calls for a U.N. investigation into Bahrain's government crackdown on protests.

Libya - Pro-Gaddafi forces launch their first air attacks on Benghazi, targeting the airport at Benina.

Col Gaddafi's forces attacked the rebel-held town of Ajdabiya, a key objective before launching a ground assault on Benghazi, but rebels deployed tanks, artillery and a helicopter to repel the assault.

Libyan state television reports that the city of Misrata was almost entirely under government control, but rebels and residents in the city deny this.

Saudi Arabia - According to AFP hundreds of Saudi Shiites rally late on 17 March in the east of the kingdom to show solidarity with their fellow Shiites at the centre of protests in Bahrain. "Free Bahrain! Peninsula Shield out!" chanted the demonstrators, taking up the slogans of Bahraini Shiite pro-democracy demonstrators. Witnesses report that Saudi security forces fired tear gas at demonstrators in the city of Qateef where shots also rang out. Marches were also held in the mainly Shiite Eastern Province of Tarut, Safwa and al-Awamiyah.

Yemen - Yemeni security forces and government loyalists clash with opposition activists in Sana'a and Taiz, using guns, tear gas and batons against the protesters. At least 85 people are reported wounded.

March 18, 2011

Libya - UN Security Council passes Resolution 1973 authorizing "all necessary measures" to protect civilians and "civilian populated areas under threat of attack" in Libya, including Benghazi, from forces loyal to Gaddafi. The resolution establishes a no-fly ban "on all flights" "in order to help protect civilians" and "authorises member states... to take all necessary measures to enforce compliance with the ban on flights..." Ten of the council's 15 member states voted for the resolution with Russia, China, Germany, India and Brazil abstaining.

President Barack Obama states that: "All attacks against civilians must stop... Gaddafi must stop his troops from advancing on Benghazi, pull them back from Ajdabiya, Misrata and Zawiyah, and establish water, electricity and gas supplies to all areas. Humanitarian assistance must be allowed to reach the people of Libya ... Let me be clear, these terms are not negotiable... If Gaddafi does not comply ... the resolution will be enforced through military action."

Saudi Arabia - King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, in a rare television address, warns that threats to the nation's security and stability will not be tolerated. After his speech, state television announced a package of new welfare benefits that include: A monthly minimum wage of 3,000 riyals (\$800) and two months' extra pay for government workers; extra grants for university students; a monthly stipend of about \$260 for the unemployed; 500,000 housing units for low-income earners; \$4.3bn spending on medical facilities. State TV also announced that the king had ordered the creation of 60,000 new jobs within the security

forces. The package is worth billions of dollars. He also ordered the setting up of a commission to fight corruption.

Support for Shiites in Bahrain continues. There are reports of peaceful protests of Shiites in several towns of the Eastern Province including: Qatif, al-Awamiyah, Safwa City and al-Rabeeya.

Bahrain - In Bahrain the army demolishes the Pearl monument and removes the grass at the roundabout occupied by opposition protesters for much of the past month that has come to symbolise their hopes for democratic reforms.

Yemen - In Yemen government forces attacked protesters in Sana'a, after Friday prayers, in the most violent crackdown in two months of unrest. Forty-six people are killed and hundreds injured as police and pro-regime gunmen shot at a crowd of tens of thousands of protesters in the capital's Taghyeer Square and pro-government snipers opened fire from rooftops. The BBC quotes statement from a field hospital: "a total of 617 people were injured on Friday, 270 with gunshot wounds and 347 'poisoned by gas'. Tear gas was fired by security forces during the day."

President Barack Obama condemns the violence in Yemen and demands that those responsible "must be held accountable".

Yemeni opposition calls for an international investigation. Reuters is quoting Yassin Noman, rotating president of Yemen's umbrella opposition group, saying there was "no longer any possibility of mutual understanding" between the protesters and president Saleh.

Thousands of people demonstrated in other cities, including Aden, Taiz and Mahweed.

President Ali Abdullah Saleh of Yemen announces state of emergency and imposes curfew on "armed men in all cities... Security forces and armed forces will take responsibilities to maintain public security".

Nabil al-Faqih, Yemen's Tourism Minister, resigns in protest. The head of the ruling party's foreign affairs committee also quits.

Syria - Syrian security forces kill four protesters (Akram al-Jawabra, Hussam Abdelwali Ayash, Ayham al-Harri and a member of the Abu Aoun family) in the old quarter of the southern city of Daraa in the most violent response to protests against Syria's ruling elite since revolts swept through the Arab world. According to eyewitnesses "Hundreds of protesters were wounded and many were snatched by the security force from the hospital where they had been taken and removed to an unknown location." The demonstrators were

taking part in a peaceful protest demanding political freedoms and an end to corruption in Syria, which has been ruled under emergency laws by president Bashar al-Assad's Baath Party for nearly half a century. Daraa is a centre of tribes belonging to Syria's Sunni Muslim majority, many of whom resent the power and wealth amassed by the elite of the Alawite minority to which Assad belongs. Smaller protests took place in the north-eastern city of Deir ez-Zor, the central city of Homs and the coastal town of Baniyas, home to one of Syria's two oil refineries. A crowd briefly chanted slogans for freedom inside the Umayyad Mosque in Old Damascus before security forces closed in on them.

The Syrian state news agency Sana also reported demonstrations in the town of Baniyas. Al Jazeera television reported protests in the cities of Tartus and Aleppo.

Jordan – Some 1,500 Jordanians gather under a heavy police presence to peacefully demand change ahead of first-ever meeting of a constitutional reform committee. The 53-member committee was organised by the government and asked to draft a new electoral law and amend a law on political parties within a three-month period. Its formation came after several weeks of protests across the country. The committee, headed by senate president Taher Masri and including leaders of political parties, journalists, government officials and activists, also includes three Islamist figures. The Brotherhood, Jordan's most powerful opposition group, refuse to participate in the newly established national dialogue committee unless constitutional amendments were on the agenda that would bring about a parliamentary government.

Mauritania - Hundreds of Mauritanian youths holding a protest rally in the country's capital, Nouakchott. The protest is organised by the February 25th Youth Coordination group. Their list of 28-demand includes calls for the dismissal of the incumbent government led by Moulaye Ould Mohamed Laghdaf and the formation of a national coalition government consisting of technocrats with "broad powers to implement a reform programme that responds to the aspirations of all Mauritians". They also request raise in the minimum wage, and the employment of indigenous labour rather than foreign workers.

March 19, 2011

Libya - Muammar Gaddafi's forces attempt to push into the rebel-held city of Benghazi defying world demands for an immediate ceasefire and forcing rebels to retreat. Reports from the city say that government tanks and artillery had bombarded the city and there was fighting around the university.

At 12:30 Summit for the Support of the Libyan People – an emergency international summit of world leaders opens at the Elysee Palace, in Paris. The meeting at the invitation of the French president Nicolas Sarkozy is also attended by U.N Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon; Secretary General of the Arab League, Amr Mousa; President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy; the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton; the Chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkle; US Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton; the prime ministers of: Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor al-Thani; U.K., David Cameron; Greece, George Papandreou; Canada, Stephen Harper; Netherlands, Mark Rutte; Belgium, Yves Leterme; Poland, Donald Tusk; Italy, Silvio Berlusconi; Denmark, Lars Lokke Rasmussen; Spain, Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero; Norway, Jens Stoltenberg; the foreign ministers of: Iraq, Hoghyar Zebari; UAE, Sheik Abdullah Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan; Jordan, Nasser Judeh; and Morocco Taieb Fassi Fihri. Delegation of the African Union failed to attend the summit. The summit issues the following statement:

Paris Summit for the Support to the Libyan People:

Since Feb. 15 this year, the Libyan people have been peacefully expressing the rejection of their leaders and their aspiration for change. In the face of these legitimate requests coming from all over the country, the Libyan regime has carried out a growing brutal crackdown, using weapons of war against his own people and perpetrating against them grave and massive violations of humanitarian law.

Despite the demands which the Security Council expressed in UNSCR 1970 on Feb. 26, despite the condemnations of the Arab League, African Union, Organization of the Islamic Conference's Secretary-General and European Union, as well as very many governments in the world, the Libyan regime has stepped up its violence in order to impose by force its will on that of its people.

This situation is intolerable.

We express our satisfaction after the adoption of UNSC 1973 which, inter alia, demands an immediate and complete ceasefire, authorises the taking of all necessary measures to protect civilians against attacks and establishes a no-fly zone over Libya. Finally, it strengthened and clarified the arms embargo vis-a-vis the Libyan regime and the rules applicable to the Libyan asset freeze, in particular on the National Oil Company, and travel restrictions against the Gaddafi's regime.

While contributing in differentiated way to the implementation of UNSCR 1973, we are determined to act collectively and resolutely to give full effect to these decisions.

Muammar Gaddafi and those executing his orders must immediately end the acts of violence carried out against civilians, to withdraw from all areas they have entered by force, return to their compounds, and allow full humanitarian access. We reiterate that the Security Council took the view that Libyan regime's forces actions may amount to crimes against humanity and that, to this end, it has referred the matter to the International Criminal Court.

We are determined to take all necessary action, including military, consistent with UNSCR 1973, to ensure compliance with all its requirements.

We assure the Libyan people of our determination to be at their side to help them realise their aspirations and build their future and institutions within a democratic framework.

We recall that UN Security Council resolution 1973 does not allow for any occupation of, or attempt to occupy the Libyan territory.

We pay tribute to the courageous action of the Libyan National Transition Council (NTC) and all the Libyans in positions of responsibility who have courageously disassociated themselves from the Libyan regime and given the NTC their support.

Our commitment is for the long term: we will not let Colonel Gaddafi and his regime go on defying the will of the international community and scorning that of his people. We will continue our aid to the Libyans so that they can rebuild their country, fully respecting Libya's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

At the end of the two hour summit president Nicolas Sarkozy announces that French airplanes are already in action over Libya. The international community was intervening to stop the "murderous madness" of Col Gaddafi, he states. "In Libya, the civilian population, which is demanding nothing more than the right to choose their own destiny, is in mortal danger... It is our duty to respond to their anguished appeal." According to French government spokesman, 20 French planes are involved in the Libya operation. At 16:45 spokesman for the French military confirms French aircraft destroyed a number of military vehicles in first attack.

British Prime Minister David Cameron comments after the summit: "The time for action has come. We cannot allow the slaughter of civilians to continue. What is absolutely clear today is that Colonel Gaddafi has broken his word, he has broken confidence and continues to slaughter his own civilians."

At 19:49 British Prime Minister, David Cameron, announces outside No 10 Downing Street, that British forces are in action over Libya. It was "necessary, legal and right" he says.

At 20:15 president Barack Obama tells reporters that the US has begun "limited military" action in Libya.

Col Gaddafi makes a brief speech on the radio promising retaliation against the West and announcing that: "Arms depots are now open and the masses are being equipped with all sorts of weapons in defence of Libya's independence, unity and honour."

By the end of the day the US and the UK have fired more than 112 missiles on 20 integrated air-defence systems and other military facilities, while French planes struck pro-Gaddafi forces attacking rebel-held Benghazi. Cruise missiles hit air-defence sites in the capital, Tripoli, and Misrata.

Agence France Presse (AFP) reports that the United Arab Emirates will be contributing 24 fighter jets (Mirage 2000-9s and F-16s) and Qatar between four and six Mirage 2000-5s to coalition's action over Libya.

Russia and China expresses "regrets" of the coalition's military action in Libya.

Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez condemns military strikes against Libya accusing the United States and its European allies of attacking the country to size its oil. Similar views are expressed by Fidel Castro and the president of Bolivia, Evo Morales.

Egypt - Voting in a landmark referendum on constitutional amendments takes place in Egypt. If approved the changes could pave the way for a return to civilian rule and parliamentary and presidential elections within six months.

Hundreds of Islamists hurl stones and shoes at Mohamed ElBaradei, Nobel Peace laureate and a secular contender for Egypt's presidency, as he tries to vote in a referendum on constitutional amendments.

Syria - Syrian security forces fired tear gas in the southern city of Daraa to disperse crowds at the funeral of two people killed in anti-government protests on 18 March. Thousands have gathered for the funeral and began chanting anti-government slogans.

Yemen - Yemeni police have fired bullets and tear gas at anti-government protesters in the southern city of Aden, injuring at least seven people.

Yemen's Human Rights minister Huda al-Baan announces her resignation in protest at previous day's bloodbath. The undersecretary at her ministry, Ali Taysir, also steps down. Mohamed Saleh Qara'a and Nasr Taha Mustafa, two prominent members of Yemen's ruling party also resign on in protest against the violence.

Algeria - In Algiers security forces swamp the capital, hampering two rallies, one called by youths through the social networking website Facebook, due outside the main post office, and another at the nearby May 1 Square, called by the National Co-ordination for Change and Democracy (CNDC). The planned protest was the seventh attempt since January

by the CNDC to stage a weekly demonstration, along the lines of pro-democracy protests sweeping the Arab world, in defiance of a ban on protests in the capital imposed in 2001.

Bahrain - Bahrain's authorities cut back by four hours a 12-hour curfew that had been imposed on large areas of the capital Manama. The curfew now runs from 8 p.m. to 4 a.m. from the Seef Mall area in Manama, through the Pearl roundabout and the financial district to the diplomatic area.

March 20, 2011

Libya - Sustained bursts of anti-aircraft gunfire rattles the Libyan capital Tripoli in the early hours of the morning.

Agence France Presse (AFP) reports that bombs have already been dropped earlier in the morning near Bab al-Aziziyah, Gaddafi's Tripoli headquarters, prompting barrages of anti-aircraft fire from Libyan forces that lasted about 40 minutes.

India, which abstained on the vote over the UN resolution, expresses regret over the air strikes in Libya. In a statement from the foreign ministry it said: "The measures adopted should mitigate and not exacerbate an already difficult situation for the people of Libya."

Libyan official news agency Jana reports that Libya's government has begun distributing arms to more than one million people and will complete the operation within hours. It quotes the defence ministry as saying they "expected the operation to end in the next hours to arm more than a million men and women."

Pope Benedict XVI, leader of the world's 1 billion Catholics, appeals to political and military leaders "to ensure the safety of Libyan citizens and guarantee access to humanitarian aid".

Late at night missiles fired by the coalition forces target and destroy Gaddafi's command centre inside the Bab al-Aziziya army barracks in Tripoli.

Bahrain - In Bahrain commercial life begins to return to normal with the reopening of shops and roads are busy again. Masked soldiers still guard the entrances to the Pearl Roundabout, focal point of protests. The main opposition groups ease conditions for talks to end the crisis. These include the freeing of all detainees, ending of security forces crackdown and the departure of Gulf Arab troops. This is a retreat from much more ambitious conditions for talks it set last week, including the creation of a new government not dominated by royals and the establishment of a special elected council to redraft Bahrain's constitution.

Syria - Syrian security forces open fire and use tear gas against a crowd of ten thousand demonstrators in Daraa, a main city in the strategic Hauran plateau. At least one

protester (Raed al-Kerad) was killed and over one hundred people injured in the clashes. According to various reports the protesters set fire to several buildings, including the local courthouse and the headquarters of the ruling Baath Party which also housed the the Syriatel mobile network owned by Rami Makhoul, the business-tycoon cousin of the president, whose wealth stirs much comment and resentment. The local Omar mosque, to which victims are being taken, has become a "field hospital." The protest took place as a government delegation arrived to pay condolences for four victims killed by security forces in demonstrations on 18 March. The government sought to appease popular discontent by promising to release 15 children whose arrest helped fuel the protests. The children had written pro-democracy slogans after being inspired by revolts in Tunisia and Egypt. The demonstration marks the third day of protests in Daraa.

Yemen - Tens of thousands of Yemeni protesters gather in the capital, Sana'a, for funerals and a day of mourning following violent clashes over the weekend that left at least 44 dead. Witnesses said the gathering at the funerals was the largest since an opposition movement began in Yemen late January. Demonstrations were also reported in several other regions.

Yemen's ambassador to the United Nations Abdullah Alsaedi resigns in protest over the violence, making him the third government official to step down from his post since 18 March.

Yemen News Agency SABA report in the evening that the Presidential Decree No. 14 for 2011 was issued on Sunday which stipulates the dismissal of the government of prime minister Ali Mujawar. Despite firing his government, president Saleh has asked the cabinet to remain in place until a new one could be appointed.

Egypt - Mohammed Ahmed Attiyah, the Head of Egypt's Supreme Judiciary Committee announces the result of a referendum on constitutional amendments. In total 18,537,954 Egyptians, out of some 45 million eligible voters took part, giving a turnout of 41.2%. There number of invalid votes was 171,190. Some 14,5 million, 77.5%, voted in favour of the proposed changes, while 4 million cast their votes against.

Morocco - Thousands of Moroccans demonstrate in Casablanca, Rabat and other cities calling for more democracy and social justice despite recent promises by King Mohammed VI of deep political reform. According to the protest organisers, the February 20 Movement, some 10,000, marched in Casablanca, some calling for the king's powers to be reduced in the north African country. Estimated 4,000, including many Islamists and veiled

women, rallied in the capital Rabat. The February 20 Movement used Facebook to organise the protests. There were no reports of any incidents by the end of the morning and police kept a low profile. The call for demonstrations was backed by the youth wing of the Justice and Charity movement, regarded as Morocco's main Islamist movement, and by several human rights bodies and non-governmental organisations.⁵

Oman - In Oman about 200 workers at the Muscat and Sohar refineries staged demonstrations demanding higher wages.

Saudi Arabia - Dozens of Saudi men and women protest outside the Interior Ministry in Riyadh demanding the release of prisoners held without trial for years. Large numbers of riot police guard the ministry, and witnesses say a number of protesters were arrested after trying to go into the building. It is the third protest this month by families and activists demanding information on the fate of people held without trial for years on security and terrorism charges.

Hundreds of people demonstrate in Qatif against the presence of the Peninsula Shield Force in Bahrain.

March 21, 2011

Libya - Forces loyal to Muammar Gaddafi fired on a crowd of unarmed people in the rebel-held city of Misrata on Monday and are using civilians as human shields against air strikes by a Western coalition.

The Arab League's Secretary General Amr Moussa - who had criticised the coalition bombarding Libya - makes the following statement after a meeting with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and talks with British Prime Minister David Cameron: "We are committed to UN Security Council Resolution 1973, we have no objection to this decision, particularly as it does not call for an invasion of Libyan territory."

⁵ According to *The National* the demonstrators are also angry that an investment fund run by King Mohammed VI and his advisers, known as the "Makhzen" [a Moroccan term that means the "warehouse" and refers to the royal advisers, business leaders and top bureaucrats who hold power behind the scenes] that dominate the economy, with stakes in banking, insurance, steel, building materials, dairy produce, sugar and cooking-oil companies. SNI, with assets worth at least \$2 billion is controlled by the king and managed by Mohamed Mounir al Majidi, the monarch's private secretary, who has business interests of his own. The 47-year-old king holds stakes in banking, insurance, dairy, sugar and cooking-oil companies; his advisers are involved in ventures from consulting to advertising. According to the website of Bourse de Casablanca, the country's main stock market, SNI combined owns 48.3 per cent of Attijariwafa Bank, the country's largest publicly traded bank; 79 per cent of Wafa Assurance, the largest traded insurer; 63.4 per cent of Centrale Laitiere, its largest dairy; 75.8 per cent of Lesieur Cristal, its largest maker of cooking oils; and 63.5 per cent of Cosumar, the largest sugar refiner. It controls 65 per cent of the steelmaker Sonasid through a joint venture with ArcelorMittal set up in 2006. Lafarge Maroc, the country's largest producer of building materials, is in a 50-50 venture with the Paris-based Lafarge.

Abdel Rahman bin Hamad Al Attiyah, the Secretary General of the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council, two members of which are involved in the allied coalition against Libya, states that the action in Libya doesn't constitute "intervention." "What is happening now is not intervention, it is protecting the people from bloodshed..." "These operations are to stop bloodshed in Libya." Asked if GCC members were militarily involved in the allied air strikes on Libya, he said: "Qatar and the U.A.E. are participating in the coalition" as per the UN resolution.

F-15E Strike Eagle jet conducting a mission on the night of 21 March crashes outside Benghazi, apparently from a malfunction. The two pilots are safely ejected.

Yemen - Protests intensified dramatically today across Yemen as tens of thousands of demonstrators took to the central squares of towns and cities to demand the resignation of president Ali Abdullah Saleh. Key military and political figures deserted the president, although the defense minister insisted the military would remain loyal to him.

Top Yemeni tribal leader Sheikh Sadiq Al-Ahmar, leader of the Hashid tribe, calls for the departure from President Ali Abdullah Saleh. The Hashid tribe is considered Yemen's most powerful tribal and includes nine clans, among them Sanhan, long a bulwark of Saleh's regime. "I announce in the name of all the members of my tribe that I am joining the revolution," Al-Ahmar said.

General Ali Mohsen Al-Ahmar, head of the first armoured division and long-time close associate of President Ali Abdullah Saleh, announces he was supporting the protesters and that he has deployed troops in the capital to protect them.⁶ The general said in a statement broadcast by Al Jazeera television. "According to what I'm feeling, and according to the feelings of my partner commanders and soldiers... I announce our support and our peaceful backing to the youth revolution. We are going to fulfil our duties in preserving security and stability." Following his statement dozens of officers of various ranks lined up in central Sana'a to pledge their allegiance to the revolution. Also Mohammed Ali Muhssein, commander of the eastern region, abandons the regime.

⁶ A 2005 US diplomatic cable published by Wikileaks said: "Ali Mohsen would likely face domestic as well as international opposition if he sought the presidency... Yemenis generally view him as cynical and self-interested." Then US ambassador Thomas Krajeski wrote that Mohsen was "a major beneficiary of diesel smuggling in recent years (and) also appears to have amassed a fortune in the smuggling of arms, food staples, and consumer products."

Now the Yemeni crisis has escalated into a fight for power between two of Yemen's most powerful families: Saleh's and the Al-Ahmar family.

Yemen's ambassadors to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Egypt, Indonesia, India, Algeria and Spain defect, joining scores of government officials, top security and army officers who join the protesters and support their demands for peaceful transition.

Tanks are deployed in Yemen's capital, Sana'a, apparently to defend key points including the presidential palace, defence ministry and central bank.

Syria - Thousands of protesters gather in the Syrian town of Daraa for the funeral of 23-year-old Raed al-Kerad – the fifth person killed in the city since the arrest began on 18 March. They shouted “God, Syria, freedom”. An 11-year-old boy dies after inhaling tear gas.

Protests are also reported in the town of Jassem, an agricultural town 30 km west of Daraa.

Bahrain - King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of Bahrain states that a "foreign plot" against his country has been foiled with the help of Gulf Arab forces. He thanked troops brought in from neighbouring countries to help end increasing unrest after weeks of protests.

Kuwaiti navy vessels with a number of ground forces on board dock off the Bahraini coasts, as part of the Joint Peninsula Shield troops deployed in the kingdom.

March 22, 2011

Libya - Renewed allied air strikes over Libya overnight. Coalition cruise missiles attack the Bousseta naval base.

There are reports of continued fighting between pro-Gaddafi forces and anti-Gaddafi inhabitants in the cities of Ajdabiya, Misrata, Zintan, near the Tunisian border, and in the town of Yafran, south-west of Tripoli.

The allied coalition's Operation Odyssey Dawn in Libya is joined by Romania which agrees to provide a frigate and 207 naval troops for three months to enforce a UN arms embargo on Libya.

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud at a meeting with British Prime Minister David Cameron in London expresses strong support for the aims of the UNSCR 1973 resolution on Libya, “and the steps being taken by the international community to enforce it.”

Bursts of anti-aircraft fire across Tripoli heralded the start of an apparent fourth night of attacks shortly after 20:15 local time.

Yemen - In Yemen two soldiers reportedly died in clashes between the army and the elite Republican Guard in the south-eastern city of Mukalla.

Demonstrators at Taghyeer Square in Sana'a resumed calls for an immediate end to Saleh's three-decade rule. "Leave, leave!" thousands chanted.

In an address on state television president Saleh told defecting generals that they risk dragging the country into a "bloody civil war," and signaled his terms for leaving office. The president is "ready to leave power by the end of the year after a new government based on parliamentary election is formed," his press secretary, Ahmed al-Sufi, said.

Syria - Hundreds of people march in four southern Syrian towns, Daraa, Nawa, Inkhil and Jasim demanding freedom, the fifth straight day of protests against Syria's ruling elite. There are reports of demonstrations in rural areas around Damascus. Faisal Kalthoum, governor of Daraa, is dismissed and the local head of political security transferred.

Jordan - King Abdullah of Jordan sends a letter to prime Minister Marouf Bakhit directing him to expedite reform plans and setting deadlines for some aspects of the process. The King singles out corruption, political reform, independence of universities, press freedom, economic reform, social justice, independence of the judiciary and equality among citizens as the major issues that need immediate attention and swift action to address. He tells the prime minister that he would not accept groundless excuses for delays in implementing the directives, and urged all Jordanians to work as one team "and not to waste the chance of moving forward towards a better future".⁷

Bahrain - Bahia al-Aradi, the first woman killed after Bahraini government crackdown against the opposition a week earlier, is buried. The protesters shout "Death, death to Al-Khalifa". When Shiites started rallying in February they were asking King Hamad for rights, jobs and Cabinet changes, now demand his overthrow.

Oman – The Omani army clears roadblocks erected by people protesting over private sector pay at two roundabouts in the industrial city of Sohar. "The military asked us to protest

⁷ Highlights from King Abdullah's letter to prime minister Marouf Bakhit

- ⤴ Elimination of corruption and suing the corrupt in transparent measures that give the public access to results of probes
- ⤴ Issuing monthly report on work of Anti-Corruption Commission
- ⤴ Completing all laws governing political action on time
- ⤴ Ending interference in student unions and freedom of political beliefs at universities
- ⤴ Drafting a strategy that ensures professional, freedom and responsible performance of all outlets, within two months
- ⤴ Supporting artists, writers and creative Jordanians
- ⤴ Taking practical steps within three months to revive the economy and create jobs
- ⤴ Ensuring social justice through fair distribution of development gains
- ⤴ Taking measures within one month to prepare the environment to attract foreign investments, especially from Arab countries
- ⤴ Proceeding with policies aimed to guarantee judicial independence

peacefully and to not block the road or damage properties,” said one of several dozen protesters who had moved to the side of a main highway.

Saudi Arabia – The Ministry of Municipal and Rural affairs announces that men-only municipal elections to elect half the members of local councils would be held on 22 September 2011.

March 23, 2011

Libya - Rear Admiral Gerard Hueber, US chief of staff for the Libya mission reports that in the last 24 hours allied aircraft had flown 175 sorties, of these 113 flights were by US aircrafts.

The commander of British aircraft operating over Libya, Air Vice Marshal Greg Bagwell says, Gaddafi's air force "no longer exists as a fighting force..." The allies can now operate "with near impunity" over the skies of Libya.

Ships from NATO nations begin patrolling off the Libyan coast to enforce a UN arms embargo against Col Gaddafi's regime. Six vessels took part in the first day of patrols.

Syria - At least six people are killed after security forces open fire on people camping outside the Omari mosque in the centre of the Syrian town of Daraa. The BBC publishes an account by witnesses who describe how shortly after midnight the power supply and telephone lines to the Old City area in Daraa, where the mosque is located, were cut and police released tear gas and fired live ammunition at protesters camping around the Omari mosque. Ali Ghassab al-Mahamid, a doctor who had gone to help victims of the violence, was killed. Six more bodies were found later in the day. Heavy shooting rattled Daraa throughout the day. Police shot another three people protesting in the city center after dusk. The total death toll since the start of protests now stands at 22. As the casualties mounted, people from the nearby villages of Inkhil, Jasim, Khirbet Ghazaleh and al-Harrah tried to march on Daraa in the evening but security forces opened fire as they approached.

Yemen - Yemen's parliament approves a sweeping set of emergency laws giving broader powers of arrest and censorship to the president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, despite growing calls from opponents demanding he quit to make way for a military-backed democratic transition. The emergency law, last evoked during Yemen's 1994 civil war, suspends the constitution, allows for greater media censorship, bans street protests and gives security agencies arbitrary powers to arrest and detain suspects without judicial process. Only 161 of the 301 members of parliament attended the vote, with those present approving the 30-day emergency law through a chaotic show of hands.

Opposition MPs, along with dozens of members of Saleh's General People's Congress, boycotted the session, rejecting its "unconstitutional" measures. The approval of the emergency laws came as talks between Saudi Arabia and Major General Ali Mohsen Al-Ahmar, a top Yemeni commander who abandoned the president on 21 March failed to yield a clear transition of power.

Algeria - Police in the Oued Koriche suburb of Algiers use tear gas to disperse a crowd of young men who threw stones and petrol bombs to try to stop bulldozers demolishing dozens of illegally built homes. The estate, which has a population of 5,000, is near Bab el Oued, home to the protest movement in Algeria.

Oman - Oman's biggest manufacturing companies, at the Rusayl Industrial Estate, 60 km north of Muscat, agree to workers' demands by increasing their pay and benefits. Workers who earn less than 500 rials a month will get a salary increase of 50 rials, while those paid more than 500 rials will get a 30-rial rise. The employers also agreed to provide medical insurance to all employees and to allow a two-day weekend. The agreement comes after workers on the industrial estate held a strike, stopping production at more than 300 manufacturing units.

Protesters set up a tent camp at a government complex in Muscat, saying they will not leave until several ministers they accuse of corruption leave. Hundreds of demonstrators demanded the ouster of the justice, housing and labour ministers and the attorney general.

Jordan - Some 500 mostly young Jordanians set up a protest camp in a main square in the capital to press demands for the ouster of the prime minister and wider public freedoms. The group which includes left-wing activists, Islamists and political independents, call themselves the March 24 Movement. The group, largely mobilised through Facebook and other internet networking websites, claims that promised reforms have not been pushed through and have called on King Abdullah II to intervene and fast-track political change.

King Abdullah's letter sent the previous day to prime minister Marouf Bakhit is published by the Jordanian media.

Egypt - Egypt's stock exchange re-opens after 38 day of closure and the main index tumbles 9.93 percent.

March 24, 2011

Libya - Allied air strikes hit targets in Libya during night.

A French warplane fires an air-to-ground missile at a Libyan military plane and destroys it just after it landed at Misrata air force base.

Nearly 12 hours of allied air strikes finally brake the Libyan regime's five-day bloody assault on the key rebel-held town of Misrata. Residents said the aerial bombardment destroyed tanks and artillery and sent many of Muammar Gaddafi's forces fleeing from Misrata, ending a siege and attack by the regime that cost nearly 100 lives from random shelling, snipers and bitter street fighting.

Syria - Agence France Presse reports that around 20,000 people have gathered in the Syrian town of Daraa for the burial of victims shot dead yesterday.

Syrian president's spokeswoman, Buthaina Shaaban, states that the Syrian government will consider lifting a state of emergency in place since 1963. It will also prepare new laws for political parties, media and respond to "legitimate demands". The concessions are announced ahead of planned demonstrations tomorrow.

Buthaina Shaaban also announces a 30 per cent salary increase for all government employees.

Yemen - Associated Press reports that presidential guards loyal to president Ali Abdullah Saleh clashed in the town of Mukalla with army units backing opposition groups.

British government urges all British citizens to leave Yemen "without delay" and reduces the British embassy in Sana'a to a core staff. Contingency plans are in place to evacuate British nationals.

March 25, 2011

Syria - Funerals take place in the Syrian city of Daraa, for some of the 25 protesters shot dead by security forces on 23 March. Police start shooting and use tear gas to disperse a crowd of thousands after people lit a fire under a statue of late president Hafez al-Assad, the father of Syria's current president, Bashar al-Assad. Reports say that more than 10 were killed when troops fired on people coming towards Daraa from nearby regions to support the people inside the city.

Demonstrations are also reported in the city of Latakia, where one person is reported killed.

In the capital, Damascus hundreds marched on King Faisal Street chanting: "Peaceful, Peaceful, God, Syria, Freedom". The protest is broken up by security forces and many people are arrested. Another protest reported to the BBC by an eyewitness took place around al-Rifai near Qasar Sousah Square. There are protests in various suburbs of Damascus.

In the town of Hama, in the central Syria, where the elder Assad put down an Islamist revolt in 1982 at a cost of many thousands of lives, residents said people streamed through the streets after weekly prayers chanting "Freedom is ringing out!" - a slogan heard during recent demonstrations in other parts of the Arab world.

In Al-Tall, near Damascus, about 1,000 people rallied to show their support for the Darra protesters and chanted slogans denouncing members of the ruling Asad family calling relatives of the president "thieves."

Al Jazeera TV reports that security forces had killed 20 people in the town of Sanamein.

Syrian authorities release 260 prisoners, mostly Islamists, from Saydnaya jail. Most of those released have completed at least three-quarters of their sentences and are entitled to be freed.

Some 4,000 people demonstrate in the town of Douma on the outskirts of Damascus when, around midnight electricity was cut and the protesters came under attack.

According to a report issued by Amnesty International, 55 people have been killed in Syria since protests began.

Yemen - Tens of thousands rallied in fresh demonstrations in Yemen to renew their demands for the resignation of Ali Abdullah Saleh, the country's increasingly isolated president. Protesters staged what they called a "Day of Departure" demonstration. Tens of thousands of protesters thronged the main square near Sanaa University where they have been camped since 21 February.

Saudi Arabia - Hundreds of Saudi Shiites staged a protest in two villages close to the main Shiite center of Qatif shortly after midday and afternoon prayers. Demonstrators called for political freedoms and an end to what they call sectarian discrimination against Saudi Arabia's Shiite Muslim majority by the absolute Sunni monarchy.

Bahrain - Small protests take place in two Shiite villages in Bahrain despite a ban under martial law imposed last week. A few hundred protesters managed a short rally in the Shiite village of Diraz, shouting "down with the regime" as women swathed in black waved Bahraini flags and held up copies of the Quran. But they fled when around 100 riot police fired tear gas and tried to chase them down. In the village of al-Dair, police fired rounds of tear gas to disperse around 100 protesters who had marched toward a main road next to a runway at Bahrain International Airport.

The Financial Times also reports protests of about 400 people in al-Rabiyah after Friday prayers and some 600 in al-Awamiyah, after mid-afternoon prayers. The protesters who demanded the release of 9 prisoners held without trial since 1996 carry Saudi and Bahraini flags.

According to *The Wall Street Journal*, in the mostly Shiite village of Al Musala, hundreds of protesters formed makeshift barricades of upturned dumpsters and concrete blocks. Police entered the outskirts of the village, firing bird shot and sending protesters scattering into side streets and doorways. In nearby Sannabis, witnesses said riot police swept into the village firing bird shot and tear gas to disperse protesters. Sporadic pops from police antiriot weapons could be heard from the neighbouring Shiite villages, while a police helicopter circled above.

Jordan - One person dies in hospital after Jordanian security forces use batons and spray water to disperse a clash between pro-monarchy and pro-reform demonstrators at the Interior Ministry Circle, (also known as Jamal Abdul Nasser Circle), in Amman. The dead person was identified as 57-year-old Khairi Saad Jamil who officials said died at hospital of a heart attack. But a medical source told AFP the man had "received blows to his chest, and his teeth were broken." ABC News reports that 130 people were injured in the clashes. According to ABC The clashes erupted after around 200 government supporters hurled large stones at more than 2,000 young demonstrators from different movements, including the powerful Islamist opposition, urging regime reforms and more efforts to fight corruption. Sixteen members of the recently formed National Dialogue Committee, comprising of 53 members, announced their resignation in protest at the way the authorities handled the situation.

Libya - A Qatari Mirage 2000-5 jet joins a similar French air force plane to patrol a sector of Libyan air space. Qatar becomes the first Arab country to begin patrolling a U.N.-backed no-fly zone aimed at preventing Gaddafi's forces from attacking civilians.

The UAE commits six F-16 and six Mirage aircraft to the west-led military campaign to enforce a no-fly zone over Libya. It becomes the second Arab state after Qatar to join the UN-authorized mission.

March 26, 2011

Libya - Libyan anti-Gaddafi forces, backed by allied air raids, seize control of the frontline oil town of Ajdabiya from pro-Gaddafi's troops. Gaddafi loyalists seized the town

last week as they advanced east to quell an uprising now in its fifth week. The breakthrough came after a seventh night of bombardment by allies enforcing a UN-mandated no-fly zone.

Large explosions are heard in the Libyan capital Tripoli. According to witnesses a military radar site was on fire in Tajura – one of the city's suburb.

Reuters, quoting US sources, reports that during the past 24-hours coalition forces fired 16 Tomahawk cruise missiles and flew 153 air sorties attacking Gaddafi's artillery, mechanised forces and command and control infrastructure.

French fighter aircraft destroy five Libyan Galeb fighter jets and two MI-35 helicopters in an attack on Gaddafi's forces. A French spokesman says the aircraft were caught on the ground at Misrata air base preparing to launch attacks in the area of the rebel-held town. Misrata is Libya's third biggest city and only 200 km from Tripoli.

Anti-Gaddafi forces seized control of the oil port of Brega, 70 km west along the Mediterranean coast from Ajdabiyah.

Col Gaddafi orders a universal promotion for everyone in the army and police "for their heroic and courageous fight against the crusader colonialist assault," and proposes arming civilian volunteers.

Neither Gaddafi nor his sons have been shown on state television since the Libyan leader made a speech from his compound in Tripoli on 23 March.

Syria - Thousands of mourners in the village of Tafas, near the southern Syrian town of Daraa, burned the local Baath Party headquarters and a police station during the funeral of Kamal Baradan, a protester killed a day earlier.

Reuters reports that at least two people are killed in the port city of Latakia after security forces opened fire on protesters trying to torch the Baath party building." The latest killing brings the number of death protesters, during the last two days, to six.

Amnesty International put the death toll in and around Daraa in the past week at at least 55.

Yemen - Yemen's foreign minister Abubakr al-Qirbi, and a close ally of the president, confirms that agreement is close on a transfer of power from president, Ali Abdullah Saleh. However, subsequently presidential spokesman, Ahmed al-Sufi, states that opposition demands for an immediate transfer of power were unacceptable. According to him Saleh will quit later this year but protesters must go now. Reuters reports that the talks involve Yemen's vice-president, the US ambassador and tribal and military leaders who have defected to the opposition. The BBC correspondent in Yemen indicates several obstacles that need to be

overcome for the crisis to be resolved - the biggest being the actual structure of the power transfer. Another set of issues relates to two relatives of president Saleh, particularly unpopular with the protesters – his son Ahmed who is in charge of the Republican Guards, and his nephew and son-in-law Yahia who heads the security forces.

March 27, 2011

Libya - Libyan TV reports more air strikes overnight at Sabha in central Libya, but there was no independent confirmation. The TV also said there had been air strikes near Col Gaddafi's power base of Sirte, on the Mediterranean coast east of Tripoli.

Anti-Gaddafi fighters reach the town of and Uqayla and push further westwards. AFP reports that they also control the key oil town of Ras Lanuf.

Bloomberg reports that in the 24 hours ending at 11 a.m. Washington time on 26 March, coalition forces flew 167 sorties, or military flights, over Libya, including 88 designed to strike targets on the ground, according to an e-mail from Navy Captain Darryn James, a Pentagon spokesman. Since the Libyan operation began, the U.S. has flown 884 sorties, while coalition allies have flown 540, he said.

The North Atlantic Treaty Alliance takes over military control of allied forces operation over Libya. The mission is restricted to the United Nations mandate to protect civilians and enforce an arms embargo.

Powerful explosions in Tripoli are reported overnight.

Yemen - Agence France Presse reports an interview of US Defense Secretary, Robert Gates, with ABC television. Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh's eventual fall or his replacement by a weaker leader would pose "a real problem" for US counter-terrorism work – says Gates. Saleh's government and the Yemeni security services have helped the United States in fighting Al-Qaeda's Yemeni branch. "I think it is a real concern because the most active and at this point perhaps the most aggressive branch of Al-Qaeda, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, operates out of Yemen," Gates states. "And we've had counter-terrorism cooperation with president Saleh and the Yemeni security services... So if that government collapses, or is replaced by one who is dramatically more weak, then I think we'd face some additional challenges out of Yemen, there's no question about it. It's a real problem," he adds.

Syria - US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, speaking on the CBS talk show "Face The Nation," describes president Assad of Syria as a "reformer" and rules out Western military intervention seen in Libya. "What's been happening there the last few weeks is deeply concerning," Clinton says. "But there's a difference between calling out aircraft and

indiscriminately strafing and bombing your own cities, [and] police actions that frankly have exceeded the use of force that any of us would want to see."

Saudi Arabia - Human Rights Watch publishes report stating that the "scale of arrests [rose] dramatically during the preceding two weeks", up to about 160 protestors and critics being held without charge.

March 28, 2011

Libya - Libyan rebel forces advanced westward with support from NATO air strikes targeting Sirte (population 140,000), port city and the home town of Muammar Qaddafi. Sirte lies 450 km east of Libya's capital - about halfway along the coast between Tripoli and Benghazi.

BBC reports that in the last two days a number of coastal communities and important oil installations, including Ras Lanuf, Brega, Uqayla and Bin Jawad, have fallen to the rebels since they took control of Ajdabiya.

According to the BBC, Britain's Ministry of Defence said its Tornado GR4 aircraft carried out strikes on ammunition bunkers on the morning of 28 March in the Sabha region, in the southern Libya desert. "Initial reports suggest that the bunkers have been destroyed and that the Libyan government has been denied ammunition it uses to threaten civilians in the north of the country," the ministry said in a statement.

Reuters reports that rebels have seized the town of Nawfaliyah, west of Bin Jawad, extending their advance towards Sirte, some 120km away.

Qatar becomes the first Arab nation to recognise the rebel leadership - the Transitional National Council (TNC) - as the official representatives of the Libyan people.

The Gulf Cooperation Council has affirmed Qatar's decision to recognise the Libyan opposition's National Council as the country's "sole legitimate" representative. "The Secretary General of the GCC confirmed that Qatar's recognition of the transitional council as the only legitimate representative of the Libyan people comes in line with the decisions of the GCC with Qatar's stance supporting the choices of the Libyan people and their protection from the continuous brutality of the regime ... The Libyan system has lost its legitimacy."

Syria - Syrian troops are deployed in force in the northern city of Latakia, 350 km north-west of the capital, where at least 12 people have died in a wave of unrest that has shaken the regime.

In Syria police reportedly fire tear gas to disperse crowds marching in the southern town of Daraa.

Yemen - A series of huge explosions at an ammunition plant in the town of Jaar in southern Yemen has kills at least 78 people. The factory was raided by Islamist militants on 27 March amid clashes with government forces. At the time of the blasts residents were in the plant looting ammunition. The dead included women and children. Opposition leader Yassin Noman tells the BBC there had been a "collapse of security" in the country.

US ambassador to Yemen, Gerald Feierstein, holds talks with General Ali Mohsen Al-Ahmar, commander of the military northwest region which covers Sana'a, and Sadiq Al-Ahmar, head of the Hashid tribal federation, the largest in deeply tribal Yemen. Both leading figures have previously defected to the opposition.

The Norwegian daily *Aftenposten*, publishes a WikiLeaks cable containing information that Yemen's president Ali Abdallah Saleh tried to get Ali Mohsen Al-Ahmar, now a leading dissident officer, killed last year by tricking Saudi forces into bombing his headquarters. "In the winter of 2010," Saudi fighter jets bombing Shiite rebellion targets in Yemen were directed to bomb a building that had been described as insurgent headquarters." But the mission was aborted at the last minute when pilots realised that they were about to bomb the headquarters of General Ahmar.

Egypt - Egypt's ruling military council approves a law opening the door for the formation of new parties that will compete in the parliamentary elections to be held in September 2011.⁸

Bahrain - Bahrain's leading Shiite opposition party, Wefaq, states that 250 people have been detained and 44 others went missing since a security crackdown crushed weeks of protests.

March 29 2011

⁸ According to Reuters the law stipulates that:

The parties' principles, programmes, activities and selection of leaders and members must not be based on religion, geography or race. There should be no discrimination on the basis of sex, language, ethnicity or religion.

Parties must not establish military or paramilitary wings, must not be part of any foreign political organisation and must declare their principles, goals and financial means.

Parties must provide written notification of their intention to begin work to a parties committee made up of judges and which will be chaired by the head of the court of cassation.

The notification must be signed by 5,000 members from 10 governorates, with at least 300 members from each governorate.

Libya - The BBC reports that pro-government forces, using heavy weapons, intensified their attacks on anti-Gaddafi forces, driving them back tens of kilometres over ground they had taken in recent days. The rebels have lost Bin Jawad and most have now fled even further east past the town of Ras Lanuf. Initially they reached Nawfaliya, 120km from Col Gaddafi's birthplace of Sirte, but pulled back to Bin Jawad, some 30km further east.

Misrata, closer to Tripoli, has also come under heavy attack and blasts have been reported in the capital.

A series of powerful explosions rocked Tripoli and state television said several targets in the Libyan capital had come under attack from "crusader aggressors."

At the invitation of the British Foreign Secretary, William Hague, the London Conference on Libya takes place. It is attended by the Secretary General of the UN, Ban Ki Moon; Secretary General of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu; Secretary General of NATO, Anders Fogh Rasmussen; EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton; the prime minister of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad Bin Jaber Al Thani; Deputy prime ministers of Croatia and Malta; the foreign ministers of Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Iraq, Jordan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Morocco, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, United Arab Emirates; USA Secretary of State; the ambassadors of the Arab League, Kuwait, Lebanon, Netherlands, Tunisia; the UN Special Envoy for Libya; and as observer the Australian High Commissioner, Archbishop Antonio Mennini (representing the Holy See), and a representative of the World Bank. The Conference agrees to set up a contact group to coordinate political efforts on Libya's future, which would hold its first meeting in Qatar soon. "We urge Gaddafi and his people to leave and not to pose any more bloodshed," said Qatari prime minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim al-Thani, adding that the offer of an exit might only be on the table for a few days.

British Foreign Secretary statement following the London Conference on Libya.

This has been an important day for the future of Libya. We have seen two key developments: First, Foreign Ministers and leaders from over 40 countries and organisations including the UN, the Arab League, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, the European Union and NATO, met for the London Conference on Libya.

I will list our key conclusions in a moment, but we have certainly widened and deepened the coalition, with a new pledge of support to NATO operations from Sweden, a

growing number of countries committed to implementing the UN Resolutions on Libya, and agreement to a new Contact Group on Libya.

And second, Libya's Interim Transitional National Council have launched, here in London, their vision for a future Libya that is free, democratic and unified today. We have said throughout that we want the Libyan people to be in the lead in determining their future – and today was a significant milestone in that process.

It comes at a time when the forces of the Qadhafi regime continue to shell Libyan civilians in Misurata, Zintan and Rejban in an indiscriminate and brutal manner, underlining why our efforts to protect Libyan citizens must and will continue.

I have here a copy of a letter we have received today from a member of the local council in Misurata, thanking Britain and the allies for their action to relieve the people of Misurata through targeted strikes and the enforcement of the No Fly Zone and for coming to the aid of the Libyan people, as he puts it, in their “most needy of hours”.

He says, in his own words, that the local council can “testify for the effectiveness and the accuracy of those strikes and confirm that there has been not a single case of civilian injury let alone death in and around Misurata” as a result of coalition activity. He goes on to “salute the men and women in uniform who have put their lives on the line to save the lives of Libyans”, saying that “we are forever grateful”.

My colleague Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamed Bin Jassim of Qatar is one of our key allies in implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1973. His country is showing great leadership and commitment both in the skies above Libya and at political gatherings like these, and indeed we welcome the fact that Qatar has agreed to host the first meeting of the new Contact Group on Libya which we agreed to form today. Before I turn over to him, and as Chairman of today's Conference, I will now set out our conclusions today in more detail.

Implementing UNSCRs 1970 and 1973

Participants today have reaffirmed the importance of full and swift implementation of UNSCRs 1970 and 1973 (2011). Participants reaffirmed their strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Libya. They have reaffirmed their commitment to enforce the restrictions and sanctions on the regime and to act to prevent the supply and operations of mercenaries. We are working together to ensure that all states implement these Resolutions, of which Qadhafi still stands in breach. We agreed to consider pursuing, in the UN and regional organisations, additional sanctions on individuals

and entities associated with the regime. Participants here today are implementing these measures as a clear message to Qadhafi that he cannot attack civilians with impunity.

UNSCR 1973 (2011) authorises all necessary measures to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack, while excluding a foreign occupation force of any form. A no-fly zone is in place over Libya and is preventing Qadhafi from attacking civilians from the air. We have a broad based coalition to implement the military actions mandated by UNSCR 1973 (2011). So far, the action we have taken has been successful in protecting countless civilians from Qadhafi's forces and in effectively wiping out Qadhafi's air capability. Participants paid tribute to the bravery and professionalism of military personnel from all contributors in the coalition.

Current and potential contributors to military operations, including NATO Allies, also met to underline their commitment to the necessity of military action to implement fully the provisions of UNSCRs 1970 and 1973 (2011). They reaffirmed their unified support for this course of action through making effective and sustained contributions to military operations until the international community's goals are secured. Participants, including regional states, welcomed NATO's contribution in agreeing to take on command and control of all military operations to enforce the arms embargo, the no-fly zone, and other actions needed, as authorised in UNSCR 1973 (2011), to protect civilians.

Participants here today have reaffirmed their support through military, logistical, financial or humanitarian contributions and pledges in support of the people of Libya. UNSCR 1973 (2011) laid out very clear conditions that must be met, including the establishment of an immediate ceasefire, a halt to all attacks on civilians and full humanitarian access to those in need. Participants agreed to continue their efforts until all conditions are fulfilled. The Libyan regime will be judged by its actions and not its words.

Preparing for Libya's future

We agreed that it is not for any of the participants here today to choose the government of Libya: only the Libyan people can do that. Participants agreed that Qadhafi and his regime have completely lost legitimacy and will be held accountable for their actions. The Libyan people must be free to determine their own future. Participants recognised the need for all Libyans, including the Interim Transitional National Council, tribal leaders and others, to come together to begin an inclusive political process, consistent with the relevant UNSCRs, through which they can choose their own future. We call on the international community to support this process, working closely with the UN Secretary General's Special

Representative Abdel-Elah Mohamed Al-Khatib. Regional actors, particularly Libya's fellow African countries and Arab neighbours, have an important role to play.

Participants today are concerned for the wellbeing of up to 80,000 internally displaced persons. We have agreed priorities for a humanitarian response. We have also agreed on the need to develop and coordinate the international approach to ensure the availability of sufficient resources to meet the humanitarian needs of the Libyan people. We noted the offer of Qatar to facilitate the sale of Libyan oil where consistent with international law, in particular the provisions of UNSCRs 1970 and 1973 and other relevant UN resolutions, and to support the people of Libya in using the proceeds to help meet their humanitarian needs. Learning the lessons from the past, we agreed on the need for priorities for long-term support. Activities to stabilise the situation will need to start early and be part of an integrated and comprehensive international response.

Taking forward support from the International community for the people of Libya. To take this work forward, participants of the conference agreed to establish the Libya Contact Group. This Contact Group will meet to: provide leadership and overall political direction to the international effort in close coordination with the UN, AU, Arab League, OIC, and EU to support Libya; provide a forum for coordinating the international response on Libya; and provide a focal point in the international community for contact with the Libyan parties. Qatar has agreed to convene the first meeting of the Group as soon as possible. Thereafter, the chairmanship will rotate between the countries of the region and beyond it. The North Atlantic Council, meeting alongside its coalition partners, will provide the executive political direction to NATO operations. Participants welcomed the UN Secretary-General's offer to lead the coordination of humanitarian assistance and planning for longer-term stabilisation support. Turkey, other key regional players and international agencies offered to support this work and take it forward with the Contact Group.

So we have achieved a great deal in a very short time to save lives in Libya and to create the space for the Libyan people to begin to determine their future.

Much work remains to be done, and the nations gathered in London today have demonstrated that we have the will, determination and commitment to continue to act for as long as the threat to the people of Libya remains.

Admiral James Stavridis, NATO's supreme allied commander for Europe and commander of U.S. European Command, in testimony to a U.S. Senate hearing, states that intelligence on the rebel forces battling Gaddafi has shown "flickers" of al-Qaeda or Hezbollah presence, but there is still no detailed picture of the emerging Libyan opposition.

"We are examining very closely the content, composition, the personalities, who are the leaders of these opposition forces... At this point I don't have detail sufficient to say there is a significant al- Qaeda presence."

Independent satellite television channel Libya TV is launched from Dohra, Qatar.

Former Libyan foreign minister Ali Abdussalam Treki, defects to Egypt.

Syria – The government of prime minister Muhammad Naji Otari resigns. Otari has been in charge of the government since September 2003 and survived at least four cabinet reshuffles over the last eight years.

Thousands gather in support of president Bashar al-Assad. Syrian state television shows people in the Syrian capital Damascus and in Aleppo, Hama and Hasaka waving the national flag, pictures of Assad and chanting "God, Syria, Bashar". There are reports that many of the supporters had been mobilised by the government.

More than two hundred protesters gather in Daraa chanting "God, Syria, and Freedom" and "O Hauran rise up in revolt", a reference to the plateau where Daraa is located.

Yemen - Scoffing at pressure to quit at a time of growing insecurity, as highlighted by the blast at an ammunitions plant in southern Yemen, Saleh challenged his opponents to leave the country instead, in remarks published on 29 March he said: "I tell those who appear in the media asking others to leave, that it is up to them to go."

Bahrain – Bahrain's parliament accepts the resignation of 11 members of the largest Shiite opposition party, Al-Wefaq, including its leader Abduljalil Khalil. The vote clears the way for the possible prosecution of the outspoken former MPs now stripped of parliamentary immunity. Al-Wefaq members resigned en masse in protest at the use force against demonstrators. A vote on whether to accept the resignation of another seven members of parliament was delayed. Al-Wefaq" with 18 seats makes up the largest bloc in the 40-member parliament.

Jordan – Agence France Presse reports that Jordan will ban government supporters from demonstrating in the capital as King Abdullah II vowed to fight attempts to "sabotage" the country's reform drive. "From now on protests by loyalists can only be held outside Amman to avoid clashes with the opposition."

March 30, 2011

Libya – Libyan rebels pull out of the oil town of Ras Lanuf under heavy bombardment from Muammar Gaddafi's forces, showing up their weakness without Western

air strikes to tip the scales in their favour. By the middle of the afternoon agencies report that the anti-Gaddafi forces have lost the key oil port of Ras Lanuf and the nearby town of Bin Jawad, and are also in full retreat from Brega. The BBC's Ben Brown, in Ajdabiya, says that the rebels are essentially now in retreat as they simply cannot compete with the discipline and fire-power of Col Gaddafi's forces.

The United Kingdom expels five Libyan diplomats, including the embassy's military attache, because they "could pose a threat to the security" of the United Kingdom.

Nicaragua names former foreign minister Miguel d'Escoto to represent Libya at the United Nations after a senior Libyan envoy Ali Abdussalam Treki was reportedly denied a visa. Treki was to replace Abdulrahman Shalgham, the Libyan UN envoy who turned against Gaddafi. The Libyan government had asked the UN to no longer recognise Shalgham.

Libyan foreign minister Musa Kusa arrives in the United Kingdom on a specially arranged flight organised by the British intelligence service. The Foreign Office in London issued the following statement in the evening: "We can confirm that Musa Kusa arrived at Farnborough Airport [in the south of England] on 30 March from Tunisia. He travelled here under his own free will. He has told us he is resigning his post. We are discussing this with him and we will release further detail in due course. Musa Kusa is one of the most senior figures in Qadhafi's government and his role was to represent the regime internationally - something that he is no longer willing to do. We encourage those around Qadhafi to abandon him and embrace a better future for Libya that allows political transition and real reform that meets the aspirations of the Libyan people." Koussa flew to London from the Tunisian resort of Djerba. He reportedly arrived in Tunisia for a "private visit" on 28 March. He was Libya's intelligence chief 1994- 2009 and is implicated in past Libyan terror attacks on the West. But he changed tack after 9/11, leading cooperation with US/British intelligence in providing information on Al Qaeda, and in decommissioning Libya's nuclear programme in 2003. He is the architect of a dramatic shift in Libya's foreign policy that brought the country back to the international community after years of sanctions.

The Guardian reports that a meeting had taken place between Mohammed Ismail, a senior aide to Gaddafi's influential son Saif al-Islam, and British officials in London. He apparently had visited family members in London, and Britain had "taken the opportunity to send some very strong messages about the Gaddafi regime." Ismail is a fixer who has been used by the Gaddafi family to negotiate arms deals and has considerable contacts in the west.

Syria - President Bashar al-Assad finally delivers the much advertised address to the Syrian parliament. He fails to announce any serious concessions including the much expected

end to 50 years of emergency law. "Syria is a target of a big plot from outside... We will defeat those behind a plot against our country." - he said

Within hours of his speech the Associated Press (AP) news agency reported that troops had opened fire during a protest in the northern city of Latakia.

Bahrain - Bahrain's Shiite opposition head Sheikh Ali Salman, who heads the Al-Wefaq party, warns Iran and Saudi Arabia against using his country as a "battlefield" in a proxy war. Salman urges Iran to keep out of the state's affairs and calls on Saudi troops to leave the country.

Bahrain's foreign minister Shaikh Khaled bin Ahmad Al Khalifa, renews accusations that Lebanon's militant group Hezbollah, which is backed by Teheran, was "training" regime opponents in the country. He says that Manama had "proof" of "plotting with Hezbollah" and of training in Lebanon on how to organise mass protests.

Yemen – Hundreds of thousands of protesters take to the streets in several Yemeni cities.

The death toll from explosions at an ammunition plant in southern Yemen rises to 150.

Egypt – The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces issues a decree establishing an interim constitution until a permanent document is drafted. Presenting the interim document, Maj. General Mamdouh Shaheen, a member of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, states that "The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces will continue to carry out its duties, as outlined in this decree, until a new parliament is elected [in September 2011]... Then the new parliament will take powers including legislation. When a new president is elected, [in November 2011] he will take over the remaining powers of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces." The interim, 62 article constitution, the one suspended when president Hosni Mubarak stepped down on 11 February. Much of it remains the same, with the addition of about eight amendments approved by voters in the referendum on 19 March. The document preserves a constitutional article stating that Islam is the state's religion and the "principles of the Islamic Sharia are the primary source of legislation." No political parties could be established on "religious basis." It also keeps a quota that allocates 50 per cent of parliament's seats to "workers and peasants."

March 31, 2011

Libya – The anti-Gaddafi forces suffer another setback. After making significant gains towards Sirte, they have now been pushed back, retreating from the oil port of Brega (which has changed hands six times in as many weeks) towards Ajdabiya.

Fierce fighting continues in Misrata to the west and Uqayla and Brega to the east.

Yemen - Hamid Al-Ahmar, of the Islamist Islah party, a powerful figure in both tribal and political circles in Yemen, tells the BBC of opposition plans to escalate anti-government protests. According to him the president and his family "have no immediate future in Yemen. They should leave power, they should leave the country for their own safety". Islah is regarded by many observers outside and inside Yemen as a dangerous force, with links to al-Qaeda.

Syria – The Syrian state news agency Sana reports that president Bashar al-Assad has directed a legal committee to "study new laws on national security and counter-terrorism, in order to pave the way for ending the state of emergency." It is to produce its report by 25 April 2011.

April 1, 2011

Libya – *The Guardian* reports: "Gaddafi regime starts talks with the west to end conflict." The report states that Gaddafi has initiated a concerted effort to open lines of communication with western governments in an attempt to bring the conflict in the country to an end. Libya's former prime minister, Abdul Ati al-Obeidi, tells Channel 4 TV news: "We are trying to talk to the British, the French and the Americans to stop the killing of people. We are trying to find a mutual solution." The newspaper also cites a spokesman for the British prime minister, David Cameron, saying that British officials have been in contact with a number of Libyan officials in recent weeks in behind-the-scenes diplomacy. He stressed that Britain had not been negotiating any possible trade-offs aimed at sealing Gaddafi's exit from power. "There are no deals."

British media report that an envoy of Gaddafi visited London in the past few days to meet with UK authorities. The BBC and other media say the envoy was Mohammed Ismail, a senior aide to Gaddafi's son, Saif al-Islam, who is British-educated and has been among the most visible of the Libyan leader's children. The reports say Ismail is believed to be back in Libya following his talks with British officials.

Syria – At least 15 people are killed during large demonstrations in the Damascus suburb of Douma when men dressed as civilians opened fire at a largely peaceful anti-

government protest. There are reports of large protests in several other cities. More than 2,000 ethnic Kurds took to the streets of the northeastern city of Qamishli.

Saudi Arabia – Demonstrations by Shiites are reported in Qatif and al-Awamiyah.

April 2, 2011

Libya - Gaddafi's forces launch a fresh assault on Misrata, the last enclave in the west still under the revolutionaries' control. Libya's third largest city was hit with tank and artillery fire. "It was random and very intense bombardment," a spokesman, called Sami, told Reuters by telephone. "We no longer recognize the place. They are targeting everyone, including civilians' homes."

Yemen - The opposition coalition Common Forum calls on the president to hand over power to his deputy, Vice-President Abdu Rabu Hadi. Common Forum, which includes the five biggest opposition groups in Yemen, offers a five-point plan for the handover:

1. President Saleh resigns and is replaced by Abdu Rabu Hadi
2. Abdu Rabu Hadi announces a restructuring of the security forces to make them accountable to the government
3. An interim government is created based on national reconciliation
4. A new electoral commission is established
5. Civil liberties are boosted and an investigation is launched into the killing of protesters.

Syria - Security forces disperse a sit-in in Daraa's, Serail Square and arrested at least 20 people.

April 3, 2011

Libya – Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou receives in Athens, Col Gaddafi's emissary and acting foreign minister Abdulati Al-Obeidi. According to unofficial reports, Obeidi is seeking a way out of the crisis and wants Greece, Turkey and Malta to mediate. Italian foreign minister Franco Frattini, who spoke with the Greek foreign minister after he had talks with Obeidi, states that the Libyan government proposals 'lack credibility' because they ignored the precondition that Col Gaddafi and his family must leave Libya.

After talks in Athens, Abdulati Al-Obeidi travels in his private Cessna jet to Ankara, where he has talks with Turkish foreign minister Ahmet Davutoglu.

In the evening Abdulati Al-Obeidi arrives in Malta and has talks with Malta's prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi. According to *The Times of Malta* "Dr Gonzi told Mr al-Obeidi that Libya must observe all UN resolutions, the Gaddafi government must step down, Col Gaddafi and his family should leave and there should be an immediate ceasefire and a process which would enable the Libyan people to make its democratic choices."

Italy's foreign minister Franco Frattini announces the recognition of the rebels' Transitional National Council (TNC) "as the only political, legitimate interlocutor to represent Libya."

The New York Times reports that Seif and Saadi Gaddafi, two of Col Gaddafi's sons were offering to oversee a transition to a constitutional democracy that would include their father's removal from power. "The proposals are the latest turn in a drama between Seif and his father that has played out for years on the stage of Libyan public life as the son has alternately pushed forward with calls for political reforms and then pulled back... The idea also touches on longstanding differences among his sons. While Seif and Saadi have leaned toward Western-style economic and political openings, Colonel Qaddafi's sons Khamis and Mutuassim are considered hard-liners. Khamis leads a fearsome militia focused on repressing internal unrest."

Turkish hospital ship transports 250 wounded people and 100 members of their families from Misurata to Turkey for treatment. The ship is escorted by 10 Turkish air force F-16s and two navy frigates.

Members of the Libyan opposition launch a new Qatar-based satellite television station.

Several of the critically wounded from clashes between pro- and anti-government forces in eastern Libya are flown out to Qatar to receive urgent medical treatment.

Yemen - Extraordinary meeting of the GCC foreign ministers is held in Riyadh to discuss the crisis in Yemen.

Syria – President Bashar Assad appoints a new prime minister, former Agriculture Minister Adel Safar, and asks him to form a government. Safar is a member of the ruling Baath Party. Under his watch at the agriculture ministry, a water crisis that experts largely attribute to corruption and mismanagement, intensified and led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. Syria became a net grain importer.

Thousands attend the funerals of 15 people killed on 1 April in the Damascus suburb of Douma. According to the BBC the mourners chanted anti-government slogans, calling for president Assad to be toppled. The bodies of eight were buried in Douma including; Fouad

Ben Ahmad Eid Baleleh, 27; Khaled Mahmoud al-Baghdadi, 37; Orfan Abdel Majid al-Durrah, 19; Haydar Ben Ali Izzeldeen, 39; Ibrahim Ben Muhammad al-Mubayyed, 39; Naim Muhammad al-Mukaddem, 33; Yasser Jamal Abu Aisha, 37; Ahmad Ben Abdel Raheem Rajab Fawwaz, 27. The rest of the victims came from different towns.

Agencies report pro-democracy demonstrations in Daraa and Latakia.

There are reports of Syrian security forces arresting dozens of people - mostly in Daraa and Douma. A joint statement by eight human rights groups, quoted by AFP news agency, said 46 people had been arrested. Protesters released from custody say that all those detained during the protests were beaten, humiliated and branded traitors by the security forces.

April 4, 2011

Yemen- At least 21 people are killed when security forces and armed men in civilian clothes fired on protesters in Taiz, and the Red Sea port of Hudaida.

The Gulf Cooperation Council invites representatives of the Yemeni government and the opposition to talks in Saudi Arabia to put an end to the current crisis in Yemen.

Libya - Libyan state television shows footage of Muammar Gaddafi saluting supporters at his Bab Al Aziziyah compound in Tripoli.

The US government says that it has lifted sanctions on Moussa Koussa, the former Libyan foreign minister who has resigned from his post and left Libya for the UK.

April 5, 2011

Libya - NATO jets bomb Libyan government vehicles near Brega. The alliance reports that Western air strikes have destroyed 30% of Col Gaddafi's forces' military capacity.

The first oil from rebel-held areas of eastern Libya for almost three weeks is loaded on a tanker docked at a terminal near Tobruk, to be exported.

US Air Force Secretary Michael Donley, gives information on Pentagon's costs of engagement in Libya. According to him the U.S. Air Force has spent about \$75 million on the allied military operation against Libya, at a rate of about \$4 million a day. About 50 strike aircraft or fighter jets were assigned to the mission as well as about 39 support aircrafts, including air refueling, transport and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance planes. The US Air Force has flown Boeing Co. (BA)'s F-15E, Lockheed Martin Corp. (LMT)'s F-

16 and Northrop Grumman Corp. (NOC)'s B-2 stealth bomber, as well as aircraft used for close-air support, such as Lockheed's and Boeing's AC-130U.

The Pentagon confirms it has ended its strike mission over Libya after flying a total of 1,600 sorties, 600 of them strike sorties. It continues to provide support to NATO such as air-to-air refueling and intelligence-gathering.

The Gaddafi government appoints Abdelati Obeidi as its new foreign minister. He replaces Moussa Koussa, who sought refuge on the UK.

Col Muammar Gaddafi sends a rambling letter to President Barack Obama.⁹

Our son, Excellency,
President Obama
U.S.A

We have been hurt more morally than physically because of what had happened against us in both deeds and words by you. Despite all this you will always remain our son whatever happened. We still pray that you continue to be president of the USA.

We Endeavour and hope that you will gain victory in the new election campaign. You are a man who has enough courage to annul a wrong and mistaken action. I am sure that you are able to shoulder the responsibility for that. Enough evidence is available, Bearing in mind that you are the president of the strongest power in the world nowadays, and since NATO is waging an unjust war against a small people of a developing country.

This country had already been subjected to embargo and sanctions, furthermore it also suffered a direct military armed aggression during Reagan's time. This country is Libya. Hence, to serving world peace ... Friendship between our peoples ... and for the sake of economic, and security cooperation against terror, you are in a position to keep NATO off the Libyan affair for good.

As you know too well democracy and building of civil society cannot be achieved by means of missiles and aircraft, or by backing armed member of AlQuaeda in Benghazi.

You - yourself - said on many occasions, one of them in the UN General Assembly, I was witness to that personally, that America is not responsible for the security of other peoples. That America helps only. This is the right logic.

⁹ The text of a letter sent to President Barack Obama by the Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi was published by the Associated Press news agency. The misspellings and grammatical errors are in the original letter.

Our dear son, Excellency, Baraka Hussein Abu oumama, your intervention is the name of the U.S.A. is a must, so that NATO would withdraw finally from the Libyan affair. Libya should be left to Libyans within the African union frame.

The problem now stands as follows:-

1. There is NATO intervention politically as well as military.
2. Terror conducted by AlQaeda gangs that have been armed in some cities, and by force refused to allow people to go back to their normal life, and carry on with exercising their social people's power as usual.

Mu'aumer Qaddaffi

Leader of the Revolution

Tripoli 5.4.2011

Yemen – In Sana'a members of the Sanhan tribe loyal to president Ali Abdullah Saleh arrive at a barracks occupied by mutinous troops supporting anti-government protesters. In the ensuing confrontation at least three people are killed and 15 others injured.

The BBC reports that for the second day in Taiz gunmen in plain clothes have been seen firing from rooftops towards protesters in the city's Tahrir Square. According to the reports hundreds of security troops attacked tens of thousands of protesters, and men believed to be plainclothes police were wielding bats and daggers. Protesters responded to the attack by hurling rocks at security forces.

Syria - Some 6,000 mourners take part in a funeral, in Moathamia, for Ahmad al Doumarani, a man shot dead by security forces early in the day.

Syria suspends all football matches. Agencies say that the decision was made in an apparent bid to avoid gatherings that may turn into a rallying point for anti-government protests.

The New York Times reports: "Wissam Tarif, the executive director of Insan, a Syrian rights group, said that at least 173 people had died in the unrest, including 15 in Douma, a working-class suburb northwest of Damascus, and 143 in and around Dara'a, the southern area where the protests began. The Paris-based International Federation for Human Rights, working with the Damascus Center for Human Rights Studies, said it had documented 123 deaths, including 22 in Douma. It said it did not have a number of dead in Dara'a. Both

groups said their figures were based on testimony from doctors, families of the dead and witnesses. It was impossible to verify their numbers.”

Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reports that 48 Kurds were released on 5 April, more than a year after they were arrested in the eastern city of Raqqa.

Saudi Arabia - Over a hundred literacy campaign teachers held a rally outside the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Civil Services in Riyadh calling for full time employment. Similar demonstrations take place in Ta'if and Tabuk.

Bahrain - Reuters reports that as a part of a government crackdown, Bahraini firms have fired hundreds of mostly Shiite workers who went on strike to support pro-democracy protesters.

April 6, 2011

Syria – Syria lifts a ban on teachers wearing the full face veil and orders the closure of the country's only casino.

April 7, 2011

Syria – Syria grants key Kurdish demands. President Bashar Assad issues a decree granting nationality to people in the eastern al-Hasaka region where many Kurds live. According to the 1962 census at least 150,000 Kurds are registered as foreigners.

According to Syrian state TV president Assad had fired the governor of Homs province, one of the areas affected by nearly three weeks of protests. Replacing the governor was one of the main demands of protesters last week.

Jordan - Mohammed Abdul-Karim, Jordanian national, sets himself on fire outside the prime minister's office. It is the first such act since political unrest hit the country in January. He is taken to hospital with third-degree burns.

Yemen – Protests take place in the city of Taiz where security forces open fired and shot tear gas at demonstrators.

Bahrain – The Bahrain Defense Force Military Public Security suspends the activities of the National Action Democratic Society (Waad). Its headquarter in Um Al Hassam is shut down until further notice.

April 8, 2011

Syria – BBC reports that at least 23 protesters are killed during anti-government rallies in the city of Daraa. An office of the ruling Baath Party in the Mahatta area of the city

is attacked and set on fire. Protests are reported in Qamishli, Hasakhe, Idlib, Banyas and Homs, where three people were killed. The town of Duma, near Damascus, is been sealed off with internet and mobile phone communications blocked. In Harsata, also on the outskirts of the capital, there are reports of gunfire and of tear gas being fired at protesters – three people were killed. In the coastal city of Latakia hundreds take part in a largely peaceful protest calling for political freedom.

Egypt - Tens of thousands of Egyptians protest in Cairo's Tahrir Square demanding the prosecution of Hosni Mubarak and accusing the military of being too slow to root out corruption from his era. The crowd's demands also include the removal of remaining Mubarak-era officials, such as the powerful provincial governors.

Saudi Arabia - Hundreds of Saudi Shiites protest in the city of Qatif in the Eastern Province demanding the withdrawal of Saudi troops from neighbouring Bahrain and political rights and freedoms at home. The demonstrators, some of them women, wave Bahraini as well as Saudi flags. Others gather in the nearby town of al-Awamiyah.

Yemen – Qatari prime minister Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassem Al Thani states that the six-nation Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) hoped "to reach a deal with the Yemeni president to step down". In return, he and his family would be granted immunity from prosecution.

President Ali Abdullah Saleh rejects a mediation offer by Gulf nations that called on him to resign in return for immunity from prosecution. He described the proposal as "belligerent intervention" and says he was opposed to any other country resolving the crisis. "Our power comes from the power of our great people, not from Qatar, not from anyone else. This is blatant interference in Yemeni affairs." Some 100,000 people demonstrate in the southern city of Taiz. In the confrontation four people are killed. Hundreds of anti-government protesters are reported to have been hurt in the Yemeni capital Sana'a.

Yemen News Agency SABA reports that president Ali Abdullah Saleh spoke with a number of leaders of the Gulf states in separate telephone calls. He telephoned Saudi King Abdullah bin King Abdul Aziz, Omani Sultan Qaboos bin Said, Kuwaiti Emir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Bahraini King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan.

Libya - Pro-Gaddafi forces launch a surprise attack on Libyan rebels in Ajdabiya, shelling the town and deploying soldiers on the streets. Anti-Gaddafi forces say they had

managed to repulse the attack after several hours of fighting. According to the BBC eight rebels were killed in the clashes.

BBC reports that in the city of Misrata, NATO forces have intensified their air strikes and destroyed 15 tanks after an upsurge of violence.

NATO announces that its jets had destroyed government ammunition stockpiles east of the capital Tripoli, tanks around Misrata and also military vehicles near Brega.

The Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, releases his peace plan for Libya. The “road map” contains three elements:

1. A genuine ceasefire should be established immediately and the forces affiliated with Gaddafi should lift the siege they impose on certain cities and withdraw from them.

2. Secure humanitarian zones should be established to provide unimpeded humanitarian aid to all our Libyan brothers indiscriminately.

3. A comprehensive democratic change and transformation process that takes into consideration the legitimate interests of all Libyan people must be launched immediately and urgently. This process should aim at establishing a constitutional democracy in which people would be able to elect their leaders with their free will.

British Royal Air Force (RAF) Tornados destroy seven tanks in Libya. The jets hit two tanks in Ajdabiyah and five in Misratah.

US Treasury Department announces that the United States has imposed financial sanctions on further five senior Libyan government officials and two entities controlled by Gaddafi's children. Those included are: Ali al-Mahmoudi Al Baghdadi - Libya's Prime Minister and member of Muammar Gaddafi's inner circle; Shukri Ghanem - Libya's Oil Minister and Chairman of the National Oil Company of Libya (NOC); Abdulhafid Zlitni - Secretary of the General People's Committee for Finance and Planning; Tohami Khaled - Director of Libya's Internal Security Office; Bashir Saleh - Head of Cabinet – or Chief of Staff – to Muammar Gaddafi. The two organizations on which sanctions were imposed are: The Gaddafi International Charity and Development Foundation - a Geneva-registered organization founded in Libya in 1998 and incorporated in Switzerland in 2004, owned and controlled by Saif al-Islam Gaddafi; the Waatasemu Charity Association, whose Secretary General is Aisha Gaddafi, Muammar Gaddafi's daughter.

United Arab Emirates – Ahmed Mansour, a blogger and civil society activist, is arrested at his home in Dubai.

US Defence Secretary Robert Gates meets in Abu Dhabi, Mohamed bin Zayed al-Nahyan, the crown prince of Abu Dhabi and deputy supreme commander of the UAE armed forces.

Oman - Heavy security prevents fresh protests after Friday prayers in the city of Sohar, where protesters camped out for over a month before security forces moved them out last week. According to Reuters' reports, checkpoints were set up across the city with dozens of armoured vehicles blocking access to protest areas. Residents' names were checked against a list and access to mosques was restricted, while a helicopter flew overhead, witnesses.

April 9, 2011

Egypt – Around 3 am the military attempts to clear protesters camping on Tahrir Square. In the ensuing battle one person is killed and 71 injured. Protesters say they were beaten with clubs and shots were fired. Three vehicles, two of them military, were set on fire during the unrest. The military force finally withdrew and protesters began to reoccupy the square in daylight. According to the BBC corresponded in Cairo “This is the latest worrying sign of tensions between the ruling military and supporters of the 25 January revolution who are becoming increasingly impatient with the pace of change.”

Yemen - Demonstrations erupt in the southern Yemeni town of Taiz, as people rally against the killing of pro-democracy protesters there the day before. Thousands of anti-government protesters take to the streets of other major cities, including Ibb, al-Hudaydah and Hadramawt, in support of the Taiz protesters. Normal life was completely paralyzed in Aden, where government offices, schools, shops and services came to a standstill.

The official Yemeni news agency, Saba, reports that the Yemeni ambassador was recalled for consultation from Qatar after the recent statement made by Qatari prime minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem about the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council's (GCC) offer of mediation between Saleh and the opposition.

Libya - A buoyant Muammar Gaddafi makes his first television appearance for five days. Gaddafi smiled and pumped his fists in the air as he received an ecstatic welcome at a school in Tripoli. He was last seen on 4 April.

Al Jazeera television reports that pro-Gaddafi forces had entered Ajdabiyah.

Reuters reports: “Western generals are increasingly pessimistic that the military stalemate [in Libya] can be broken despite NATO air attacks on Gaddafi's armoured forces.” Misrata, Libya's third largest city is the lone major rebel outpost in the west of the country. It

has been under siege by Gaddafi's forces for weeks. According to Reuters "people in Misrata are crammed five families to a house in the few safe districts to escape weeks of sniper, mortar and rocket fire. There are severe shortages of food, water and medical supplies and hospitals are overflowing." Analysts predict a long, low-level conflict possibly leading to partition between east and west in the sprawling country.

Bahrain – Frank Gardner, the BBC security correspondent, reports from Bahrain that Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, one of the country's leading human rights activists, and his two sons-in-law, were seized in the middle of the night and taken away. Abdulhadi al-Khawaja who did not resist his arrest was beaten "unconscious" and dragged "downstairs, leaving a trail of blood." According to Gardner "more than 400 people are believed to have been detained and hundreds more have been sacked from their jobs for taking part in pro-democracy protests."

United Arab Emirates - Fahad Salim Mohammed Salim Dalk, 38, civil society activist is arrested at 7 p.m. in his flat in Ajman.

April 10, 2011

Egypt – In an apparent concession to protesters Egypt's interim military government has states that it will remove some provincial governors appointed by former president Hosni Mubarak.

Al Arabiya TV broadcast recorded message from former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak. "I have felt great pain – and still – due to the unfair campaigns and unjust accusations to which my family and I have been exposed , aiming mainly to endanger my reputation, question my honesty and mess with my military and political history during which I exerted big efforts for Egypt and its people ... in war and peace... However, as I have spent my whole life in serving the nation with honesty and integrity ... I cannot remain silent in face of the continual campaigns of defamation and false accusations that aim at ruining the reputation and integrity of my family and me." Mubarak declares that he does not "own any accounts or assets outside Egypt" and agrees for public prosecutor to "to contact all the foreign ministries worldwide to inform them of my approval, and my wife's, to reveal any account that we have abroad since I started my military and political public work until now."

Former president Hosni Mubarak is summoned by the state prosecutor for questioning over alleged corruption and killings of protesters. Also his sons Gamal and Alaa are summoned to answer questions. Mubarak, his sons and their wives have been banned from leaving the country and their assets have been frozen.

Syria – According to *The Washington Post* several people were killed in the port city of Baniyas, 300km north-west of the capital Damascus. The city has a major oil refinery . Human rights groups named Ayman Soliman, Nizar Higazy and Muhammad al-Dayegh as those killed after Sunday prayers. The authorities for the first time employed soldiers and tanks against anti-government demonstrators. Human rights workers also said that security forces and rooftop snipers fired on hundreds of demonstrators outside the al-Rahman mosque. It has subsequently emerged that some 13 people were killed in the town by security forces.

Mourners demonstrated in Douma; and a sit-in was staged in Daraa.

The National Organisation for Human Rights said 37 people were killed across Syria on 8 April, including 27 in Daraa, three in Homs, three in Harasta and one in Douma, bringing the total death toll to more than 200 since 18 March.

Libya - Delegation of African Union arrives in Tripoli for talks with Muammar Gaddafi. Presidents Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz of Mauritania, Amadou Toumani Toure of Mali, Denis Sassou Nguesso of Congo and Jacob Zuma of South Africa, left the Mauritanian capital Nouakchott in mid-morning and travelled separately to Tripoli. Uganda's Foreign Minister Henry Oryem Okello arrived in Tripoli later.

The opposition forces regain control of the strategic coastal town of Ajdabiya, with help from NATO strikes. Airstrikes blew up 11 tanks belonging to forces loyal to Qaddafi as they approached the town. "The whole of Ajdabiya is under our [anti-Gaddafi forces] control."

Yemen - Foreign ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council, meeting in the Saudi capital of Riyadh, urge Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh to step down and call for a unity government led by the opposition. The GCC offer does not specify a timeframe for a transfer of power to Saleh's deputy. However, it includes protections for the president and his family from prosecution for crimes under his leadership. According to the BBC, late on Sunday [10 April], president Saleh's office issued a statement saying that it welcomed the GCC initiative. It said: "[president Saleh] has no reservations about transferring power peacefully within the framework of the constitution." But he did not specify whether this meant leaving office when his term ends in 2013 or handing over power in January 2012, a date he had recently suggested.

Bahrain - Two Bahraini Shiite activists detained in the wake of anti-regime protests have died in detention, interior ministry announced on 11 April. Ali Issa Saqer, 31, died at the hands of prison security guards after "causing chaos in detention". "Security men had to

intervene to restore security ... but he resisted, forcing them to engage him, which resulted in him receiving several wounds," police statement said. Photos taken before his burial showed criss-cross purple lash marks all over his back. His legs were also badly bruised, and his toes and feet were covered in purple bruises. There was a big bruise on the left side of his head and possible burn marks on his ankles and wrists, said Daniel Williams, a senior researcher with Human Rights Watch (HRW), who viewed the body as it was being prepared for burial. Another detainee, Zakaraya Rashed Hassan, 40, arrested on April 2, had been "found dead" in his prison cell.

United Arab Emirates – Authorities arrest another activist advocating political reforms in the country. Professor Nasser Ahmed Khalfan bin Gaith, an outspoken economist who teaches economic law at La Sorbonne in Abu Dhabi, is arrested in Dubai. Dr bin Gaith is a member of the online political forum, UAE Hewan, which is blocked in the country, and organiser of a petition to demand a greater say in the election of Gulf state's quasi-parliamentary body, the Federal National Council (FNC). In a recent article on a UAE website, bin Gaith voiced unusually bold criticism of the Western-allied Gulf Arab states' political system and their moves to create jobs and raise social spending in a bid to prevent the eruption of popular unrest. "They have announced 'benefits and handouts' assuming their citizens are not like other Arabs or other human beings, who see freedom as a need no less significant than other physical needs. So they use the carrot, offering abundance. But this only delays change and reform, which will still come sooner or later," he wrote. "No amount of security -- or rather intimidation by security forces -- or wealth, hand-outs, or foreign support is capable of ensuring the stability of an unjust ruler."

Saudi Arabia – Small group of literacy teachers and unemployed university graduates demonstrate in front of Ministries of Civil Services and Education in Riyadh and the Ministry of Education in Jeddah.

April 11, 2011

Libya – After meeting Gaddafi for several hours in his Bab al-Aziziyah compound the AU delegation says that the Libyan government has accepted an African Union peace plan to end the eight-week-old conflict. According to the BBC, the AU deal's main points are:

- An immediate ceasefire
- The unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid
- Protection of foreign nationals

A dialogue between the government and rebels on a political settlement
The suspension of NATO airstrikes.

After talks in Tripoli Jacob Zuma returned to South Africa. His foreign minister and the other AU heads of state travelled on to Benghazi for talks with the Interim National Transitional Council. BBC correspondent in Benghazi, Jon Leyne reports that "The AU delegation arrived in Benghazi to a rough reception, with demonstrators shouting 'Gaddafi out' and mobbing their vehicles".

After four hours of talks, the rebels reject the terms of the ceasefire deal. They stated, "The proposal did not include Gaddafi and his family from standing down... Any reforms which were included would be within the Gaddafi regime and that is also unacceptable."

Moussa Koussa, former Libyan foreign minister, now in London, tells the BBC: "I ask everybody to avoid taking Libya into civil war... This would lead to so much blood and Libya would be a new Somalia... More than that, we refuse to divide Libya. The unity of Libya is essential to any solution and settlement for Libya."

Egypt - A military court in Egypt sentences an internet activist, Maikel Nabil, 26, to three years in jail for criticising the armed forces. He was arrested last month for blogs that criticised the army's role during anti-government protests. This was the first trial of a blogger by a military court since the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces assumed control on 11 February.

Yemen - Thousands demonstrate on Sana'a University Square on the streets of Taiz, Aden, Hudaida, Ibb and the south-eastern province of Hadramaut to protest against the GCC plan. The protesters are not happy with the GCC proposal because it allows president Saleh to remain in the country and it appears to offer him immunity from prosecution. The protesters want to see legal action against Saleh and his sons, who occupy key security and political posts.

President Ali Abdullah Saleh rejects GCC foreign ministers plan for the transfer of power in Yemen, having accepted it the previous day. Saleh's carefully worded rejection statement praised the GCC's offer, but insisted on his remaining in office until the 2013 elections.

Syria - Syrian security forces brake up a demonstration of some 1,500 student at Damascus University in support of anti-government protesters.

Twenty-two people are arrested in Baniyas, as funerals are held for four people who died when security forces opened fire on protesters over the weekend.

Fayez Sara, 61, a well-known Syrian writer and journalist, is arrested. He is the third well known opposition figure detained since 10 April.

April 12, 2011

Libya - French foreign minister, Alain Juppe, says that NATO is not doing enough to destroy heavy weaponry used by Muammar Gaddafi's forces in Libya. "NATO must play its role fully. It wanted to take the lead in operations," - efforts so far were "not enough". His views are echoed by UK's Foreign Secretary William Hague who also urges NATO allies to intensify military operations. Senior Libyan rebel, Mustafa Abdel Jalil, is quoted by Reuters as saying, "NATO's air fleet cannot deliver the occupied cities where Gaddafi's forces, using the civilian populations as a human shield, have now taken cover."

The British Foreign Office confirms that former Libyan foreign minister, Moussa Koussa, who sought refuge in London, has left the UK for meetings in Qatar for an international meeting on Libya. It is expected that he will return to the UK in the next few days after the trip to the Middle East. The hope in Whitehall is that Koussa's lenient treatment by the UK authorities will send a positive signal to other would-be Libyan defectors as part of a broader strategy of eroding Muammar Gaddafi's position.

Bahrain - Following a case filed by the Bahrain Information Affairs Authority against *Al Wasat* newspaper, the General Prosecution summons its former editor-in-chief Mansoor Al Jamri, managing editor Walid Nouwehed and head of local news Aqeel Mirza. They are charged with publishing fabricated news and made-up stories in a manner that may have harmed public safety and national interests.

Egypt - Former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak suffers heart problem during an investigation into corruption and abuse allegations, and is admitted to hospital in Sharm el-Sheikh.

Syria - Syria's leading pro-democracy group, the Damascus Declaration, estimates about 200 people have died in protests in the country, since they first erupted in March in the southern city of Daraa.

Troops lock down the town of Baniyas. There are reports of dozens of people being injured in clashes with security forces, and that soldiers were preventing ambulances from getting into the town. The security forces storm the nearby village of Bayda, which is subsequently surrounded by army vehicles.

White House Press Secretary, Jay Carney, states that the Obama administration is “deeply concerned” about reports that Syrians injured in protests are being denied access to medical care and condemns continuing violence in the country. “The escalating repression by the Syrian government is outrageous, and the United States strongly condemns the continued efforts to suppress peaceful protesters... The Syrian government must respect the universal rights of the Syrian people, who are rightly demanding the basic freedoms that they have been denied.”

April 13, 2011

Egypt - Egypt's state TV reports that the prosecutor general has ordered the detention of former president Hosni Mubarak, ahead of an investigation into corruption and abuse allegations. His detention order will be in place for 15 days. Mubarak, 82, is in hospital after reportedly suffering heart problems. The prosecutor also has ordered the detention for 15 days of Alaa and Gamal Mubarak – the two sons of the former president. Hosni Mubarak, along with his sons and their wives, have been banned from leaving the country. The family's assets have been frozen.

Libya - The Libyan contact group of foreign ministers meets in Doha, Qatar. Its final statement stipulates that: "Participants remained united and firm in their resolve... Gaddafi and his regime has lost all legitimacy and he must leave power allowing the Libyan people to determine their own future." "Participants agreed that a Temporary Financial Mechanism could provide a method for the INC (interim national council) and international community to manage revenue to assist with short term financial requirements and structural needs in Libya." The language of the statement indicated a stronger stance than that seen at the group's meeting two weeks ago, reflecting increased pressure by Britain and France, who are delivering most of the air strikes on Gaddafi's armour. The next meeting of the contact group will take place at the beginning of May in Italy.

Loud explosions are reported in Tripoli, with NATO later saying that it had attacked munitions bunkers 13km from the Libyan capital

Five Libyan diplomats are expelled from Germany for intimidating Libyan citizens living there.

Libyan state-run TV reports that NATO aircraft attacked the Libyan cities of al-Aziziya and Sirte.

Libyan rebels report heavy fighting in central and eastern Misrata, but say they are making progress against government troops

AFP news agency reports that Libyan Foreign Minister Abdelati Laabidi flies to Cyprus as Col Gaddafi's regime pursues a diplomatic offensive among Mediterranean nations.

Yemen - Rival Yemeni forces have clashed in the capital Sana'a, killing two soldiers, as protests continued across the country. Troops loyal to President Ali Abdullah Saleh clashed with those supporting Gen Ali Mohsen Al-Ahmar, who has defected to the opposition.

Saudi Arabia - Saudi authorities have freed 13 Shiite activists detained for taking part in demonstrations calling for the release of jailed relatives in the Eastern Province.

April 14, 2011

Bahrain - The government of Bahrain files a lawsuit in court seeking to disband two Shia opposition groups. State media report that the ministry of justice and Islamic affairs "is seeking to dissolve the Islamic Action Association and al-Wefaq". The two groups were accused of violating the constitution and "harming social peace and national unity".

Libya - NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen tells a foreign ministers' summit that the alliance needs "a few more" aircraft for its mission in Libya.

Tunisia – Tunisia's Justice Minister Tunisian, Lazhar Karoui Chebb, says that the authorities want to try former President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali on 18 different charges, including voluntary manslaughter and drug-trafficking. These charges are among 44 to be made against Ben Ali, his family and some former ministers.

Syria - President Bashar al-Assad forms a new government under recently-appointed Prime Minister Adel Safar.

Morocco - King Mohammed VI pardons or cuts the sentences of 190 detainees, including Islamist political prisoners, on the advice of National Human Rights Council (CNDH).

Saudi Arabia – Protests take place in Qatif and al-Awamiyah against the use of the Peninsula Shield Force troops in Bahrain. The protestors also demand the release of prisoners held without trial.

April 15, 2011

Jordan – According to agencies reports more than 2,000 demonstrators protest across Jordan to demand a greater political freedoms. About 1,000 protest outside Amman's municipal building after Friday prayers.

United Arab Emirates - Abdullah al Shehi, a retired army officer in his 60s, is taken for questioning from his home in Ras Al Khaimah. Al Shehhi is the head of the Al Shahouh Folklore Society, one of the four civil society associations that signed a second petition calling for universal suffrage in upcoming Federal National Council elections. Despite the fact that he is being treated for cancer he has been arrested three times before. He is released on 17 April.

Jordan – Islamist Salafist demonstrators armed with swords, daggers and clubs attacked police in the northern industrial town of Zarqa during protests. Zarqa is the hometown of al Qa'eda leader Abu Musab Zarqawi, who was killed in an air strike north-east of Baghdad in 2006. According to *The National* "Fifty-one policemen, including senior officers, were stabbed with knives, beaten with bats or hit with sharp tools."

Security forces arrest 70 Islamists after violent protests in which many people, most of them policemen, were hurt. The suspects, members of the ultra-conservative Sunni Muslim Salafist movement, are rounded up during raids in the town of Zarqa and nearby Rassifeh, hours after Islamist protesters attacked police. Among the detained are 22 prominent figures of the Islamist group including its chief in Jordan, Abdul Shahatah al-Tahawi, and other leaders of the movement: Abdul Qader, Amer Dmour, Abdul Rahman Naqeeb and Saad Hneiti.

April 21, 2011

United Arab Emirates - Mariam Mohammed Khalfan Al-Roumi, the UAE social affairs minister, issues a decree dissolving the elected board of directors of the Jurist Association - one of the country's most prominent civil society organizations. The decree states, the Jurist Association violated section 16 of the UAE's 2008 Law on Associations, which prohibits nongovernmental organizations and its members from interfering "in politics or in matters that impair State security and its ruling regime." The Jurist Association and three other non-governmental organizations had signed a petition seeking political reforms in the country. According to Human Rights Watch the action against the Jurist Association is part of a broader crackdown on peaceful dissent by the UAE government.

Saudi Arabia – Protests are reported in Qatif and al-Awamiyah against the use of the Peninsula Shield Force troops in Bahrain. The demonstrators also demand the release of prisoners held without trial.

April 22, 2011

Jordan – The authorities detain 136 people on "terrorism" charges after scores were hurt when Islamist Salafist protesters clashed with police in the northern city of Zarqa. A police spokesman states that "the involvement of 100 other people on the run... will be referred to the attorney general of state security once they are arrested."

Saudi Arabia – After meeting government officials, leading Saudi Shiite clerics call on protesters to end two months of demonstrations in the kingdom's oil-producing Eastern Province, in an apparent bowing to government demands.

Human Rights Watch reports that more than 160 Saudi activists have been arrested since February 2011.

April 23, 2011

Saudi Arabia – *Gulf News* reports civil disobedience actions by groups of women in Riyadh and other cities responding to a ban on their participation in the 22 September 2011 municipal elections. Ignoring the ban, groups of women were seen standing at the gates of registration centres in the capital city. About 60 Saudi women academicians and researchers have launched a Facebook campaign under the name 'Baladi' or 'My Country'. Fawzia Al Hani, chairperson of the group, told reporters that women who had approached registration centres in Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam in the past three days — to press for their right to take part in the elections — were not violating any law. "The law reads: 'Woman has the right to cast her vote and stand as a candidate'," she added.

April 24, 2011

Morocco – Agence France Presse reports peaceful demonstrations of several thousand people Casablanca, Tangiers and Marrakesh. The protesters demand end to corruption, an independent judiciary, constitutional reforms, legislative elections as well as more jobs for university graduates. The marches are organised by the February 20 Movement.

April 25, 2011

United Arab Emirates – Foreign Ministers, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed, confirms the arrests of several opposition individuals. "The public prosecutor in the UAE called some people [in] and those procedures are completely compliant with the UAE laws... We are confident that the UAE laws are transparent and clear. The justice system in the UAE is trustworthy and I don't think there is anyone who is above the law in any way." His statement is made at the conclusion of an EU-GCC meeting held at Emirates Palace hotel in Abu Dhabi

April 26, 2011

United Arab Emirates – The official news agency of the UAE, WAM, reports a statement by the country's Attorney General, Salim Saeed Kubaish, that five persons "were held... for being found committing crimes of instigation, breaking laws and perpetrating acts that pose threat to state security, undermining the public order, opposing the government system, and insulting the president, the vice president and the crown prince of Abu Dhabi." Four are named as Ahmed Mansour, Nasser Ahmed Khalfan bin Gaith, Fahad Salim Mohammed Salim Dalk, Hassan Ali al Khamis. The fifth, identified as Ahmed Abdul Khaleq, was not carrying identification papers.

Jordan - A military court charges 146 hardline Islamists with plotting terrorist acts in Jordan after they clashed with police in Zarqa earlier this month.

April 28, 2011

Morocco - A bomb attack in the main square of the Moroccan city of Marrakech kills 16 people, including 13 foreigners. At least 23 people were injured. The blast wrecked the Argana cafe in Djemaa el-Fna square, a popular tourist spot. The remote-controlled nail bomb was detonated at lunchtime.¹⁰ Three Moroccans were subsequently arrested in connection with the bombing.

Syria – Hundreds of members of the ruling Ba'ath Party resign in protest at the increasingly bloody crackdown of pro-democracy demonstrators.

UN Security Council fails to agree on a European and US-backed statement condemning the government's use of violence. The draft proposed by France, Britain, Germany and Portugal is opposed by several members of the Security Council, including Russia, Lebanon and India.

¹⁰ The attack was the deadliest in Morocco since 12 suicide bombers killed 33 people in co-ordinated strikes in Casablanca in 2003.

Saudi Arabia – Agence France Presse reports the arrest of 20-30 Shiites, including two bloggers, for allegedly taking part in protests in the oil - rich Eastern Province. The list of arrested include prominent writer Hussein al-Yusef and his son.

April 29, 2011

Morocco – The MAP news agency reports that the death toll in Marrakech terrorist attacks has risen to 16. At least 11 of those killed are foreigners, and at least 20 people are injured.

Libya – Libyan government sends text messages to mobile phones of its armed supporters, urging them to stop firing in the air in order to save ammunition for "our crusader enemies."

In Tripoli residents report rising tensions over fuel shortages. Witnesses say there have been clashes between residents and troops, some with stones and tear gas, at gas stations in recent days, after security forces tried to cut into huge lines.

Hundreds of refugees fleeing Libya land on the Italian island of Lampedusa in a fresh wave of arrivals of around 1,300 migrants in the past two days.

Syria - Hamza al-Khateeb, a 13-year old boy is detained by security forces during a protest in Saida, 10km east of the town of Daraa. According to eye-witnesses; "People were killed and wounded, some were arrested. It was chaotic we didn't know at that point what had happened to Hamza. He just disappeared."

April 30, 2011

Libya – Muammar Gaddafi makes his latest appearance on state TV. In a speech lasting one and a half hours, he reaffirms his commitment to a ceasefire but added it must not be one sided.

May 1, 2011

Libya – UN staff leaves Tripoli because of the deteriorating situation.

Saudi Arabia – Authorities detain Fadhil al-Manasif, a Shiite activist in the town of Awwamiyya . He has been documenting demonstrations in the Eastern Province.

May 2, 2011

Libya – Funeral of Gaddafi's youngest son Saif Al-Arab Gaddafi takes place at the El Hani cemetery in Tripoli. He was killed with three of Gaddafi's grandchildren during air

strikes by coalition forces on 30 April. Large crowd chanting support for Muammar Gaddafi attends the funeral.

Syria - Reuters reports that Syrian secret police agents wielding assault rifles arrested human rights campaigner Diana Jawabra outside her home in the Mezza West district of Damascus.

A military spokesman announces the arrest of 499 people in the town of Daraa, a week after thousands of troops backed by tanks swooped on the town to crush protests. The spokesman also announced the deaths of two members of the security forces "as well as 10 terrorists."

May 3, 2011

Libya – The Swiss foreign ministry announces the freezing of around \$415 million from funds owned by Gaddafi.

Reuters reports attack by Gaddafi's forces on the rebel held town of Zintan in the Western Libyan mountains.

Luis Moreno-Ocampo, the prosecutor for the International Criminal Court, tells the UN security council that the Libyan regime systematically committed and covered up war crimes.

Syria - Syrian security forces swept into the coastal city of Baniyas. The city centre has been under the control of demonstrators since Assad loyalists known as "al-shabbiha" opened fire on 10 April after a protest demanding the "overthrow of the regime".

May 5, 2011

Yemen - The Associated Press reports that on this day a drone strike by US special operations forces targeted US-born al-Qaida cleric Anwar al-Awlaki, but a malfunction caused rockets to miss him by a matter of minutes.

Syria – Mass arrests are made by Syrian soldiers in the Damascus suburb of Saqba - scenes of demonstrations against the regime last week.

Libya – Britain orders the expulsion of a further two Libyan diplomats from the Libyan embassy in London.

The Red Star 1, a ship carrying 1,138 people evacuated from the besieged Libyan city of Misrata, arrives in Benghazi.

The second meeting of the Contact Group on Libya is held in Rome and co-chaired by Italy and the State of Qatar, with the participation of 22 countries and representatives from the United Nations, the Arab League, NATO, the European Union, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference and the Gulf Cooperation Council to discuss developments in and prospects for the situation in Libya. The African Union attended as an invitee. Observers included representatives from 6 countries and from OCHA and the World Bank.

Egypt - Former interior minister Habib al-Adly is sentenced to 12 years imprisonment for money laundering and profiteering.

May 6, 2011

Syria – Britain, France and Germany are again pressing for the UN Security Council to respond to the Syrian government's deadly crackdown on protesters.

Protests are reported in many towns including Jama, Latakia, Deir al-Zour, Salamieh, Baniyas, Homs, Derbassiye, Zabadani and the Midan district in Damascus.

Saudi Arabia - Hundreds of demonstrators take to the streets of Qatif protesting at crackdown on demonstrations in Bahrain.

Yemen - Hundreds of thousands of people take part in a rally against the Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh.

Libya - France orders 14 more Libya diplomats to leave France within 48 hours.

May 7, 2011

Syria – Syrian opposition figures called on president Bashar al-Assad to: "Stop shooting at demonstrators, allow peaceful demonstrations, remove all your photos and those of your father, release all political prisoners, allow political pluralism and free elections in six months."

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton released the following statement about the violence in Syria: I am deeply troubled that the Syrian government chooses to continue to use force and intimidation against the Syrian people. The United States condemns in the strongest terms the Syrian government's actions over the past five weeks and calls on it to immediately cease the killing, arrest, and harassment of protestors, activists, and journalists. I am particularly troubled by ongoing reports of deaths of citizens at the hands of the Syrian government, including accounts today that at least 30 people were killed when Syrian security forces again opened fire on peaceful protestors throughout the country. On behalf of the

United States, I extend our sincerest condolences to the families and friends of those who have lost their lives.

The Syrian people, like people everywhere, have the inherent right to exercise their universal freedoms, including peaceful assembly, expression, and speech. The Syrian government must respond to the Syrian people's call for change. It must realize that violence and intimidation will not answer their call.

The Syrian government's actions are neither those of a responsible government nor a credible member of the international community. We will continue to hold to account senior Syrian officials and others responsible for the reprehensible human rights abuses against the Syrian people. We welcome the European Union's decision to join us in these efforts with similar steps. We will also continue to work both unilaterally and with our international partners to determine the most effective next steps if the Syrian government chooses not to abandon its current path.

Jordan - Dozens of protesters staged demonstrations near the Syrian embassy in Amman.

May 8, 2011

Egypt - Angry demonstrations erupt in the capital after a Coptic church in the Imbaba (a poor neighbourhood in the north-west of Cairo) was burned down. Fighting broke out over rumours, which turned out to be false, that a Christian woman was being held inside a church and prevented from converting to Islam. Egyptian media described the Imbaba attackers as Salafis¹¹ – fundamentalist Muslims who want the imposition of sharia law.

Syria – Agencies report large demonstrations in Homs, Zabadani, Douma, Hama and several suburbs of Damascus. Thousands of people are arrested by Syrian police and security services.

Yemen - Hundreds of thousands of people take part in a rally against President Ali Abdullah Saleh. President calls the demonstrators outlaws and terrorists.

Morocco - Thousands of Moroccans march in Marrakesh to demand reforms and condemn the 28 April terrorist attack.

¹¹ Salafis demonstrated in front of the US embassy in Cairo after the killing of Osama Bin Laden.

Bahrain - King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa issues a Royal decree lifting the State of National Safety from 1 June 2011.

May 9, 2011

Syria – Mathew Weaver of *The Guardian* gives the following account of the situation in Syria today: "There are military operations still going on in Homs, Baniyas and Tafas and we now have checkpoints and gunfire in six areas around Damascus, including Moadamiyeh, Harasta and Douma."

The Guardian quotes western diplomats in Damascus saying that Iran is playing an increasingly active role in helping the Syrian regime in its crackdown on pro-democracy protesters. There has been a "significant" increase in the number of Iranian personnel in Syria since protests began in mid-March.

The EU imposes restrictive measures against Syria. The full statement by the Council of the European Union states:

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Brussels, 9 May 2011

EU imposes restrictive measures against Syria

The Council has adopted a regulation and a decision providing for an embargo on exports to Syria of arms and equipment that could be used for internal repression, as well as a visa ban and an assets freeze.

The visa ban and the assets freeze targets 13 officials and associates of the Syrian regime who have been identified by the Council as being responsible for the violent repression against the civilian population in Syria.

The decision and the regulation, together with the list of persons subject to the restrictive measures, will be published in the Official Journal on 10 May 2011.

Rami Abdul-Rahman, director of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, says security forces are conducting house-to-house raids to detain dissidents, with raids focused in Homs, Baniyas, some Damascus suburbs and villages around Daraa.

Libya - State television shows footage of Gaddafi wearing brown burnouse and sunglasses visiting a school in Tripoli reportedly in morning of 7 May, with pupils shown shouting anti-Western slogans. He could be seen entering the school surrounded by bodyguards.

NATO commander of the Libya operation Lieutenant-General Charles Bouchard states that air strikes hit armoured vehicles firing on civilians near both Misurata and Ajdabiya. According to him NATO jets also struck ammunition stockpiles east of Tripoli being used in attacks on Misurata and other populated areas. The Associated Press reports that warplanes destroyed 17 tanks and damaged nine more.

Yemen – Al Jazeera reports that security forces in Yemen opened fire on protesters in the southern city of Taiz, killing at least one man and wounding 10 others.

May 10, 2011

Syria – The EU publishes details of restrictive measures against 13 Syrian officials it has accused of playing a role in the violent repression against anti-government demonstrations. The list does not include president Bashar al-Assad, reportedly at the request of certain member states, including Germany. The measures - asset freezes and travel bans - are part of a package of sanctions that also include an arms embargo that goes into effect on 10 May 2011 as part of EU efforts to force Syria to end violence against anti-government protesters.

1. Maher al-Assad

President Bashar al-Assad's 43-year-old brother. Principal overseer of violence against demonstrators. Commander of the army's 4th Division, member of the Baath Party Central Command, strongman of the Republican Guard.

2. Ali Mamlouk

The 65-year-old head of the General Intelligence Service, a position he has held since 2005. Involved in violence against demonstrators.

3. Mohammed Ibrahim al-Chaar

Minister of interior. Involved in violence against demonstrators.

4. Atef Najib

Former head of Political Security in the city of Daraa; involved in violence against demonstrators.

5. Hafez Makhoul

A 40-year-old colonel and the Head of Unit in the General Intelligence Directorate, Damascus Branch. He is close to Maher al-Assad and involved in violence against demonstrators.

6. Mohammed Dib Zeitoun

Head of Political Security; involved in violence against demonstrators.

7. Amjad al-Abbas

Head of Political Security in the city of Baniyas; involved in violence against demonstrators in Baida.

8. Rami Makhoul

The 41-year-old first cousin of Bashar and Maher al-Assad and one of the most powerful businessmen in Syria. Described as an "associate" of Maher, Makhoul bankrolls the regime, allowing violence against demonstrators.

9. Abd al-Fatah Qudsiyah

Head of Syrian Military Intelligence; involved in the repression against the civilian population.

10. Jamil Hassan

Head of Syrian Air Force Intelligence; involved in the repression against the civilian population.

11. Rustum Ghazali

Head of Syrian Military Intelligence - Damascus Countryside Branch; involved in the repression against the civilian population.

12. Fawwaz al-Assad

A leader of the Shabiha, or undercover militia; involved in the repression against the civilian population.

13. Muneir al-Assad

Took part in the repression against the civilian population as part of the Shabiha militia.

The Guardian quotes the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights saying that at least 400 people had been rounded up in the coastal town of Baniyas since 7 May, adding to an estimated 7,000 already in detention across the country.

The non-governmental National Organization for Human Rights in Syria says 757 civilians have died since the countrywide protests against president Bashar al-Assad began on 18 March.

Under pressure from fellow member states, Syria withdraws its candidacy for membership on the UN Human Rights Council. Syria's candidacy is replaced by Kuwait.

A website called the Committee of Martyrs of the Syrian Revolution names 757 people killed in the violence in Syria in last seven weeks.

Libya - NATO warplanes struck at least four sites in Tripoli in the heaviest bombing of the city in weeks.

Egypt - Former tourism minister Zoheir Garrahan is jailed for 5 years .

Gulf Cooperation Council – Agence France-Presse and Reuters report that Jordan and Morocco have asked to join the Gulf Cooperation Council.

May 11, 2011

Libya - Gaddafi makes his first appearance on Libyan state television since 9 April. He is filmed from a distance sitting with tribal leaders.

NATO says it has carried out more than 2,400 air strikes in Libya since March 31.

Yemen - Yemeni forces open fire on demonstrators in three major cities, killing at least 18 and wounding hundreds in one of the fiercest bouts of violence witnessed in nearly three months of popular unrest.

Syria - UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urges Syria to halt mass arrests of anti-government protesters and to heed calls for reform.

Bahrain - Al Jazeera reports that the Bahraini police carried out raids on girls' schools as part of a crackdown against pro-democracy protests.

May 12, 2011

Syria - Security forces arrest civil rights activist Najati Tayara on a street in Homs.

Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu states that the outside world should not interfere in Syria's internal affairs.

We also think that the outside world should not interfere in Syria's internal affairs so as to avoid adding complicating factors. We hope the international community can play a constructive role in maintaining peace and stability in the Middle East.

US embassy in Damascus issues a statement on calling the Syrian government to allow peaceful protests. The statement reads:

The United States Embassy witnessed, on the evening of May 12, the third peaceful demonstration this week of protesters who disagree with American policy towards Syria. The United States respects the right of these demonstrators to express themselves in peaceful marches.

The U.S. Embassy regrets that the Syrian Government has denied the rights of thousands of other Syrians to demonstrate peacefully to criticize Syrian policy. Most recently, on the evening of May 11, Syrian security forces, using clubs and batons, brutally assaulted a group of Aleppo university students who sought to march peacefully to demand an end to Syrian security operations targeting some Syrian cities.

The United States believes there should be no double standard. The Syrian Government should grant all Syrians the right to express themselves peacefully, as required of it by its signature on the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

May 13, 2011

Libya - Gaddafi's compound in Tripoli is hit by NATO rockets again, a few hours after he appeared in public for the first time in almost two weeks. Gaddafi was shown on state television in a traditional brown robe addressing tribal leaders.

Saudi Arabia – Protests are reported in the cities of al-Awamiyah and Qatif in solidarity with anti-government protesters in Bahrain. The demonstrators also call for the immediate withdrawal of Saudi troops from Bahrain.

Egypt - Tens of thousands of people gather again in Cairo's Tahrir Square. The rally is being held as a show of religious unity after Muslim-Christian clashes, last weekend, left 12 dead.

Reuters reports the arrest of Suzanne Mubarak, wife of the deposed Egyptian president. She is detained for 15 days pending further investigations into corruption allegations.

Syria – UN reports that up to 850 people have been killed since the violent crackdown in Syria began.

Thousands of security personnel have successfully crushed a protest in Midan, a Sunni neighbourhood of Damascus which two weeks ago saw the largest anti-government protests in the capital since the unrest began.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov warns against foreign intervention in Syria, calling on its opposition not to seek a repeat of the "Libya scenario".

Yemen - Vast crowds of people gather in Taiz, in southern Yemen, to protest against president Saleh's government.

Qatar's news agency QNA said reports that Qatar has withdrawn from talks to end Yemen's crisis based on a plan to allow Saleh to step down with immunity from prosecution. "The government [of Qatar] was obliged to take the decision because of the stalling and

delays in the signing of the agreement, the escalation of the events, the severe confrontations and the lack of wisdom which contradict the spirit of the initiative."

May 14, 2011

Syria - Representatives of Syria's Kurds, the largest ethnic minority in the country, call on all opposition forces inside and outside the country to join together to form a single political body responsible for overseeing a transition from dictatorship to democracy.

May 15, 2011

Libya - The head of Britain's armed forces, Sir David Richards, says NATO should step up its military campaign against the Gaddafi regime by broadening the range of bombing targets.

In his Sunday address Pope Benedict XVI expresses his "apprehension" about the conflict in Libya and calls for "negotiation and dialogue to prevail over violence, with the help of the international bodies who are working to find a solution to the crisis."

Egypt - Several Coptic Christians are injured in Cairo after they were attacked at a demonstration outside Egypt's state TV building. A Christian leader calls for an end to the protest.

Reuters reports that Suzanne Mubarak, wife of the deposed Egyptian president, has been arrested on corruption allegations.

Yemen - Vast anti-government demonstrations take place in Sana'a and in the southern city of Taiz. A defiant president Saleh described the protesters as "saboteurs".

Israel - As many as 15 people are killed when Israeli troops opened fire on pro-Palestinian demonstrators who breached its borders on three fronts. Four of those killed are shot in a Golan Heights village after Syria appeared to allow thousands of demonstrators to cross the border. Israel blamed Syria for the violence and accused it of trying to divert attention from its political unrest. Syria accused Israel of "criminal practices".

Saudi Arabia - About 1,000 people in the city of Qatif defy a ban on demonstrations and stage peaceful protest to demand the withdrawal of Saudi troops from Bahrain.

May 16, 2011

Libya – According to Agence France Presse, NATO bombs struck the Bab al-Aziziya area of Tripoli where Muammar Gaddafi resides. Three explosions were reported, and the blasts also evidently shook a hotel near the city centre where many foreign journalists live.

International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo requests ICC judges to issue arrest warrants against Muammar Abu Minya Gaddafi, Saif Al Islam Gaddafi and the Head of the Intelligence Abdullah Al Sanousi from crimes against humanity committed in Libya since February 2011.

May 17, 2011

Libya – A Tunisian security source reports that the chairman of Libya's National Oil Corporation, Shukri Ghanem, has defected from Muammar Gaddafi's administration and fled to neighbouring Tunisia. Ghanem, an internationally respected technocrat, is credited with liberalising Libya's economy and energy sector.

Russia hosts a representative of Gaddafi's government in Moscow and calls on Tripoli to stop using force against civilians, comply fully with UN Security Council resolutions and withdraw armed groups from cities. The talks indicate Russia's desire to act as peacemaker and preserve its influence in Libya, where it has billions of dollars of arms, energy and infrastructure contracts.

NATO air strikes hit government buildings in Tripoli. British planes hit a number of targets include a building used to train Gaddafi's bodyguards.

Egypt - Egypt's former first lady Suzanne Mubarak is released on bail after agreeing to hand over assets to the state.

May 18, 2011

Yemen - A deal that would end the rule of Ali Abdullah Saleh within a month is due to be signed by the Yemeni president and the opposition today. Two previous near-deals fell through at the last minute. The president refuses to sign this one too, at the last moment despite a telephone call from John Brennan, a White House adviser on national security, urging him to sign the agreement.

Syria - The Associated Press quotes an interview given by president Bashar al-Assad to *Al-Watan* newspaper in which he says that the country's security forces have made mistakes during the uprising against his regime. He does not acknowledge any responsibility himself, but blames poorly trained police officers at least in part for a crackdown that has killed more than 850 people over the past two months.

Syrian activists claim 8 more people have been confirmed killed in Tel Kelakh, which has been bombarded by tanks for a fourth day.

Switzerland imposes embargo on arms and equipment that could be used for internal repression.

Saudi Arabia – BBC website publishers report by Michael Buchanan, “Saudi woman seeks to put women in the driving seat”, giving an account of the driving campaign by Najla Hariri - believed to be the only woman regularly driving in a Saudi city. The 45-year-old, mother of five, says she was inspired by the protests taking place elsewhere in the Middle East.

May 19, 2011

United States - President Barack Obama delivers an address on the United States' policy on the Middle East and North Africa at the State Department in Washington. He describes the National Transitional Council as “legitimate and credible.” Middle East analysts say the president’s speech on the uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa was effective in aligning American policy with the sweeping changes in the region. However, they also say his remarks on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could prove to be a major distraction from his overall message.

May 20, 2011

Libya - NATO planes hit eight Gaddafi warships.

Syria – More than 20 people are reported to have been killed in the largest and most widespread demonstrations in Syria since protesters took to the streets 10 weeks ago. Most of the casualties took place in the city of Homs, but there are reports of violence across Syria.

The Syrian government claims it is withdrawing forces from the besieged border town of Talkalakh. Opposition groups say at least 35 people have been killed in the town in the last four days.

Morocco – Reuters reports that in a daring breach of protocol, a group of jobless graduates worked their way through a crowd to near the king after he led Friday prayers and chanted "Your majesty, we want jobs." State television cut off a live broadcast as the slogans began. The outburst was almost unprecedented in a country where the king is treated with outmost reverence.

Yemen - President Ali Abdullah Saleh promises early elections in what is being seen as another stalling tactic.

May 21, 2011

Saudi Arabia - Manal al-Sharif, a 32-year old mother and women's rights activist who helped to start a women's right to drive campaign, is detained for six hours after a video showing her driving in Khobar in the Eastern Province. In reaction to al-Sharif's arrest, several more Saudi women published videos of themselves driving during the following days.

May 22, 2011

Morocco - Moroccan police beat protesters who defied a ban on demonstrations across the country, leading to arrests and dozens of injuries. According to Reuters, in major cities, including Rabat, Casablanca, Tangier, Fes and Oujda, police armed with batons and shields moved people off the streets wherever they gathered. The demonstrations end in a huge number of casualties and arrests. The 20 February Movement reports some 90 protesters hurt, six with fractured arms and two with fractured legs. Reuters suggests that the violence appears to signal a tougher government line against the protest movement, which has become more defiant after demonstrations started in February but has yet to attract mass public support. The protests were in response to a call by the February 20 Movement, a loose youth-led network from various ideological backgrounds, mostly leftist and Islamist. Many are affiliated with authorised political parties. Relying mostly on the Internet, the group is pressing King Mohammed VI to establish a parliamentary monarchy, enforce accountability and grant the judiciary full independence.

Syria - King Abdullah II of Jordan urged Syrian president Bashar al-Assad to reach out to protesters. His call is echoed by Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa, who appeals to Assad to accelerate socio-economic and political reforms, provide more freedoms and announce new elections.

Yemen - President Ali Abdullah Saleh once again refuses to sign a deal that would see him leave office in return for legal immunity. Western and Arab diplomats, including the British ambassador to Yemen, are trapped inside the UAE embassy in Sana'a for several hours by a mob loyal to Saleh.

May 23, 2011

Yemen – President Ali Abdullah Saleh refuses, at the last moment, to sign a deal that would see him leave office in return for legal immunity - deal negotiated by GCC.

President Saleh's forces attack the house of Sheikh Sadeq Al-Ahmar's house in Hasaba, Sana'a. In response Sheikh Sadeq issues the "Tribal Call" which in effect calls every tribesmen to join him in defending his honor, attacking one's house is a great dishonor in tribal law. The attack on Sadeq's residence signals irreconcilable breakdown between the two most important tribal confederations.

Libya – Reuters reports that Gaddafi forces are shelling neighbourhoods in the west and south of the western city of Misrata.

Syria - The European Union extends its sanctions on Syria to president Bashar al-Assad, and other senior officials.

Egypt - Hundreds of Egyptians stage an unprecedented show of online defiance against their country's military leadership, taking to their blogs to write at times scathing critiques of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) that assumed power after longtime president Hosni Mubarak stepped down in February.

Saudi Arabia – Manal al-Sharif who drove a car in Khobar is re-arrested. The Khobar prison chief Ayoub ben Nahit is quoted in *al-Watan* newspaper as saying Sherif faced accusations of "violating the rules and the system by driving her car, roaming the streets of the province". He also accuses her of "inciting public opinion" by posting video of her driving a car on YouTube.

May 24, 2011

Libya – It is announced that Britain and France are to deploy attack helicopters against Libya in an attempt to break the military stalemate.

Syria - The Guardian profiles five key figures in the Syrian opposition who are emerging as possible leaders of the Syrian rebellion: Suhair Atassi; Burhan Ghalioun; Radwan Ziadeh; Adnan Mohamed and Michael Kilo.

Switzerland announces the freezing of assets of Syrian president Bashar al-Assad.

Egypt – The prosecutor general, Mahmoud Abdel-Meguid, announces that former president Hosni Mubarak and his two sons, Gamal and Alaa, will stand trial on charges of abusing power and amassing wealth.

May 25, 2011

Yemen – The Associated Press reports a message of defiance from president Ali Abdullah Saleh. He cited as saying that he will not step down or allow the country to become a "failed state". His spokesman quoted him saying "I will not leave power and I will not leave Yemen."

Libya – During a press conference in London, President Barack Obama states that winning the war in Libya would be a "slow, steady process". He plays down hopes of an early breakthrough. "I think that there may be a false perception that there is a whole bunch of secret super-effective air assets that are in a warehouse somewhere that could just be pulled out and would somehow immediately solve the situation in Libya... That's not the case... People have to be patient."

Syria – The body of Hamza Ali Al-Khatteb, a 13-year-old boy detained by Syrian Airforce Intelligence on 29 April is released to his family. The child had spent nearly a month in the custody of Syrian security, and when they finally returned Hamza's corpse it bore the scars of brutal torture: his eyes were swollen and black and there were identical bullet wounds where he had apparently been shot through both arms, the bullets tearing a hole in his sides and lodging in his belly. Lacerations, bruises and burns to his feet, elbows, face and knees, consistent with the use of electric shock devices and of being whipped with cable, both techniques of torture documented by Human Rights Watch as being used in Syrian prisons. On Hamza's chest was a deep, dark burn mark. His neck was broken and his penis cut off. His name has become a rallying cry for protesters. A Facebook page honoring his death had more than 105,000 connections by the end of June 2011.

Britain, France, Germany and Portugal circulate a draft resolution to the UN Security Council condemning Syria for its bloody crackdown against pro-democracy protesters.

May 26, 2011

Yemen - Fighting rages for a fourth day in Sana'a between anti-government tribesmen and forces loyal to Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh. Witnesses report that the house of a Yemeni tribal leader was severely damaged in the fighting.

The United States calls for a ceasefire in Yemen and urges president Saleh to stand down. The French government blames Saleh for the violence.

The US has ordered all non-essential diplomats to leave Yemen and urged all Americans there to depart.

Libya - Pentagon spokesman Colonel Dave Lapan states that the US military is supplying bombs and spare parts to allies carrying out strikes in the NATO-led air campaign

against the Gaddafi regime. "We have provided material support, including munitions, to Allies and partners engaged in operations in Libya" since 1 April. The statement is the public confirmation that the Pentagon is providing ammunition to NATO allies, amid reports that some countries were running out of supplies of precision-guided bombs or parts. According to Colonel Lapan since NATO took the lead in the air campaign on 1 April, the United States has provided allies and partners with about \$24.3 million worth of "repair parts, ammunition, and technical support."

According to Agence France Presse five powerful explosions hit the Libyan capital Tripoli during the night rocking an area where Muammar Gaddafi has his residence. A column of smoke is seen rising from Gaddafi's compound.

Saudi Arabia – The investigation into the alleged offences committed by Manal al-Sharif, a 32-year old mother who drove around the eastern city of Khobar, is extended by another ten days. She is kept in prison during the period of inquiries. It is disputed by lawyers whether it is illegal for women to drive under national law but it is socially and religiously unacceptable in many quarters.

May 27, 2011

Yemen - Hundreds of militants, alleged to be al-Qaeda fighters, seize Zinjibar, the capital of the country's southern Abyan province, taking advantage of a breakdown of authority resulting from the government's battle with armed tribesmen seeking to topple president Ali Abdullah Saleh. According to Al Jazeera up to 300 fighters entered the southern coastal town and took over "everything" in the area. At least four protesters were reportedly shot dead by security forces in the city of Taiz.

One of Yemen's principal tribal leaders Sheikh Sadeq al-Ahmar announces a ceasefire in fighting between his Hashid tribe and forces loyal to president Saleh. He told a rally of hundreds of thousands of people that he backed a peaceful uprising. The ceasefire has held in Sana'a but outside the capital a tribal militia seized control of two army bases prompting government air strikes.

Egypt - An estimated 100,000 Egyptian protesters return to Cairo's Tahrir Square on a 'Second Day of Rage'. One of their demands is the replacement of the ruling military council.

Syria - There are reports of protests across Syria.

Libya - Gaddafi's forces launch rocket attacks overnight in the rebel-held town of Zintan and are fighting rebels on the outskirts of Misrata, which Gaddafi's enemies also

control. In Tripoli, several large explosions were heard and a column of smoke seen rising from Gaddafi's Bab al-Aziziyah compound.

Libyan Prime Minister Al-Baghdadi Ali Al-Mahmoudi gives a rare news conference during which he repeats offers of a ceasefire. In the past similar offers were rejected by the opponents of the regime because they say Gaddafi's departure is a precondition. Al-Mahmoudi states: "Libya is serious about a ceasefire," but adds: "The leader Muammar Gaddafi is the leader of the Libyan people; he decides what the Libyan people think. He is in the hearts of the Libyan people."

Speaking on the sidelines of the G8 summit at Deauville in northwestern France, Russian deputy foreign minister Sergei Ryabkov issues the strongest call yet for the embattled Muammar Gaddafi to stand down. "We believe that Colonel Gadaffi has forfeited legitimacy due to his actions... indeed we need to help him go," Ryabkov said. The statement marks a dramatic change of tone for Moscow, which has been critical of UN-sanctioned Western strikes on Gaddafi's forces as they try to quash a pro-democracy rebellion.

According the Russian daily newspaper *Kommersant* reports that US President Barack Obama asked his Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev to convey to Muammar Gaddafi that he will remain alive if he leaves Libya. The two presidents met on the sidelines of the G8 summit in France. *Kommersant* report suggests that both Obama and French President Nicolas Sarkozy were pressing Russia to accept the role of mediator because they feared the conflict was reaching a stalemate. "Acknowledging that the conflict has dragged on for too long, and the West has severed all connections with Gaddafi and his circle Russia has been offered to act as a mediator in negotiations with the Libyan leader."

May 29, 2011

United Arab Emirates - Dr Anwar Mohammed Gargash, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Minister of State for Federal National Council (FNC) Affairs and Chairman of the National Election Committee (NEC), states during a lecture at the UAE University in Al Ain, that this year, it is expected that around 70,000 Emiratis will cast their votes in [indirect] elections on 24 September. This would be a nine-fold increase on 2006, when 7,757 Emiratis — 6,595 men and 1,162 women — turned out to vote. "This year's election campaigns will be more organised and more up-to-date as we gained good experience in the 2006 elections," he said. "For political consolidations, we are following strategic programmes step by step. Now we are in the third stage of this manual and it would expand extensively. In

the coming years, we would move to the fourth step, which would open up more public participation in the electoral process of the country.

Saudi Arabia - King Abdullah issues a decree approving 18 new salary scales for government employees. The new scales that came into effect a day earlier include a 15-percent inflationary allowance.

Morocco – Some 15,000 people gathered in the Sbata district of Casablanca, responding to a call from 20 February Movement, to demand more democratic freedoms, jobs and better social conditions. According to CNN report, police sealed off streets around the district to block people, swelling the numbers, and then sent several 30-strong squads of truncheon-wielding officers charging into the crowd.

May 30, 2011

Yemen – Hundreds of soldiers loyal to Yemen's embattled president Ali Abdullah Saleh storm a protest camp in the southern city of Taiz killing at least 20 people.

At least 30 people reported killed in strikes on city of Zinjibar, which is said to be held by al-Qaeda-linked fighters.

Syria - Syrian troops bombard a town in the central province of Homs with artillery, killing at least one person.

Reuters reports that tanks have stormed the town of Talbiseh in the central province of Homs.

President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela expresses support for Syria's president Bashar al-Assad. He blames "terrorists" for the protests in the Syrian city of Daraa.

Libya – South African President Jacob Zuma arrives in Tripoli for talks with Muammar Gaddafi. According to Xinhua news agency “Zuma, during his several hours' visit to Tripoli, held what he described as a ‘detailed and long’ talk with the embattled Libyan leader, during which he informed Gaddafi of ‘recent steps and measures taken by the AU,’ and iterated an AU call for dialogue between the Libyans.”

Eight high-ranking Libyan military officers, including five generals, appear at an Italian government-arranged news conference in Rome, saying they were part of a group of up to 120 military officials and soldiers who defected from Gaddafi in recent days.

President Hugo Chávez announces that envoys from Muammar Gaddafi's government have flown to Venezuela to discuss ways to resolve Libya's conflict.

May 31, 2011

Bahrain – King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa calls for talks on reform involving all parties in the Gulf Arab state "without preconditions" from 1 July. The King's address does not offer a framework or agenda of negotiations. "Who does not want more efficient government performance? Who does not want more effective legislative representation? Or political associations and civil society groups that work in the framework of national unity and the rule of law?"

Yemen - Clashes erupt in Sana'a, shattering a truce between loyalist troops and dissident tribesmen, as security forces shot dead seven protesters, sparking strong condemnation from Washington. Government forces attacked the heavily guarded home of Sheikh Sadeq Al-Ahmar. Ahmar's armed followers fought back and reoccupied several government buildings they had seized in the first round of fighting between the sides last week. Live ammunition against protesters in Taiz is used by government forces and seven protesters are reported shot dead. Elsewhere, 13 Yemeni soldiers are killed by militants in south Yemen: eight died from clashes with suspected Al-Qaeda fighters, and five others in a car bomb that targeted a military convoy. In the south suspected Al-Qaeda fighters killed 11 soldiers and wounded 31 in separate attacks near Zinjibar, capital of Anbar province. Two more soldiers died of wounds sustained earlier. That latest attacks bring to 41 the number of soldiers and civilians killed in fighting in or near Zinjibar since 27 May.

Members of the Hashid tribe seize the headquarters of General People's Congress in Sana'a - the ruling party in Yemen.

June 1, 2011

Syria - Human rights activists report that Syrian troops have bombed the southern town of Hiraq (near Daraa) killing at least eight people.

Human Rights Watch publishes report detailing "crimes against humanity" in Daraa, since protests began there on 18 March. It is based on more than 50 interviews with victims and witnesses to abuses. Some of the deadliest incidents documented in the report include:

An attack on al-Omari mosque, which served as a rallying point for protesters and a makeshift hospital for the wounded protesters, and attacks on ensuing protests from 23 to 25 March, killing more than 30 protesters;

Attacks on demonstrators during two protests on 8 April, resulting in at least 25 deaths; Attacks during a protest and a funeral procession in the town of Izraa on 22 and 23 April, resulting in at least 34 deaths; Killings during the blockade of Daraa and neighboring

villages beginning on 25 April, and during an effort by residents of neighboring towns to break the siege on 29 April, which left up to 200 dead.

Syrian dissidents meet at an opposition conference in the Turkish town of Antalya. They declare that their main aim, at this stage, is to get the UN security council to pass a resolution referring members of president Assad's regime to the international criminal court.

Bahrain – The authorities lift martial law on in what the government hopes will be a sign to tourists and business of a return to normal. With Bahrain's state of emergency over, military prosecutors can no longer call in civilians but military courts will still hear several cases started since martial law began on 15 March. Forty-eight doctors and nurses are on military trial on charges ranging from incitement against the government to storing weapons and seizing control of a major hospital during the unrest. Twenty-one opposition figures, seven of whom are abroad, are on military trial on charges of seeking to overthrow the system. Most of them are from parties that called for a republic. During the martial law dozens of Shiite places of worship were demolished and four people died in custody.

Yemen Overnight Street battles in Sana'a leave at least 41 people dead, some trapped in burning buildings. Arab embassies are evacuating their staff and the few remaining western residents are being advised to leave urgently. *The Guardian* reports: "No safety, no electricity, no water, no phone network, and people with no jobs, the situation is very bad these days." Reuters reports that at least 120 have been killed in the clashes between tribal fighters and government troops since they began last week.

Libya – NATO and its partners in the military campaign to protect Libyan civilians decided to extend their mission another 90 days. The decision is made during a meeting of ambassadors from the 28 NATO countries plus ambassadors from the five non-NATO countries participating in the Libya campaign - Jordan, Qatar, Sweden, the United Arab Emirates and Morocco.

Libya's oil minister Shukri Ghanem officially defects to the anti-Gaddafi side. He tells reporters that he had left the regime two weeks ago and arrived in Rome on 31 May.

Egypt - The Middle East News Agency reports that, Abdel-Aziz Omar, head of the court of appeals, has issued the trial date for the ousted Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak on charges of corruption and intentionally killing protesters. It will start on 3 August. His two sons will also be tried on charges of corruption.

June 2, 2011

Bahrain - Formula One race in Bahrain is cancelled after teams objected to it being rescheduled in October.

Syria - Syrian security forces continue their assault on the central town of Rastan, hitting it with artillery and gunfire.

Morocco - Khaled al-Amari, 30-year-old member of Morocco's main opposition group, dies after reportedly suffering a severe beating at the hands of police during a protest in the city of Safi. Officers deny that his death was a direct result of police violence, despite eyewitness accounts that he was severely beaten.

Saudi Arabia - Reuters reports the arrival of President Barack Obama's chief counter-terrorism adviser, John Brennan, to Saudi Arabia en route to the United Arab Emirates. Apparently he is seeking help from both countries to pressure Saleh into stepping down.

June 3, 2011

Yemen – Rocket attack on a mosque in the presidential compound in Sana'a, by opposition tribesmen determined to topple the president, kills 11 bodyguards and seriously wounds five senior officials who were worshipping alongside president Saleh. The president is seriously wounded in the attack. Reuters subsequently reported that the president's injuries were more serious than previously reported. Saleh was initially said to have received shrapnel wound. However, according to Yemeni and US officials he also suffered burns to over roughly 40 percent of his body. Two members of Saleh's extended family are also injured in the strike - Kannan Saleh, a son of Yemen's central security chief, and Tarek Saleh, the son of a Republican Guard commander.

Saleh delivers an audio address on television to reassure supporters, but his voice sounds laboured and the address was made accompanied by an old photograph of him on the screen.

Earlier Friday, intense government shelling flattened the homes of two tribal leaders and a military general who also joined the opposition.

Kuwait - Around five thousand Kuwaitis, including a delegate from Kuwait Lawyers Society take part in a demonstration held at the 'Will Yard' (Demonstration Yard) outside the parliament house under the slogan 'For the Sake of Kuwait'.

Bahrain - A motor racing council meeting in Barcelona agrees to reinstate the Formula One Grand Prix race cancelled earlier this year after pro-democracy protests erupted in the kingdom. The race is now scheduled for 30 October.

Majority Shias demanding political reforms continued to stage protests, two days after the lifting of emergency rule that the country's minority Sunni rulers hope will bring back tourism and commerce after months of turmoil. Police fired tear gas to break up a protest by some 500 people "Down with (King) Hamad" and "Gulf forces out" in the district of Sanabis.

Sheikh Issa Qassim, the most revered Shia cleric in Bahrain, tells worshippers at Friday prayers the opposition would need a popular mandate to enter any talks and suggested the king's offer was not serious. "Any political society, party or person will need a clear mandate from the street before entering any negotiations," he said. "Domestic security in any country is clear — it comes from a serious initiative for reform ... The security approach is no longer able to keep people quiet."

June 4, 2011

Yemen – President Ali Abdullah Saleh is flown to Riyadh on board a Saudi medical aircraft for surgery to remove shrapnel from his chest, the result of a rocket attack on the presidential compound the previous day. A second plane reportedly carried 24 members of his family.

Several officials, including caretaker Prime Minister Ali Mohammad Mujawar and head of parliament Abdulaziz Abdulghani, also hurt in the bomb attack are also taken for treatment to Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia – A well-known Saudi actress, Wajnat Rahbini, is detained in Jeddah for driving her car. She is released the following day without bail.

June 5, 2011

Yemen - Thousands of democracy activists sang and danced in the streets of Sana'a, celebrating the departure of President Ali Abdullah Saleh, hoping it marks the end of his three decades in power. In the southern city of Taiz tens of thousands celebrated Saleh's departure with a fireworks display.

Bahrain - Police clashed with Shia marchers in outlying villages less than a week after Bahrain repealed an emergency law.

Libya – British Foreign Secretary, William Hague, visits the National Transitional Council in Benghazi and describes the NTC as "the legitimate representatives of the Libyan people".

Morocco – Estimated 60,000 of protesters take to the streets of Rabat and Casablanca to condemn the death of Khaled al-Amari and to demand an end to the country-wide government crackdown on peaceful demonstrations. Many protesters believe that the recent escalation in violence is meant to quash mass mobilisations before the 1 July referendum on reforming the constitution.

June 6, 2011

Yemen – US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton states “We are calling for a peaceful and orderly transition.” “We feel that an immediate transition is in the best interests of the Yemeni people.” In a joint statement, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Nicolas Sarkozy, and the prime ministers of Britain, Spain and Italy thanked Saudi Arabia for receiving Saleh for treatment, and called on all parties in Yemen to “find a means of reconciliation on the basis of the GCC initiative.” “Saleh’s departure to Saudi Arabia isn’t just courtesy from the Saudi ruling family,” said Egyptian political analyst Nabil Abdel-Fattah. “The security of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf is linked to security in Yemen.”

The Guardian reports that the United States and Britain are pressing Saudi Arabia to persuade the Yemeni president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, to formally stand down and implement a deal under which he would relinquish power in exchange for immunity from prosecution and financial guarantees about his future.

Libya – NATO confirms that during the past 24 hours has hit the following targets. In Tripoli: 1 Command & Control Facility. In the vicinity of Tripoli: 2 Command & Control Facilities, 1 Surface-To-Air Missile Storage Facility, 1 Ground Forces Compound, 1 Air Defence Forces Compound, 4 Surface-To-Air Missile Launchers, 1 Radar. In the vicinity of Brega: 3 Military Vehicles. In the vicinity of Misrata: 1 Armoured Fighting Vehicle.

Saudi Arabia - The Shoura Council recommends to the government that it takes necessary measures to allow Saudi women to vote in municipal elections under Islamic law. In the upcoming municipal elections in the Kingdom, women are not allowed either to vote or to contest the polls. The Council’s recommendation is for future elections. Hundreds of women around the Kingdom have joined an online campaign called Baladi, Arabic for "My Country", in protest at their exclusion from the municipal elections. In April, dozens showed up at voting registration centres in Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam to demand their right to vote but were turned down by officials.

Egypt – The interim government agrees on a \$3bn loan package with the International Monetary Fund to help stabilise the country's finances during the post-Mubarak transition period.

Bahrain – Some 47 doctors and nurses who treated injured anti-government protesters during the unrest in Bahrain go on trial in a security court on accused of participating in efforts to overthrow the monarchy.

June 7, 2011

Yemen – Yemen's Defense Ministry reports the killing by its troops of at least 30 militants just outside the city of Zinjibar.

Saudi Arabia – Saudi border guards kill Abdullah bin Abdul Rahman Al-Sayel, a Saudi terrorist trying to make his way to Yemen through the Al-Wadeeah border post. The man was also involved in a fatal attack on a police office in Qassim a month ago.

June 8, 2011

Yemen – The International Committee of the Red Cross reports that Some 20 bodies have been retrieved in and around Sana'a since 4 June by ICRC and Yemen Red Crescent teams . More than 200 people have been killed and thousands have fled Sana'a in the last two weeks as fighting intensified. Officials and residents described dire scenes in the southern Abyan province where the army and Islamist militants have fought for days, causing thousands of residents to flee. The fighting has reduced Zinjibar, once home to more than 50,000 people, to a ghost town without power or running water. Protests are held in the southern city of Taiz.

Syria - Columns of government tanks surround Jisr al-Shughour, near the Turkish border, and most of the town's 41,000 people are reported to have fled after armed clashes three days earlier.

Syrian refugees stream across the border into Turkey where they are accommodated in a tent city set up by Turkey's Red Crescent in the border town of Yayladagi. Turkish authorities report that more than 30 Syrian refugees have been treated at Turkish hospitals for wounds they suffered in clashes in northern Syria.

The Turkish prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan calls on Syria to rein in violence against its people. "Syria should change its attitude towards civilians and should take its attitude to a more tolerant level as soon as possible." Erdogan also promised not to turn away

refugees as residents of the Syrian border town Jisr al-Shughour headed for the Turkish frontier to escape a feared military assault.

Tunisia - Tunisia's interim government postpones elections, due to be held in July, until 23 October 2011. The Tunisian electoral commission had asked for the delay, saying it needed more time to prepare a credible vote.

Libya - Spain recognises the Libyan rebel National Transitional Council as the country's legitimate representative. It follows France, Qatar, Maldives, Italy, Kuwait, the Gambia, and Jordan who recognised the NTC earlier.

Gaddafi's forces attack Misrata from three sides, in the heaviest bombardment since the rebels took control of the city.

NATO'S intensifies aerial bombardment of Tripoli hours after Muammar Gaddafi made a rare speech on state television vowing to fight to the death.

June 9, 2011

Libya – The third meeting of the Libya Contact Group is held in Abu Dhabi, UAE, under the co-chairmanship of UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Foreign Minister of Italy Franco Frattini, and US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. It reiterates support for the Transitional National Council and calls for the establishment of an international mechanism to unfreeze Libyan state assets, formerly controlled by the Muammar Gaddafi's regime. The meeting, attended by 20 foreign ministers, including from the GCC, and envoys from world organisations, pledged more than \$ 1.4 billion to help support Libya's opposition group. (Italy pledged up to \$ 600 million to the rebel council and France pledged \$ 421 million. Kuwait renewed a pledge for \$ 180 million and Turkey and Qatar \$ 100 million each.)

Luis Moreno-Ocampo, the chief prosecutor of the international criminal court, states that according to new evidence submitted to the court, Muammar Gaddafi's regime in Libya is using rape as a weapon of conflict. He tells reporters at the UN in New York that there even evidence that the government had been handing out doses of Viagra to soldiers to encourage sexual attacks. US Ambassador to the UN Susan Rice made similar allegations in April.

NATO has continues to bomb Tripoli in one of heaviest bombardment of the capital so far.

Yemen - Yemeni government troops try to recapture areas held by Islamic militants killed 12 suspected al-Qaida members in the Doves and Kod areas of the southern province of Abyan.

Saudi Arabia - Saudi authorities detain six women for driving cars in the capital in defiance of laws allowing only male motorists on the kingdom's roads. Saudi Arabia has no formal ban on women driving. But as citizens must use only Saudi-issued licences in the country, and as these are issued only to men, women drivers are anathema.

Jordan - King Abdullah II pardons 1,184,000 criminal offenders to mark the 12th anniversary of his accession. The pardon covers traffic violators and those who committed petty crimes, but also some detainees who took part in street protests demanding reforms. The amnesty excluded prisoners involved in terrorist acts, but 11 hardline militants will have their sentences significantly slashed under a special amnesty.¹²

June 10, 2011

Bahrain – *Gulf News* reports that about 400 people have been put on trial in Bahrain for their roles in weeks of protests that rocked the kingdom this year. Wefaq, which represents Bahrain's Shia majority, said up to 50 people had already been sentenced, with penalties varying from a short prison term to execution. Twenty-one activists face charges of attempting a coup in coordination with a foreign terrorist organisation - among them the prominent hard-line Shia dissident leader Hassan Mushaima and Ebrahim Shareef, head of the leading secular party Waad.

Sheikh Isa Qassim, the country's most senior Shia cleric, says there is no chance of talks with the country's Sunni rulers while security forces maintain their clampdown on protesters. "We cannot negotiate in such conditions," he told worshippers in a mostly Shia area outside the capital, Manama. "The brutal force and abusive language being deployed against us can never destroy our will and desire to achieve our rights and dignity."

Yemen – Tens of thousands of Yemenis take to the streets of the capital in parallel protests one demanding the country's wounded leader surrender any claim to power, another calling him back home. Thousands of anti-Saleh demonstrators filled Siteen Street in the heart of Sanaa demanding Saleh formally hand over power to his deputy, Abd-Rabbu

¹² Jordan's 14 prisons house some 8,308 prisoners.

Mansour Hadi, the acting president. Near the presidential headquarters, a smaller group of Saleh supporters gathered after Friday prayers to urge his return to the country.

Sheikh Sadiq Al-Ahmar, leader of the opposition tribal confederation, leads a march through the Change Square in Sana'a carrying bodies of 41 fighters killed last week in battle with government troops.

Agence France Presse reports that president Ali Abdullah Saleh, in a Saudi hospital, is in poor condition and is suffering breathing problems.

Libya - Gaddafi's forces shelled the town of Gadamis, 600km southwest of Tripoli, for the first time since a February uprising against his rule.

The Associated Press reports 22 people killed by Gaddafi's forces on the outskirts of Misrata.

Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, tells NTV television, that has offered a "guarantee" to Muammar Gaddafi in return for his departure from Libya but has received no reply. Gaddafi "has no other option than to leave Libya - with a guarantee to be given to him... We have given him this guarantee. We have told him we will help him to be sent wherever he wants to go." "Depending on the reply we will get from him, we will take up the issue with our (NATO) allies, but unfortunately we have received no reply so far," he said.

Norway announces it will withdraw completely from the NATO-led operation against Libya by 1 August, and in the meantime will scale down its fighter jet contribution from six to four planes.

Libyan state television reports that NATO warplanes had attacked targets in the neighbourhood of Ain Zara in the southeast of the capital Tripoli.

Syria – The British Foreign Office issues the following statement: "We remain extremely concerned by the Iranian government's repression of its own people and its support for violent elements in the region. We have seen credible information suggesting Iran is helping Syria with the suppression of protests there, including through the provision of expertise and equipment. We had already raised this issue with the Iranian chargé in London."

Agence France Presse reports accounts of four named Syrian army deserters of atrocities committed by soldiers in suppressing anti-government protests, under threat of execution if they disobeyed orders. The four conscripts interviewed by AFP, who fled to Turkey, recounted instances of rape and wanton murder as president Bashar al-Assad's forces combat demonstrations against his regime across the country.

June 11, 2011

Libya – Agencies report a letter purported to be from Muammar Gaddafi which suggests to the US Congress that he is ready to negotiate a ceasefire in the three-month-old conflict. The US State Department said it had heard about the letter, but not seen it. In the three-page letter, Gaddafi is reported to be saying that he was grateful for the "thoughtful discussion of the issues." "We are ready to sit at the table with appropriate internal interlocutors led by the United States. Let's stop the destruction and begin the negotiations to find a peaceful solution for Libya." "Our nation must not be colonized again by Europeans. Our Country must not be divided again," the letter apparently states. Gaddafi also asked for humanitarian assistance and "accommodation between the parties within Libya that are at odds." The letter is dated June 9, 2011 and is signed by "Muammar Gaddafi, Commander of the Great Revolution."

Attack by Gaddafi forces near Misurata kill dozens of rebels and NATO aircraft bomb Zuwarah in western Tripoli.

Yemen – *The National* of Abu Dhabi reports from Sana'a: "The government ministries are closed, police stations are empty, gunmen and thugs roam the streets and there is growing concern over who is running the country as the president recovers in a Saudi hospital from an assassination attempt... Saleh is still exercising power from his hospital bed through his family, most notably his son, Gen Ahmed Ali Saleh, who commands Yemen's most highly trained troops... He has deployed thousands of security personnel in Yemen's main cities since the attack on June 3 on [the] presidential compound... Gen Ahmed is prepared to use all necessary options if opposition forces try to take over power in his father's absence."

Yemeni state media report that Yemen's army killed 21 Al-Qaeda members in the southern province of Abyan, 18 of them in Zinjibar. Ten soldiers were killed in fighting there and in the city of Lawdar.

Bahrain - Thousands of Bahrainis shouting "we are victorious" gather for a rally for political reform, in the first large demonstration since a democracy protest movement was crushed in March.

The government appoints, Khalifa al-Dhahrani, the speaker of the Council of Representatives, to lead the national dialogue.

Kuwait - Hundreds of Kuwaiti youths rally for the ouster of the country's prime minister, Sheikh Nasser Mohamed al-Ahmed al-Sabah, and for democratic reforms to resolve an on-going political crisis.

June 12, 2011

Syria - The Syrian army has taken control of the northern town of Jisr al-Shughour following what state media has described as heavy fighting.

Jordan – In a televised address marking the 12th anniversary of his accession to the Hashemite throne, King Abdullah II promised to relinquish his right to appoint prime ministers and cabinets. In the future cabinets will be formed according to an elected parliamentary majority. The BBC reports that the king, however, first wants to see Jordan's splintered 33 political parties merge into three main political blocs from which cabinets can be formed. King Abdullah also added that more reforms would be announced, including new election and political party laws, but warned that sudden change could lead to "chaos and unrest" like in other Arab countries.

Libya - The UAE officially recognizes the Transitional National Council, as the "sole legitimate representative of the Libyan people". *The National* quotes a government statement saying: "Based on this, the UAE's dealings with the TNC will take the form of a government-to-government relationship in all issues related to Libya. There is no legitimacy in Libya today but for the TNC." The current Libyan ambassador to the UAE is given 72 hours to leave the country.

Libyan state television broadcasts pictures of Gaddafi meeting the president of the international chess federation, Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, (a former Russian provincial governor). Images are shown of Ilyumzhinov playing chess with Gaddafi in Tripoli.

Yemen – Russia begins evacuation of its nationals from Yemen. According to the Interfax news agency there are about 1,000 Russians citizens are in Yemen.

June 13, 2011

Syria - Heavy shelling and gunfire is reported in the north-western town of Jisr al-Shughour, two days into a military assault that has caused more than 5,000 refugees to flee into neighbouring Turkey.

Iran - Iranian security forces used baton charges and tear gas to disperse hundreds of protesters at a silent rally in central Tehran marking the second anniversary of the country's

disputed presidential election. Riot police and plainclothes basij militia are deployed in various locations in the capital, arresting at least tens of protesters.

Libya - Germany recognizes the Transitional National Council as "the legitimate representatives of the Libyan people". TNC is now recognized as the "sole legitimate representative" of the Libyan people by Australia, Britain, France, Gambia, Germany, Italy, Jordan, Malta, Qatar, Senegal, Spain and the UAE.

Tunisia - Tunisia's interim prime minister, Beji Caid Sebsi, interviewed by Al Jazeera, discloses that "Ben Ali's trial will start on 20 June." "He will be tried in a military and in a civilian court." Tunisian authorities have been preparing several legal cases against Ben Ali, including conspiring against the state, voluntary manslaughter, drug trafficking and peddling of archaeological artifacts. Officials in Tunis have said the first charges will relate to the discovery of cash, weapons and drugs in presidential palaces, including almost two kilograms of narcotics, thought to be cannabis, and \$27m in cash.

Jordan - Jordanian and western media quote eyewitness accounts of vehicles in the convoy King Abdullah II being hit twice by stones and bottles during a visit to the southern town of Tafila, scene of recent protests. Jordanian government denied these reports.

June 14, 2011

Libya - Canada recognizes the National Transitional Council (NTC) as the legitimate representative of the Libyan people.

Syria – BBC reports that Syrian tanks have fanned out around towns and villages near the Turkish border, widening a crackdown on 12 weeks of anti-government protests. Witnesses say troops are pursuing a "scorched earth" strategy, destroying houses and crops as residents flee.

The Arab League for the first time publicly criticizes the violence in Syria, saying Arab states are "angry and actively monitoring" the crisis.

Bahrain - Bahrain has defied international criticism by continuing the military trial of dozens of medical personnel accused of trying to topple the government.

June 15, 2011

Syria - Syria's feared 4th division, commanded by Maher al-Assad, brother of Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad, is reported to have moved to the eastern city of Deir Azzor. The same

division has been in control of the town of Jisr al-Shughour, forcing most remaining people in the besieged enclave to flee to the nearby mountains bordering Turkey.

Thousands of civilians fled in panic as tank columns pushed into Ma'arat al-Numan, on the road between Damascus and Aleppo, in an expanding military campaign against the protest movement.

Bahrain – Bahraini authorities announce that it will sue *The Independent*, British daily, accusing it of "orchestrating a defamatory and premeditated media campaign" against the Gulf state and neighbouring Saudi Arabia. It singled out for criticism the newspaper's award-winning Middle East correspondent, Robert Fisk.

June 16, 2011

Libya – The BBC reports six explosions in the centre of Tripoli, near the fortified Bab al-Aziziya compound of Muammar Gaddafi. The report also says that Russian envoy, Mikhail Margelov, who met representatives of the Interim Transitional National Council in Benghazi, holds talks with the Libyan government in Tripoli as part of attempts to mediate in the conflict. Russian Interfax news agency quotes Margelov as saying that he was told "Gaddafi is not prepared to leave, and the Libyan leadership will talk about the country's future only after a cease-fire."

The Italian daily *Corriere della Sera* carries an interview with Saif al-Islam Gaddafi who says that his father, Muammar Gaddafi, will never leave Libya. "He was born here and intends to die and be buried here, alongside those he holds dear." Colonel Gaddafi would agree to have elections. "They could be held within three months. At the maximum by the end of the year, and the guarantee of transparency could be the presence of international observers. The important thing is that the election should be clean, that there should be no suspicion of vote-rigging." Saif Gaddafi says: "I have no doubt that the overwhelming majority of Libyans stands with my father and sees the rebels as fanatical Islamist fundamentalists, terrorists stirred up from abroad, mercenaries on the orders of [president Nicolas] Sarkozy."

Russia and China express concern about the Libya conflict and urged NATO to stick strictly to UN Security Council resolutions.

June 17, 2011

Morocco - In a televised speech King Mohammed VI announces a series of constitutional reforms, to be put to a national referendum on 1 July. The proposed reforms

would give the prime minister and the parliament more executive authority, and would make Berber an official language in Morocco, together with Arabic. Under the proposed reforms the prime minister will have the authority to appoint government officials and to dissolve the parliament - the powers previously held by the king. However, the king would remain the military commander-in-chief and would retain his position as the chair of the Council of Ministers and the Supreme Security Council, the primary bodies responsible for the security policy. A new constitutional provision would also confirm the king's role as the highest religious authority in the country. The King's proposals are rejected by the 20 February Movement as insufficient. The Movement calls for "truly democratic constitution and a parliamentary monarchy".

Saudi Arabia – About 30 to 40 women take to the steering wheel during women's driving campaign day. Reports of women driving cars come from Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam.

June 19, 2011

Morocco - Pro-government demonstrators attack democracy activists protesting against the constitutional reforms unveiled by the king on 17 June, which they believe do not go far enough.

June 20, 2011

Syria – President Bashar al-Assad delivers speech at Damascus University pledging to introduce reforms within months. Assad expresses regret about the protest deaths, saying that they were a great loss to the nation and him personally. But, the "saboteurs", who had smeared the image of Syria across the world during the protests, had to be isolated. "What is happening today has nothing to do with reform; it has to do with vandalism." "The demands of the street do not justify inflicting damage on the country." The president states that a national dialogue would start soon to review new legislation including laws on parliamentary elections, the media, and allowing political parties other than his Baath Party, as well as look at possible changes to the constitution. It is his third address to the nation since protests began in March 2011.¹³

¹³ For full text see: http://www.al-bab.com/arab/docs/syria/bashar_assad_speech_110620.htm

Turkish President Abdullah Gul says the speech is "not enough". "Assad should clearly and precisely say: 'Everything has changed. We're transforming the system into a multi-party one. Everything will be organised according to the Syrian's people will, and I will be carrying out this process.'"

Turkish officials say that more than 10,000 Syrian refugees have already crossed into Turkey and another 10,000 are sheltering close to the border just inside Syria in the olive groves and rich farmland around the town of Jisr al-Shughour.

Tunisia - The trial of Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali in absentia is hld in the capital. The Tunis Criminal Court is hearing two embezzlement, money laundering and drug trafficking cases against the ousted dictator. At the end of the one-day trial Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali and his wife Leila are sentenced to 35 years in jail for embezzlement and misusing public funds. The couple, who fled to Saudi Arabia in January after a popular uprising, are also fined \$66m (£41m).

June 22, 2011

Bahrain - Nineteen activists are given live sentences and others long-term imprisonment for taking part in protests earlier this year. The following full list of defendants is published by the Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights:¹⁴

- 1-Abdulwahab Hussain Ali (life sentence imprisonment)
- 2-Ibrahim Sharif Abdulraheem Mossa (5 Years imprisonment)
- 3-Hassan Ali Mushaima (life sentence imprisonment)
- 4-Abdulahdi Al Khawaja (life sentence imprisonment)
- 5-Abduljalil Abdullah Al Singace (life sentence imprisonment)
- 6-Mohammed Habib Al Safaf. (Mohammed Habib Miqdad) (life sentence imprisonment)
- 7-Saeed Mirza Ahmed. (Saeed AlNouri) (life sentence imprisonment)
- 8-Abduljalil Mansoor Makk (Abdul Jalil Miqdad) (life sentence imprisonment)
- 9-Al Hurra Yousif Mohammed (2 Years imprisonment)
- 10-Abdullah Isa Al Mahroos (5 years imprisonment)
- 11-Salah Hubail Al Khawaj (5 years imprisonment)
- 12-Mohammed Hassan Jawad (15 years imprisonment)
- 13-Mohammed Ali Ismael (15 years imprisonment))

¹⁴ <http://byshr.org/?p=632>

- 14-Abdul Hadi Abdullah Mahdi Hassan (Abdulahadi AlMukhodher) (15 years imprisonment)
- 15-Akeel Ahmed Al Mafoodh (15 years imprisonment)
- 16-Ali Hassan Abdullah (Ali Abdulemam) (15 years imprisonment)
- 17-Abdulghani Ali Khanjar (15 years imprisonment)
- 18-Saeed Abdulnabi Shehab (life sentence imprisonment)
- 19-Abdulraoof Al Shayeb (15 years imprisonment)
- 20-Abbas Al Omran (15 years imprisonment)
- 21-Ali Hassan Mushaima (15 years imprisonment)

June 23, 2011

Libya - Britain and France both reject a call by Italy for a pause in the bombing of Libya.

The British government reveals that the cost of the campaign in Libya has run to £260m.

Syria - The *Hürriyet Daily News* reports that Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu and his Syrian counterpart Walid Muallim held talks about the military movements near the Turkish-Syrian border and the Syrians fleeing into Turkey. The daily also quotes Syrian “rights groups” saying that more than 1,300 civilians have been killed and some 10,000 people arrested in the crackdown that has seen troops dispatched to crush revolt in cities across the country.

The European Union announces fresh sanctions against the Assad regime, adding 11 individuals and businesses to a list of Syrians already targeted.

June 24, 2011

Iran - Iran's former deputy foreign minister, Muhammad Sharif Malekzadeh, a close ally of the hardline president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, is arrested on charges of financial corruption. Malekzadeh resigned from his post two days ago – only a week after he was appointed – after coming under pressure from the conservative-dominated parliament for his connections to Ahmadinejad's controversial chief of staff and close confidant, Esfandiar Rahim Mashaei.

June 26, 2011

Morocco - Thousands of people demonstrate around the country both for and against Morocco's proposed new constitution, just a week before it is put to a referendum. In downtown Rabat, the capital, a march of at least 1,000 calling for the boycott of the referendum is blocked by police as well as a few hundred government supporters. The two groups, separated by riot police, chanted rival slogans. Activists reported brief scuffles and some injuries. In Casablanca, government supporters also block march organized by the February 20 movement.

June 27, 2011

Syria - The Syrian government announces that it will hold talks on 10 July 2011 to set the framework for the national dialogue promised by President Assad. The state news agency reports that constitutional amendments, including changes to an article which puts the Ba'ath Party at the centre of Syrian politics, would be on the agenda of the meeting. The proposed meeting is dismissed by opposition figures.

June 28, 2011

Bahrain - Saudi Arabia announces that it would pull out some of its 1,500 troops sent to Bahrain "because the situation is getting much calmer."

June 29, 2011

Egypt - Tahrir Square in Cairo sees the worst clashes between demonstrators and the police since the fall of Hosni Mubarak. The violence came after the trial of the former interior minister, Habib al-Adly, on the charge of unlawfully killing pro-change protesters had been delayed by a judge this week, with no reason given to the public. More than 1,000 people are injured in the confrontation.

Libya – *Le Figaro* reports that in May France has parachuted in weapons to help Berber tribes advance on the Libyan capital Tripoli. According to Deutsche Presse-Agentur "large quantities" of rocket launchers, assault rifles, machine guns and anti-tank missiles were dropped on the Djebel Nefousa mountains.

Saudi Arabia – Associated Press reports that At least five Saudi women have been arrested after defying the kingdom's ban on women drivers.

June 30, 2011

Egypt - Demonstrators have started a new sit-in in the Tahrir Square in protest at the pace of change conducted by Egypt's interim government. *The Guardian* quotes Nabil Abdel Fattah, a political analyst at the al-Ahram Centre saying: These clashes are the result of Egypt's new regime trying to reproduce the authoritarian policies and brutal, unaccountable security apparatus that were the tools of dictatorship for the old regime, and they are a critical turning point for the revolution.

We are seeing the same tactics – tear gas, bullets, state violence – that Mubarak used, and more importantly we are hearing the same discourse from Egypt's interim rulers. 'This is a plot to destabilise the country, there are shadowy groups trying to sow discord.

Saudi Arabia – According to *The Guardian* Prince Turki al-Faisal, a former Saudi intelligence chief and ambassador to Washington, warned senior NATO military officials that if Iran comes close to developing a nuclear weapon, “the existence of such a device ‘would compel Saudi Arabia ... to pursue policies which could lead to untold and possibly dramatic consequences’”. He did not state explicitly what these policies would be, but a senior official in Riyadh who is close to the prince said that his message was clear. "We cannot live in a situation where Iran has nuclear weapons and we don't. It's as simple as that," the official said. "If Iran develops a nuclear weapon, that will be unacceptable to us and we will have to follow suit."

END NOTES

* Prof. Dr., University of Lublin (Poland) and the University of Exeter (United Kingdom).

Sources:

ABC News, Agence France Presse, Al-Jazeera, Amnesty International, Arab News, Arab Times, Associated Press, BBC, Bloomberg, CNN, Corriere della Sera, Deutsche Presse-Agentur, Deutsche Welle, Financial Times, Gulf News, Haaretz.com, Human Rights Watch, Hürriyet Daily News, Interfax news agency, Jordan Times, Khaleej Times, Le Figaro, Los Angeles Times, Magharebia.com, Middle East Online, Radio Netherlands Worldwide, Reuters, Saudi Gazette, The Daily Telegraph, The Guardian, The National, The Ottawa Citizen, The Wall Street Journal, Time, Voice of America, WAM, Xinhua News Agency, Yemen Observer.

SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS AND THE ARAB REVOLTS

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the article is to evaluate the role of social media in Arab revolts. The study argues that social media played a pivotal role in recruiting and mobilizing hesitant participants to get involved in mass action and abandon fear of an autocratic regime and In synchronizing individual's believes and coordinating their actions. They facilitated the crossing of a fear barrier by rallying a large number of people and not just the small group of dedicated dissidents. They strengthened immeasurably civil society and the public sphere in the countries where the authoritarian governments routinely have stifled communication between citizens and power holders.

Key words: Social Media, Arab Revolts, Network Society, Tunisian Revolution, The Global Identity Space.

SOSYAL MEDYA ARAÇLARI VE ARAP BAHARI

ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı Arap devrimlerinde sosyal medyanın rolünü analiz etmektir. Sosyal medya devrime taraftar kazandırmış, isteksiz olanları mobilize ederek kitle hareketlerine neden olmuş ve otokratik rejimlerin korkulu rüyası haline gelmiştir. Kitlenin korkularını aşarak, ayaklanmanın küçük bir grupla sınırlı kalmamasını sağlamıştır. Yöneticilerin iletişimi control ettiği bu ülkelerde sosyal medya bu ülkelerde sivil toplumu ve kamusal alanı güçlendirmiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Sosyal Medya, Arap Devrimleri, Ağ Toplumu, Tunus Devrimi, Küresel Kimlik Alanı.

Social Media Tools and The Arab Revolts

One of the most remarkable and interesting aspects of the 2011 Arab revolts has been the use of social media tools - text messaging, e-mail, video and photo sharing, social networking, and the like - by small groups of activists and a large body of protesters in mobilising, organising, communicating and transmitting these events.

These tools which successfully utilise global identity space are both mechanisms and consequence of the development of probably one of the greatest inventions of the XX century – the internet and the mobile phone. Both have dramatically altered not only the way people communicate but even more importantly the way they relate to communications tools and the manner they use them.

The aim of this article is to provide a short conceptual introduction to some of the critical parameters of the subject matter and their investigative dimensions. Its intention is to offer analytical avenues for intellectual examination of what has clearly become of the most powerful and important socio-political phenomena of contemporary societies.

The evolution of the internet from a limited military use in 1969 by the United States army, to a current indispensable tool for over two billion people world-wide makes it one of the basic instruments of life for almost one-third of world's population.¹ The popularity of the internet is primarily due to its characteristics that distinguish it from other media. Its global reach is clearly mainly due to its interactivity and multi-mediality as well as to the fact that it can flow, almost without constraints, across national borders. Information available on the network are transmitted in all currently known languages. This benefits people representing different cultures, ethnic and national groups. One can therefore say that it is a medium facilitating the breaking down of cultural, national, ideological and/or religious barriers. Any attempt to understand the functioning of contemporary societies requires a careful examination of the role performed in these by the internet and associated social media tools.

Initially, internet communications were mainly based mainly on e-mail, instant messaging, discussion groups and forums. Currently they also encompass the increasingly very popular, virtual communities or online communities, which combine a variety of forms of communication over the network.

Network society

The notion of network society was introduced in 1991 by Jan van Dijk in his book *The Network Society*.² He defined the idea of the “network society” as a form of society increasingly organizing its relationships in media networks gradually replacing or complementing the social networks of face-to-face communication. Personal communication is replaced by digital technology. This means that social and media networks are shaping the prime mode of organization and most important structures of modern society. He describes social networking as “individuals creating ties to family members, friends, acquaintances, neighbours, colleagues... and so on.”³ Thus the network society is a society in which a

combination of social and media networks shapes its prime mode of organization and most important structures at all levels (individual, organizational and societal). In other words the network society is a collectivity of people in which interactions take place via the internet and its basic services which enable these interactions include mailing and discussion groups, internet relay chats, internet portals, blogs and others.

These communities have many similar traits that characterize the communities existing in reality. Their main characteristics are: interaction, a sense of identity and belonging, the existence of a common goal, and the generally applicable rules and standards. There is an on-going discussion among social scientists whether these communities can be treated equitably with communities existing in reality? Some argue that the community of this type is a poorer version of real communities. They are devoid of direct interaction with another human being. None of them have “church or place of worship, cafe, gallery, theatre or pub. Lots of contacts between people, but without an ounce of humanity.”⁴ Communication via the internet cannot replace direct “face to face” relationship.

Other social scientists argue that communication via the network should be treated equally with direct communication. “Virtual space is fast turning into the natural habitat”.⁵ The only difference is the space in which it takes place. The first occurs in physical space, and the other in cyberspace, which as we know overcomes the physical barriers. In both rules, norms and customs apply. Failure to obey these entails the possibility of exclusion from the community. People affiliated in internet communities extend emotional support to their co-affiliates, give advice and frequently engage in ties that can then be transferred to an existing real world.⁶

This argument is taken a step further by Zygmunt Bauman who contents that communication via the internet outweighs real, direct communication. He presents a series of arguments for the superiority of virtual communication over real communication. First, because of the availability of virtual acquaintances on the internet one always has company. This reduces problems and dangers associated with loneliness. If one loses permanent or temporary contact with a person with whom one communicates via the internet, one always finds other potential candidates for further communication. Thus for example Facebook gives one friends for seven days a week for 24-hours.

In the online world as opposed to the offline world, characterized by having a lesser tendency to promote human happiness, all seem to be ready for immediate response to our call.⁷

Secondly, online contacts with other people are devoid of any obligations. None of them talk about “burdensome and unwanted necessities associated with contacts outside the network.”⁸ Communication via the internet often takes place without having to make commitments on our part to keep it. There is little risk of having rows and forceful disagreements. If someone does not respond to us, just a mouse move and we are somewhere else.

Bauman’s arguments about the superiority of virtual over real communication appear to be supported by results of empirical findings concerning the behaviour of American teenagers. They show that 75 per cent of those studied spend any available free time on the internet, mainly on social networking sites such as Facebook.⁹ The increasing popularity of virtual communication is also changing the traditional model of family functioning. Research conducted in the United States shows that twenty years ago 60 per cent of American families gathered regularly at a joint dinner. Today the figure is 20 per cent.¹⁰

Network Society and Social Ties

As in the earlier stages of social development, network society, has, not unexpectedly, produced entirely new types of social ties, which form the basis of collective life. The classical German sociologist, Ferdinand Tönnies, argued that society divides between two types of social groups. The first *Gemeinschaft* - or community, based on close-knit group united by bonds of blood, soil, tradition, communal ties in which the bond was derived from a sense of brotherhood, family or neighbourhood, was “natural” and therefore “organic”. The second, *Gesellschaft* - an association in which the bonds are of a formal, rational character is not natural but a product of man-made conventions.¹¹

In the network society we are dealing with completely new types of bonds. They are less subject to spatiality than those suggested by Ferdinand Tönnies or by analogous typology proposed by Emile Durkheim who distinguished society based on “mechanical” solidarity and “organic” solidarity.¹²

Communal space ceases to be a precondition for the emergence of social ties in the network society as they may exist in virtual reality by creating virtual communities. In this context the question arises as to whether they can be considered as “ordinary” ties, or rather as virtual ties forming virtual reality. A typology of social ties provided by the Polish sociologist Paweł Rybicki, offers a useful avenue to address this question. Rybicki suggests that social ties: “...manifest themselves on two planes. One constitutes substantially defined cohesions and relationships between people: communalities and blood relationships, territory of origin,

language, culture in its different aspects, and also the organization of collective life. The second plane represents specific state and acts of consciousness: a sense of union with other human beings mutual dependence on them, and the manifestations of this feeling in attitudes, behaviour, and either individual or collective activities.”¹³

Thus the Rybicki typology offers two aspects of social ties. The first relates to everything that can be observed from the outside. The second one concerns the consciousness on the basis of which the unification with people within a particular ambit takes place.

Virtual bonds are created in virtual reality and are the basis of network society with several specific attributes that cannot exist in the real world. The first is a-spatiality. While in the case of real communities the most common point of reference is their physical borders, the action in the virtual world is not limited territorially. The second concerns a-synchronicity. Communication does not need to run in real time while communication that runs in real communities requires the presence of the participants in the same place and time. Another attribute is associated with a-corporeality. In virtual communities the key is text. The fourth attribute is associated with a-stigmatism. Communication is based mainly on a text free from stigma – aspects such as background characteristics, gender, physical appearance, race etc. have secondary importance. All of these attributes significantly affect anonymity. Since virtual communication lacks physical contact between sender and receiver there is no certainty who is on the other side of the screen.¹⁴

Network society and Political action

There is ample empirical and inferred evidence of the growing importance of network society for the individual who increasingly seeks and receives support for a variety of aspects of his/hers daily existence. For us, however, the important question is the role of network society in political action.

One of the earliest examples of the effects of network society on modern group dynamics is cited by Clay Shirky in his article the political power of social media.¹⁵ He describes events in Manila. On 17 January, 2001, during the impeachment trial of the President of the Philippines, Joseph Estrada, his supporters in the Philippine Congress voted to set aside key evidence against him. Less than two hours after the decision was announced, thousands of Filipinos, angry that their corrupt president might be let off the hook, converged on Epifanio de los Santos Avenue, a major crossroads in Manila. The protest was arranged, in part, by forwarded text messages reading, “Go 2 EDSA. Wear blk.” The crowd quickly

swelled, and in the next few days, over a million people arrived, choking traffic in downtown Manila.

The public's ability to coordinate such a massive and rapid response - close to seven million text messages were sent that week - so alarmed the country's legislators that they reversed course and allowed the evidence to be presented. Estrada's fate was sealed; by 20 January, he was gone. The event marked the first time that social media had helped force out a national leader. Estrada himself blamed "the text-messaging generation" for his downfall.¹⁶

The Philippine tactic has been subsequently used several times elsewhere – often with desired effects. Two examples are particularly interesting in the context of our analysis. On 11 March 2004, three days before parliamentary elections in Spain, a series of coordinated bombings against commuter trains took place in Madrid, killing 191 people and injuring 1,800. The Spanish government of Jose Maria Aznar and the ruling Popular Party (PP), claimed evidence indicating that the Basque separatist organization ETA was responsible for the bombings. Such claims were generally thought favorable to the PP's chances of being re-elected. However, within hours of the bombings evidence emerged suggesting that a jihadist cell inspired by al-Qaeda was responsible for the atrocities. Many on the opposition site believed that al-Qaeda targeted Spain because of prime minister Jose Maria Aznar's support of the war in Iraq, and that Aznar was downplaying the role of al-Qaeda in an effort to improve his party's chance in the election. Mass demonstrations organized by text messaging followed. Spain has an official ban on political demonstrations in the 24 hours prior to any election. Activists and concerned citizens ignored the ban and gathered anyway. By 11 p.m. on 13 March more than 10,000 people had congregated in front of the PP headquarters in Madrid.¹⁷ The text messaging campaign increased in volume. While 13 March saw a 20 per cent increase in text messages; 14 March, election day, saw a rise of 40 per cent.¹⁸ The text messages contained simple but effectively instructive texts: "The government lied. Pass it on," "We want to know before we vote," "Today at 18 at PP Genova no political signs demanding truthful information pass it on," and "Information poisoning at 18:00 PP pass it on."¹⁹ The tactics proved successful. Jose Maria Aznar and the Popular Party lost the general elections to the Socialist Party. "This was the first time when the results of a national election could be ultimately traced to the activity of a minority of well-connected individuals, which originated a snowball effect: the alpha-users and their communities arrived in politics."²⁰

Another interesting example of the impact of network society concerns Moldova. In parliamentary elections held on 5 April 2009, the incumbent Communist Party of Moldova claimed to have won 49.48 per cent of the vote, which guaranteed them 60 seats in

parliament. The victory for the communist was larger than expected and arose suspicion not only among opposition parties but also civil society activists. A day after the elections when preliminary results were announced, six of them met in a café in Moldova's capital, Chisinau. "We discussed what we should do about the previous day's parliamentary elections, which we were sure had been rigged... We decided to organise a flash mob for the same day using Twitter, as well as networking sites like Facebook and SMS."²¹ The messages spread quickly as the senders asked everyone to forward them to all the people they knew. With no recent history of mass protests in Moldova, "we expected at the most a couple of hundred friends, friends of friends, and colleagues... When we went to the square, there were 15,000 people waiting there. It was unbelievable."²² The authorities were taken by surprise by the sudden appearance of thousands of protestors in front of Moldova's parliament building. There were no speeches, no declarations or no written official demands. A huge mass of people stood between the parliament house and the president's building, which faces one another, for hours and waited for the authorities to respond.²³

The demonstrations continued peacefully into the following day. But on 7 April, with no response from the government, protesters swept police aside to storm the parliament building and the presidential palace opposite. Fire broke out in one wing of the parliament, and the young protesters vented their fury by wrecking computers and office furniture. The police routed the remaining crowds in the main square and arrested some 200 people. While the so-called 'Twitter revolution' ended in repression it forced Moldova's president, Vladimir Voronin, to order recount of the vote. The result of the election was not changed through the recount, as no serious errors were determined.²⁴

The Moldovan case is a significant example of a close co-relationship between network society and action call against political regimes under social stress. At a time when there is a decrease in the level of social acceptance for authority (and consequently a decrease in the level of its legitimacy), and the society itself seems to be tired of the regime, access to social media (assuming that their contents are not controlled or even blocked by the authority) not only provides an important platform for exchange of views between those who oppose authoritarian power, but is also a central imperative of social mobilization.

As one of the Moldovan activists put it: "Not only did we underestimate the power of Twitter and the internet, we also underestimated the explosive anger among young people at the government's policies and electoral fraud."²⁵

Social networks played a very important role in organizing protests against the Alexander Lukashenko regime in Belarus. Every Wednesday since late May 2011, thousands

of people have come out onto the main squares of Belarusian cities, responding to rallying calls spread via Facebook and its Russian-language version V Kontakte. The silent gatherings break all the rules of previous opposition rallies. There are no organisers to arrest. And, unlike in the past, they are everywhere, not only in the capital. The protesters walk or stand silently and every two or three minutes just clap. The internet-organised marches are known as “Revolution by Social Networks”.²⁶ In anticipation of protests during Independence Day celebrations on 3 July 2011, the authorities blocked access to Facebook, Twitter and a major Russian social networking site, but about 700 or 800 people gathered anyway on a central square in Minsk and clapped their hands in unison to show their opposition to president Alexander Lukashenko.

The global identity space

The Arab revolt famously began when Tunisian fruit seller Mohammed Bouazizi, a poor and desperate young man, harassed by the authorities, set fire to himself in SidiBouazid, inspiring a revolution that brought down the country’s dictator, which in turn inspired protest movements across the Middle East.²⁷ Mohamed Bouazizi was not the first Tunisian to set fire to himself. Abdesslem Trimech, a street vendor, set himself on fire in the provincial town of Monastir on 3 March 2010 in protest against local government hindrance of his work. But not many people knew of his action. Bouazizi burned to death in front of a camera. The photos of his self-immolation were posted on Facebook and aroused a powerful set of emotions not only in Tunisia but also around the world. In contrast Trimach died in obscurity.

While the protest movement in Egypt was considered inspired by the Tunisian revolution discontent had been simmering for some time and a spark that helped to light the fuse was the death of Khaled Said.²⁸ The 29-year-old was allegedly beaten to death by two policemen after he posted an online video of local police officers apparently dividing up the spoils of a drug haul. Graphic photos of Said’s injuries circulated online and became a rallying cause for activists opposed to Egypt’s 29-year-old emergency law. Within weeks “We are all Khaled Said” Facebook page has more than 130,000 followers. By the beginning of February 2011, it had over 473,000. The number subsequently rose to over 773,000 followers, with hundreds of photos and over 60 videos. Although it is impossible to quantify how much Said’s death or the Facebook page galvanized the protesters, by the account of one Egyptian protester, “[Khaled Said] is a big part of our revolution.”²⁹

The brutal death of Hamza al-Khatib, age 13, tortured and killed by the Syrian security forces in May 2011, now being seen as a symbol of revolution in that country, raises parallels

with other people in the Middle East who fell victim to state-sponsored brutality and whose fate rallied protest movements in their respective countries. The “We are Hamza” Facebook page has more than 250,000 followers.³⁰

The key aspect of making the self-immolation of Mohammed Bouazizi, the murder of Khaled Said, or the brutal killing of Hamza al-Khatib, known to the people outside their towns, and posting it on social media sites was a determined action of a handful of highly dedicated individuals. These activists were not merely observers of what was happening around them but architects of social action on a much larger scale. They understood the importance of the events they were recording on the mobile phones and the necessity to get it out to the outside world via Facebook, YouTube and other sites. This determined political action based on a fusion of personal grievances and political struggles against the autocratic rulers and their henchmen was fundamentally important to the success of the Arab spring in Tunisia and Egypt and the spread of the revolt to other Arab countries - Bahrain, Libya, Yemen and Syria. Social media proved critical at a time when everything was censored. Above all it supplied the avenues to communicate. Social media gave the marginalized a voice. It galvanized strangers and gave them the dates and locations of protests.

The impact of social media on the developments in the Arab countries has been that it supplied information, graphic images, facts and dates, coordinated their actions, and especially support for actions of civil society of which it has become an integral part. In the long-run these developments have strengthened the goals of civil society in countries where traditionally civic society and public sphere are very weak. The power relations between the state and civil society in the Arab region have been substantially shifted partially due to the impact of global identity space on these revolts.

One area that, so far, has received only limited attention in the analysis of the impact of social media on the Arab revolts is the effect and sway of the Doha-based television network Al Jazeera on the Arab revolts. The network has been a big change in the region, certainly the first critical media that we have seen in that part of the world. There can be little doubt that Al Jazeera has been a critical factor that has ensured that social media has maintained a high profile in these uprisings. The network regularly broadcasted material smuggled out via Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. This meant that videos have often been broadcast back to the country of origin. But it is also clear that Al-Jazeera was not the medium that would allow protesters to coordinate their actions. So one of the open research questions is: how much has Al-Jazeera helped everybody to understand what is going on, and how much did social media help people to coordinate their actions? To what degree the twin

effect of the presence of Al-Jazeera plus social tools for synchronizing beliefs and coordinating actions matter?

Conclusions

In the Arab revolt social media played a pivotal role in recruiting and mobilizing hesitant participants to get involved in mass action and abandon fear of an autocratic regime. In synchronizing individual's beliefs and coordinating their actions. They facilitated the crossing of a fear barrier by rallying a large number of people and not just the small group of dedicated dissidents. They strengthened immeasurably civil society and the public sphere in the countries where the authoritarian governments routinely have stifled communication between citizens and power holders.

Moreover this process also involved the acceptance of the value of the individual and social dignity and the rejection of a material deal with the autocratic regime. Social media made it possible for the visible enlargement of the participatory pool of discontent and quality of the revolts dependent on quantity – the mass of participants.

After the “Arab Spring” surprised the world with the power of technology to revolutionize political dissent, governments are racing to develop strategies to respond to, and even control, the new player in the political arena - social media.³¹ Anti-government protests in the Arab states of north Africa and the Middle East served as a wake-up call to those in authority. By allowing millions of citizens to coordinate political action quickly and often without conventional leadership, the new technology is challenging traditional political power structures.

Clay Shirky suggests that: “For political movements, one of the main forms of coordination is what the military calls ‘shared awareness’ the ability of each member of a group to not only understand the situation at hand but also understand that everyone else does, too. Social media increase shared awareness by propagating messages through social networks”.³² The anti-Estrada call in Manila, the anti-communist demonstrations in Moldova, and the anti-Aznar protests in Spain, gained momentum so quickly precisely because the millions of people spreading the message were not part of a hierarchical organisation.

Political repression, economic crises and the widening wealth gap in many countries could all further fuel the growth in social media-fed protest. “The question for governments is what responses might prove effective and acceptable. So complex and fast moving are modern systems, some experts suspect, that any attempts at censorship or shutdowns will simply be circumvented or overwhelmed.”³³ When Mubarak tried to control the open flow of

online and mobile information by blocking Twitter and Facebook, people managed to access the services through their mobile phones and turned to third-party applications like Hoot suite and Tweet Deck to tweet.

It is, however, also worth pointing out that many of authoritarian regimes have wised-up and begun using the social media for their own ends. At the beginning of October 2011 messages on Egypt mobile networks appeared calling on people to support President Hosni Mubarak and attend pro-Mubarak rallies. These messages were sent and received despite an existing block on normal SMS. In the middle of March 2011 anonymous text messages carrying dire warnings of huge fines, loss of nationality and expulsion from the country were sent in the Eastern province of Saudi Arabia.

In its 2011 Annual Report, Amnesty International stated that “governments are scrambling to regain the initiative or to use this [social media] technology against activists.” It cited instances in countries including China, Egypt and Syria where bloggers have been arrested.³⁴

A documentary on Al-Jazeera English detailing the violent crackdown on dissidents in Bahrain reported the apparent use by the Bahraini authorities of Facebook to identify those protesters to be identified, with one thread inviting visitors to “write the traitor’s name and work place and let the government do the rest”.³⁵

The Arab revolts apart from the immense significance for the development of civil society and public sphere in the countries of north Africa and the Middle East, have also opened a new chapter in the socio-political importance of social media and their effect on the global identity space.

END NOTES

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America/Caribbean - 10.3%; Africa - 5.7%; Middle East - 3.3%; Oceania/Australia - 1.0%. (<http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>).

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THE SOCIAL OPPOSITION MOVEMENT IN SYRIA: THE ASSAD REGIME IN THE CONTEXT OF REFORM AND REVOLUTION

Veysel AYHAN*

ABSTRACT

Although the Sunni Arabs were the primary social group calling into question the reform demands through the massive protests on March 17, the Alawis (Nusayris) Arabs have been the primary group protecting the regime. The Syrian opposition alone does not have enough force to overthrow the regime, yet the regime was able to suppress the riot through military measures. Despite the fact that Bashar al-Assad frequently talks about the reform initiatives, civil casualties have been increasing as a result of the use of excessive force against protesters, which may bring about a long-lasting tension among the different sects and religions in Syria. In this context, this study will focus on the social opposition movement and analyze the future of the Assad regime in Syria.

Key words: Syria, Assad Regime, Ihvan Movement, Alawis, Revolution, Reform.

SURİYE’DE TOPLUMSAL DİRENİŞ HAREKETLERİ: REFORM VE DEVİRİM BAĞLAMINDA ESSAD REJİMİ

ÖZET

Suriye’de reform talebinde bulunan en baştaki grup Sunni Araplar iken Nusayrililer ise sistemi korumaya çalışan grubu oluşturmaktadır. Suriyedeki muhalif grubun gücü rejimi düşürmek için yeterli değildir. Tam tersine rejim, muhalefeti askeri önlemlerle bastırmaktadır. Her ne kadar Essad ülkede rahatsızlıkları önlemek için reform yapacağını iddia etse de her geçen gün sivil kaybı daha da artmaktadır. Bu bağlamda bu çalışma, Suriye’deki muhalif hareketi ve Essad rejiminin geleceğini analiz edecektir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Suriye, Essad Rejimi, İhvan Hareketi, Aleviler, Devrim, Reform.

Introduction

A new hope was raised for the implementation of the political and economic reforms in Syria when Bashar al-Assad came to power. Assad, who received medical education in ophthalmology in London, appeared to be a modern leader in the eyes of the Syrian people; indeed, he underscored the importance of democracy and reforms in his first speech as Syria’s

president. In his first speech to the Syrian Parliament, Bashar al-Assad emphasized the need to carry out reforms in the economic sector, struggle against the corruption, and improve democratic values as well as the importance of respecting the rights of the individual. Moreover, he stated that a number of rights and freedoms, such as those related to elections, the press, and expression, are the result of democracy and that the Syrian people also have to improve their own democracy according to their traditions and experiences.

However, the regime supporters thought that the opposition was taking steps that would lead to the demolition of the system as a whole after February 2001; fearing that the opposition was out of control in this sense, regime supporters decided to take action in order to interfere in the calls for reform and launch an arrest campaign against the opposition. At the beginning of the attacks against the opposition leaders on February 2001, the expectations related to reform also started to change. Although the reformists were suppressed, the ideas they put forward were adopted by the other parties as well and, in 2011, the issue was brought into question once again. The ongoing uprisings in Syria first started in Damascus in an effort to focus attention on the problem of the political detainees. The subsequent uprising emerging in Daraa appeared to be a bigger problem, launching criticism against the existence of the Ba'ath regime.

The Socio-Economic Structure of Syria

The Syrian society is heterogeneous in terms of its ethnical, religious, and sectional composition. This heterogeneity is based on the fact that throughout its history the country has hosted different religious groups, peoples, and ethnic clusters. For example, during the age of the Roman and Byzantine Empires, the area of contemporary Syria was the main center of Eastern Christianity and subsequently the epicenter of the first Muslim Omayyad Empire. Following the age of the Omayyad, the Christians in Syria maintained their existence during the Abbasid, Seljuk, Mameluk, and Ottoman periods. In this context, the primary minorities consisted of Alawi, Druze, Ismaili, and various Christian groups. Therefore, both Muslims and Christians were divided into quite different groups (Antoun, 1991: 2-12).

Although it is not possible to have correct and explicit information concerning the percentages of the ethnic and religious groups in Syria today, which has a population of 23 million in 2011, we can reach some results by means of the censuses and data of the past. According to the Syrian writer Husni Mahalli, "15% of the Syrian population is Alawi, 6-7% Druze, 12-13% Christian and the rest is Sunni. And the 10-12 % of the Sunnis is Kurdish, 1-2% is Turkmen and the rest is Arab. A great majority of the Arabs are originally Syrian and

some are of Palestine origins” (Mahalli, 2011). According to Mahalli’s calculations, Sunni Arabs account for less than 50% of the population in the country while the Alawis are the most important minority group in the country. In 1947, the population of the country was 3,043,310: Sunnis numbered 2,040,908, Alawis 447,993, Druzes 96,641, Maronites 14,133, Orthodox Rums 144,517, Orthodox Armenians 104,923, Catholic Rums 49,543 (in 1950 52,000), Jews 30,873, Nestorians (the Eastern Church) 9,630, Catholic Armenians 17,493 (in 1950 18,500), and Catholic Arabs 17,613 as well as other minorities totaling approximately 100,000 (Protestant-Yazidis, Assyrian-European Catholics) (Monroe, 1954:466; Baer, 1962:108-117). As the data from 1947 indicate, various societies emerged from every group. In a study about Syria published in the US in 1965, the Sunni population was 72%, the Alawis 11%, and the Ismailis 1%. The percentage of Christians in the entire population was deemed to be 12% (Perlmutter, 1969:829).

As previously stated, the current population of Syria is about 23 million. The ethnic dispersion within this population—although not clear in proportional terms—may be as follows: Alawis 11-12%, Ismailis 1.5%, Druzes 3-5%, Christians 14-15%. The population of the Sunni groups during the 1950s was about 67-70%; this proportion is not thought to have undergone significant changes since then. The Sunnis include the Sunni Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen, Caucasians, and some other small groups. The proportion of the Kurds in the whole population is estimated to be 10-12%. Although no clear information exists about the general population of Turkmen, they have a considerable population in Golan, around Lazkiye, and in Aleppo and Damascus. For example, 20 kilometers west of Damascus is a Turkmen village called Kaldı. The local people stated that the village has existed in these territories since the pre-Ottoman era (Interview: 2008). Based on current estimates, Sunni Arabs are thought to constitute approximately 52-57% of the population (United Nations Population Fund, 2011).

Another important feature of the demographic structure of Syria is the increasing population and unemployment. The population growth rate of the Sunni Arabs and Kurds has reached its highest level while it remains proportionally low for Christians, Druzes, and Alawis. In addition to educational factors, the fact that monogamy is an adopted perception among these groups is thought to cause such a low population growth rate. The population growth rate in Syria is 2.7%, which is higher than the world’s average. Syria has a dynamic and young population, with 15- to 24-year-olds constituting 36.3% of the entire population. Syria’s young population structure brings about some challenges related to employment and creating new business sectors. Although some initiatives have recently been enacted to decrease—in a controlled way—the state’s control of the economy, the per capita income is

about US\$2,400. The monthly income of a doctor or engineer working in a public institution is about US\$200-300. According to IMF data, the official unemployment rates were 8.4% in 2010. However, the real unemployment rate is claimed to be as high as 50%. Every year 320,000 people must be offered new employment possibilities to keep the unemployment rates at the same level. This figure imposes the need that new employment possibilities must be created for 604,000 people in 2035.

From The Socialist Republic to The Arab Kingdom: The Bashar Assad Period in Syria

Before Hafez Assad died in June 2000, no important discussion took place about the government change in Syria. Despite the existence of distinguished notions in the Baath ideology and preamble of the Syrian Constitution, such as socialism, union, freedom, public power, and public democracy, it was well known that the ophthalmologist Bashar Assad—who was brought back from London just after the death of Basil Assad, the elder son of Hafez Assad, in a suspicious traffic accident in 1994—would be elected as the new Syrian president. However, the second article of the Syrian Constitution clearly states that the regime of the state was a republic and Syria had put a revolutionary policy into practice. On June 10, a couple of hours after the death of Hafez Assad, the Syrian Assembly gathered to amend the 83rd article of the Constitution, dropping the minimum age required to be elected as the head of state from 40 to 34. During the Assembly meeting, which was broadcast on live on a public TV channel, Deputy Mundhir Al Mawsili stood up to protest the amendment and stated that there was no need for such a constitutional amendment. However, Mawsili's protest was ignored by the majority, and on the following day *Tishreen*, the newspaper published by the Syrian State, wrote that the amendment had been adopted by a majority vote (Kedar, 2005:245). Three days after the constitutional amendment, in accordance with the 84th article of the Constitution, the Regional Command of the Arab Socialist Baath Party nominated Bashar Assad as a candidate for the head of state, and the assembly held a referendum on this candidacy (Yale Law School Press, 2011). In the elections, in which just one candidate participated, Bashar Assad was elected as the second Syrian president with the surname Assad with 97.29% of the votes.

The election of Bashar Assad not only caused the rise of constitutional problems in Syria, but also accompanied an ideological debate. During the period of the Baath regime, Syria blamed many Arab countries for having traditional kingdoms and regimes, suggesting that the Baath government was revolutionary and socialist. However, some newspapers bound

to the regime defined Bashar Assad as the new “Caliph” before he was elected, and the Republic witnessed a power change from father to son, which caused reactions among some Syrians (Kedar, 2005:245). A short time after Bashar Assad’s election, these critics also contributed to the foundation of an opposition wave seeking to establish a democratic system in Syria. Certain families and foundations preserved their authority in this establishment of power in Syria with the election of Bashar Assad, such as the Assad family, including Mahir Assad, the brother of Bashar Assad, Asif Sevkett, the husband of Bashar Assad’s sister Busra and the head of the military intelligence, and Rami and Ihab Makhoulf, sons of Bashar’s uncle. Although Asif Sevkett is an important name in the intelligence domain, the Makhoulf family is distinguished as an important force in the Syrian regime with their wealth of more than US\$3 billion. The Makhoulf family manages Syriatel, the banking and free-trade region on the border with Lebanon, as well as the duty-free shops in the customs zone.

In addition, an important part of the illegal smuggling business has been carried out by the Makhoulf family. The Shaleesh family, who are cousins of Bashar Assad on the paternal side, has significant influence on the security units and the commercial domain. Asif Isa Shaleesh and General Dhu Himma Shaleesh, who is responsible for the president’s security, are also important names in this family. Thus, the Makhoulf and Shaleesh families were the focus of critics during the 2011 protests. Other Alawi individuals who play a role in the regime include Nasef Kheir as well as the Khouli, Haydar, Kana’an, Umran, and Duha families. A number of people from these families have considerable influence on the Baath party, security, intelligence, and economic domains (Bar, 2006:381). A large part of these families are members of the Kalabiya tribe, to which Assad is bound as well, which attracts attention. Furthermore, as stated by Cengiz Çandar in his article, in the Syrian regime during Bashar’s period, numerous powerful people are of Alawi-Nusayri origins, including General Abdulfettah Kudsiyya (personal secretary of Bashar Assad); Head of the Air Force Intelligence Cemil Hasan (who replaced Abdulfettah Kudsiyya); Ali Memluk, who is the head of the Muhaberat, and his assistant Zuheyr Hamad; Muhammed Nasif Kheirbek, assistant to the Deputy of President who is responsible for the security affairs (he is also a member of the Kalabiya tribe); Minister of Defense Ali Habib; and General Rüstem Gazali, who was the final commander of the Syrian forces in Lebanon, is directly bound to Bashar Assad, and carried Bashar’s last message to Dera’a (Candar, 2011).

Bashar Assad's Loss of Legitimacy: From The 2000 Damascus Declaration to The 2011 Uprising

The First Opposition Wave: Damascus Spring

Following the death of Hafez Assad, a serious debate process emerged in Syrian society about political reforms. The primary social groups leading these debates on reforms included the intellectuals, intelligentsia, jurists, journalists, non-governmental organizations, and academic society. Although these groups did not have a certain social base, they are important as they performed the ideational leadership of the anti-regime groups. After the death of Hafez al-Assad on June 10, 2000, the Sunni Arabs and Christian leaders were among those who brought forward the demands for reforms, leading the reform initiatives known as "Damascus Spring." The fact that Bashar Assad mentioned democracy and freedoms in his speech on July 17, 2000, was interpreted as support for the movements calling for democratic conversion. A number of parliament members, such as Riyadh Seif, founder of the National Debate Forum, attempted to build a social base regarding the form of the change during meetings held in their own homes. Christian writer Michel Kilo from Homs tried hard to constitute common demands among the groups demanding reforms. Kurds started to discuss the reforms in the organizations that they founded in Al Qamishli. The reform debates launched by the intellectuals provided political change demands within society for the first time since the 1080 events in Syria. In September, the demanders of reforms succeeded for the first time in presenting a reform package signed by 99 people to the attention of the public. The Assad government did not react in a negative way to the September 2000 reform demands, which were signed by different people in society and basically comprised four articles, which was interpreted as a positive development by the reformists. The following demands were included in the communiqué signed by 99 Syrian writers and intellectuals (Leveretti, 2005:91):

- Abolishing the martial rule and state of emergency laws, which had been in force since 1963;
- Granting a general amnesty to all political prisoners, including the returns from exile;
- Guaranteeing the freedoms of meeting, press, and expression by means of legal regulations; and
- Respecting the political, economic, and ideational variety and recognizing civil freedoms.

However, the reform demanders did not call for a presidential election or multi-party political system in their demands. Assad's response to the reform demands was to liberate

about 600 political prisoners in November and, in the following month, close the prison of Mezzeh, which had been for political prisoners. Moreover, newly liberated lawyer Ahkam Naisa was allowed to reopen the Defense Organization of Liberal Freedoms and Human Rights of Syria. The organization named its bulletin "Voice of Democracy" and carried out its first interview with Fatih Jamus, the leader of the Communist Party. Lawyer Halil Matuk, who had signed the communiqué of 99, founded the Organization of Human Rights and started to organize several activities related to social democratic reforms (Kedar, 2005: 245).

In parallel with all these developments, in January 2001, parliamentarian Riad Seif announced that they had made the formal applications to the concerned authorities for the establishment of the party known as the Social Peace Movement. Seif stated that the party was based on a liberal and nationalist philosophy. Within the same month, a newspaper published in Lebanon printed a notice signed by 1,000 Syrians. The most important demands in the notice were demands for political freedoms, principles of separation of powers, and transition to a multi-party system. Unlike the previous notice, the fact that presidential elections had been indirectly brought forward the demands list in 2001 was noteworthy. In addition, for the first time, many segments of society demanded the creation of an alternative civil society and a political zone outside of state control (George, 2003:182-186). In response to the notice, the government declared that the emergency law had been frozen. In February, journalist Ali Ferzad stated that he was allowed to publish a weekly journal entitled "Ad Dumari."

However, the regime supporters thought that the opposition was taking steps that could lead to the demolition of the system as a whole after February 2001 and that the opposition was out of control in this sense; therefore, they decided to take action in order to interfere in the calls for reform and launch an arrest campaign against the opposition. At the beginning of the attacks against the opposition leaders in February 2001, the expectations related to reform also started to change. The popular author Nabil Suleiman was attacked by unidentified persons. In March, Vice President Abdul Halim Khaddam warned "the non-governmental organizations not to jeopardize the unity of the country" in his well-known declaration. Khaddam added that, "the non-governmental organizations, which would like to hold a meeting, should get permission from the concerned authorities 15 days before." The government started to criticize those seeking the abolishment of the emergency law. Although certain political prisoners were released due to the Pope's visit in May 2001, the non-governmental organizations' attempts to organize meetings in August and September without gaining permission led to strong reactions, and a significant portion of the opponents—

including Riad Seif, Nizar Naif, Riad Turk, and Mamun Hamsi—were arrested and brought under control of the civil opposition (Dean, 2003:1020). Meanwhile, the non-governmental organizations that organized forums with broad participation during the Damascus Spring were closed, and meetings of opposition groups were not allowed either. The Committee for the Revival of Civil Society and Jamal al-Atassi Forum for Democratic Dialogue carried out regular meetings, where reforms were actively discussed, during this period as well. Hundreds of people participated in the meetings, which were regularly organized on a monthly or weekly basis, and they discussed reforms and transitions (Landis-Pace, 2007:45-68). All of these were closed by the regime forces as well, and arrest operations against those who participated in the aforesaid meetings were organized. Dr. Kamal al-Labwani, the founder of the Syrian Liberal Democratic Union, took part in the meetings carried out in Türk's, Kilo's, and Seif's houses and was also among those arrested because of their speeches (Ayhan, 2011).

Thus, the first reform wave was ended through the consolidation of Bashar Assad's power. Nonetheless, all of these events also caused Bashar Assad to lose his legitimacy and trust in the people asking for reform. As a result, the Syrian opposition started to claim that Assad was not reformist and that he had the same administrative mentality as his father Hafez Assad. The fact that a transition on the institutional basis did not take place in the Syrian regime after Bashar Assad took office as the head of state indicated that the regime would not be able to democratize. As the military and intelligence structures carried on their oppressions on the Syrian society, individuals closer to the regime made further use of the economic revelation as well.

The Second Opposition Wave

The second reform wave in Syria appeared when the U.S. criticized the policies of Iraq and Lebanon in the post-2003 Iraq invasion period. During an interview in Damascus, a Syrian expert stated that, "between 2003 and 2004 Syria really expected a U.S. invasion. Bashar Assad had newly been elected and the elites in Damascus got the idea that the regime would collapse as a result of the U.S. oppression. Under these circumstances, upon the oppression of the European countries such as France, a UN sanction was brought into question. Under these conditions, on one hand while the Syrian regime had to withdraw its soldiers from Lebanon, on the other hand it closed its eyes to calls for reform coming from inside" (Interview, 2008). The increasing international oppression of the Syrian regime led

opposition groups to once again bring calls for political reform within the country into question.

The Assad administration showed a positive approach toward the reform requests, due to the increasing international oppressions. The opposition groups created the National Coordination Committee for Protection and Promotion of Fundamental Freedoms and Human Rights. The Committee for the Revival of Civil Society once again published a notice aimed at opening the dialogue channels among all social groups, including Muslim Brothers. The leading human rights defender of Syria, Suhair Atassi, tried to revive the Jamal al-Atassi Forum once again. The journalist and activist Ali Abdullah announced a letter from the General Secretary of the Muslim Brothers Ali Sadraddin El Beyanuni, sent directly to the public in Damascus, allowing political party activities. Thus, although capital punishment existed, the Muslim Brothers was represented in the public opinion for the first time since 1982. During this period, even the creation of an opposition party in which the Muslim Brothers could also participate was brought into question. In light of the increasing reform requests, the Assad administration emphasized arrest policies and, in May 2005, the administration arrested 11 activists among the Jamal-al Atassi Forum administrators, including 68-year-old journalist and academician Hussein Aludaat, Suhair Atassi, and Ali Abdullah (Arab Commission For Human Rights, 2005). Despite such developments, at the end of 2005, opposition writer Michele Kilo went to Morocco to interview Ihvan Secretary of General, when it was announced that the opposition had settled on four subjects: the principles of democracy, a violent-free opposition, the unity of opposition groups, and democratic transition. In his speech, the Secretary General Beyanuni stated that Michele Kilo was entitled to conduct interviews with the Ba'ath leaders. When international oppression to the Damascus regime increased, opposition groups both harshly criticized the regime with their "Damascus Declaration" published in October 2005 and called for a serious dialogue; they once again brought their requests for political reforms into question. In the declaration, the Ba'ath regime was accused of establishing an authoritarian, totalitarian, and arbitrary administration; in addition, preparing a new constitution, creating a constituent assembly, and carrying out equitable elections were mentioned. The declaration, which was written by Michele Kilo, was also signed by 250 well-known opponents in addition to five opposition parties. The five-page document was also signed by the Syrian Arab Nationalists, the Kurdish Democratic Alliance, the Future Party led by Sheikh Nawaf al Bashir, the Committee for the Revival of Civil Society, and the Kurdish Democratic Front in National Democratic Meeting. Signatories included opponents such as Riad Seif, Cevdet Said, Dr. Abdülrezak, Samir el-

Nashar, Dr. Fida Ekrem el-Hurani, Dr. Adil Zakkar, Abdülkerim el-Dahhak, Heysem el-Malihve, and Naif Qaysiyah as well as political parties and non-governmental organizations (Landis, 2005). However, in March 2006 the International Commission of Inquiry into the Hariri Assassination avoided directly accusing the Syrian regime in its second report (Mehlis, 2005), and the policies of the U.S., which was engaged in Iraqi and Iranian problems, once again led the Assad administration to directly turn towards the entire opposition. In March 2006, large-scale arrests once again occurred. Dr. Kamal Lebwani, who was arrested again in November 2005, was sentenced to twelve years in prison in 2007. Michele Kilo and Christian Anwar al-Bunni were arrested in 2006 and were sentenced to five years in prison in 2007. Although some of the declaration signatories had to flee, others were arrested and their political activities were put an end. Thus, the second Damascus Spring, which started in 2005, gave way to the Damascus Winter.

Despite the oppression and arrest policies, the opposition groups reorganized under the name of the Damascus Declaration for National Democratic Change on December 1, 2007. The opponents, who created a National Council amongst themselves, determined a plan of attack to carry out the reforms they had already put forward. Dr. Fida al Hewrani was elected as president of the National Council, while Abdulhamid Darwish and Abdülaziz Alkhaier were elected as vice presidents, Riad Seif was elected as secretary general, and Amin Obeidi, Nawaf El Beshir, Riad Turk, Suleiman al Shammarve, and Ali Abdullah were elected as members of the executive board (The Damascus Declaration for National Democratic Change, 2011).

Shortly after the opponents established the National Council, many members were arrested. A considerable part of the council's administrators arrested in 2008 were sentenced to 2.5 years in prison. In this way, the policy of suppressing all the opposition voices within Syria was carried on (The Syrian Human Rights Committee, 2008). Although the reformists were suppressed, the ideas they put forward were adopted by the other parties as well and, in 2011, the issue was brought into question once again.

2011 Uprising: The Third Opposition Wave and The Future of The Assad Regime

Anti-regime demonstrations started to be organized in February 2011 and culminated in mass participation actions in different regions of the country, including Damascus and Daraa in March, which were carried to a new stage after the troops entered Daraa on April 22. Although the opponents constantly called for mass actions after the Daraa invasion, the

international community—particularly the UN—started to send harsher messages to the Syrian administration to prevent another Hama. As the army directly intervened with the demonstrators, especially in Daraa and Baniyas, the issue was tried to be carried up to the UN Security Council's agenda, and France fervently tried to issue a resolution against the Syrian administration. When the tanks laid siege to Daraa on April 25, because of the different opinions among the Security Council members, which brought the decision-making process into question on April 27, the issue was directed to the UN Human Rights Council. Based on the England's and France's declarations related to the draft resolution, they strongly supported reprobating the regime. In the UN Secretary General's statement made before the conference, the fact that tanks were used against civilian demonstrators was harshly criticized (Malas-Lauria, 2011).

On the other hand, a severe increase was observed in the attacks a short while after the first armed attacks against civilian demonstrators in Daraa, located near the border with Jordan and whose total population is approximately 1 million. As a result of the intervention in the demonstrations organized in major provinces of the country, including Homs, Latakia, Hama, and Damascus, the civilian death toll rose to approximately 700 in the first week of May; hundreds of demonstrators were wounded by rogue bullets during the assaults. Although Bashar Assad made some efforts for reform, such as launching reform attempts, leaning toward creating a new government, changing the governors of Daraa and Homs, disannulling the 1962 census in Al-Hasakah, creating a new commission to confer Syrian citizenship to some of the Kurdish with no identification, actively fighting against illegal activities, increasing salaries, and declaring the abolishment of the emergency law that had been in force since 1963. Within 7 days of the beginning of the demonstrations, the demonstrators were subjected to attacks that led to further events.

The demonstrations that took place in Homs, on the same day with the aforesaid declarations, showed that the people do not rely on the Bashar Assad administration and that Bashar Assad had lost his legitimacy. Indeed, by March 19, as social opposition increased, the Assad regime had to make fundamental changes for the first time in its history. After the Council of Ministers meeting on April 19, several important decisions were made: "Closing the State Security Courts, which were created with the decision dated 1968 and numbered 47 and transferring the inclusive cases to the concerned legislative authorities; approving the enactment draft in the legislative decrees regulating the peaceful demonstration right of the citizens, which is identified as a right among the fundamental human rights in the Constitution; abolishing the Emergency Law and political parties law from the concerned

ministries; demanding the information and local government enactment drafts as soon as possible” (Sana News, 2011).

Although the new legal regulations show that the regime failed its policy of suppressing the developing social opposition movement by resorting to force, they also indicate that the Syrian people exceeded the fear threshold. Several days before the adoption of these laws, the government announced that all demonstrations and meetings were illegal. However, the rapid expansion of the demonstrations in Homs and the harsh intervention of the security forces in the demonstrations taking place on April 18 and 19 led to intensified reactions. Another indicator demonstrating that the fear threshold was being exceeded is the fact that a military opposition was launched against the security forces for the first time since the February 1982 Hama events. The fact that armed attacks were organized against the high-level security forces in different regions of the country, particularly Daraa, Homs, and Aleppo, shows that the demonstrators did not overlook the military methods for a radical change as a choice. On the other hand, Assad wanted to give legitimacy to the force policies that he would carry out in the forthcoming days by bringing certain reforms into question instead of giving priority to the reforms. As such, the regime was headed toward persuading the national and international public opinion by resorting to force.

Attempts to Suppress the Social Opposition by Military Methods: Demonstrations of Challenging the Invasions

After the April 29 demonstrations, the opponents once again put forward their reactions to the regime by organizing major actions on Friday May 6; the security forces resorted to serious measures in Sunnite Arab regions under the administration of Damascus, Baniyas, Latakia, and Homs. In this context, during the demonstrations organized on April 29, approximately 60 civilians lost their lives, including people in Daraa. In fact, in the tension starting in early February and March between the regime and opposition movements in Syria, the organization of Frustration Days on March 17 pointed out the beginning of a new period. The demonstrations, which continued with mass participations in the post-March 17 period, continued with increasingly larger demonstrations every Friday on a regular basis. After the Frustration Day demonstrations, the Assad administration decided to make reforms in a short period of time while attempting to suppress the demonstrations with force; however, the death of approximately 800 people during the events eliminated the importance of the reform arguments (YaLibnan News, 2011).

While reform promises were being made, tanks and heavily armed forces were entering the demonstrators' settlements in Al-Baida, Deraa, Baniyas, and Rastan. A great arrest campaign was launched against the opponents by searching from house to house; this resulting in the opposition and the international public losing their trust in the reform promises. Indeed, despite the declaration of legal regulation related to the abolition of emergency law that had been in force since 1963, no improvement in practice was evident.

Demonstrations initially organized in Daraa and Haseki soon spread to Latakia, Homs, Hama, Bayda, Baniyas, and Deir al-Zor; soon, anti-regime protests were observed in many settlements. The Republican Guards—the sole troops deployed in the center of Damascus—achieved partial success in preventing anti-regime protests from occurring in Damascus. However, after the anti-regime protests took place in Duma, which administratively belonged to Damascus, both Republican Guards and elite troops under the command of Bashar al-Assad's brother Maher al-Assad were poised to launch an intense operation against the opposition groups. During the protests in Daraa, assaults against the security forces took place; the armed forces then surrounded a settlement for the first time, where the opposition groups were active and blamed them for cooperating with terrorist groups. As protests were occurring in Daraa, news emerged that the subordinate units of the 4th Mechanized Division under Maher al-Assad's command began to surround the city on April 25; after the protests on April 29, they entered the city and started hunting dissidents, house by house, similar to behavior in the 1980s. Approximately 62 people were killed during the demonstrations in different regions of Syria on Friday April 29 (Oweis-Al Khalidi, 2011).

After the security forces launched direct operations against dissidents, approximately 10,000 people were arrested, and tens of people were killed during the conflicts in Daraa, Damascus, Homs, Baniyas, Al-Rastan, and Bayda, where dissidents were active. Although the security forces entered the city after the attacks against the security forces in Bayda, the troops that remained outside the Daraa city center on April 25 entered the city center after the demonstrations on April 29, and 27 protestors were killed during the clashes. The security forces entered Banias on April 3, providing once again that the regime would give priority to applying rigid responses to protestors. In addition, the al-Assad administration declared the end of the operations in Daraa, where the Friday protests took place, on April 5, which was perceived as a setback on the part of the government. However, the ongoing anti-regime protests by the Syrian opposition—despite the declaration of retreatment from Daraa and the initiation of the retreatment—will make the international community prioritize more active policies for Syria.

Consequently, important developments took place during the demonstrations on Friday May 6 for both the dissidents and the regime. Although the al-Assad administration declared that the troops would retreat from Daraa, where the protests had begun, it intensified its military presence in Baniyas, Al-Rastan, Homs, Hama, and Damascus in order to get the clashes under control and stated that they would not allow the protests. As a result, the dissidents took action to organize a demonstration on May 6. Approximately 30 people were killed during the protests that started after the Friday prayers. The Syrian Human Rights Group stated that the total death toll was 28, including 16 people in Homs, 6 in Hama, 2 in Jableh, and 4 in Deir al-Zor (Al Jazeera News, 2011a).

The armed forces entered Baniyas and the Sunni districts belonging to Damascus and Homs, then started to arrest the dissidents in a house-to-house hunt, which increased the tension. *Al-Watan*, the daily newspaper, interviewed Bashar al-Assad, the President of Syria, who put forward that they sped up the reform initiatives and the riots were about to come to an end when the Syrian Ministry of Interior urged them to give extra time to the protesters to turn themselves in and hand over their weapons (until May 15). According to a report by the Interior Ministry, the number of individuals who turned themselves in reached 1,093 by May 8-9, and they were immediately released after they affirmed their regret (TRT News, 2011a). According to a statement issued on May 11, the number of individuals who turned themselves in to the security forces reached 3,308 (Sana News, 2011b). As the latest statements indicated, the Damascus regime proved that it would use all its power to terminate the demonstrations. The most significant of all the methods applied to stop the demonstrations was the mass arrest of dissidents. The security forces launched a wide-scale operation against the dissidents in Homs, the third biggest city of the country. According to a statement issued by Ammar Qurabi, the head of the Syrian National Organization for Human Rights, dozens of people lost their lives due to the crackdown by the security forces in Homs, Hama, Latakia, Daraa, and Deir al-Zor, where peaceful demonstrations occurred. According to Qurabi, on May 11, 19 Syrian citizens were killed by the Syrian security forces in Harra, belonging to Darra. The mass arrests against the dissidents in Homs and in the cities where the Sunni Arabs live deserve attention. The activists stated that not only were 10,000 people arrested, but also hundreds of people remained missing (Shibeeb- Tayel, 2011). However, the dissidents' continuation of the anti-regime protests despite the suppression will cause serious problems for the Damascus regime.

In the time since the March 17 public protests in Syria, it has become evident that the Assad administration could not take control over and suppress the anti-regime opposition

movements. Starting with democratic demonstrations in different regions of Syria, the opposition focused on a strategy of military resistance, following Libya's example. Unlike efforts in Tunisia and Egypt, the success of the opposition movement in Libya in ousting the Gaddafi administration with military methods by receiving external support has affected Syrian opposition movements the most. In a statement made by one of the founders of the opposition armed structure, called the Free Syrian Army, Colonel Riad al-Assad said some 15,000 soldiers, including officers, had already deserted, and he was waiting to move his command inside Syria. The most senior Sunni Arab officer to defect from Syria's armed forces said "there is no option but to topple President Bashar al-Assad by force and he was directing a military uprising against the Syrian leader" (Ya Libnan-2, 2011).

However, in October, it became obvious that the Syrian regime did not take the steps expected by the international community, including Turkey, and did not have the will to do so. Although the Assad administration could not demonstrate a solid will for the transformation to a democratic system, it also failed in oppressing the opponents. Therefore, after this step, Syria is moving toward a civil war, which will turn into a denominational power struggle; the international community, including the UN, will not determine a common approach against the developments in Syria. During this process, while one seeks to determine the main actors in the power struggle in Syria, the actors are divided into two groups: internal and external. Regarding the national actors, President Assad and military and civil units who have devoted themselves to the protection of the regime constitute the internal actors. Officially and unofficially organized actors are in the military and civil units. With regard to the opposition figures, internal actors include civil initiatives that are mostly composed of Sunni Arabs, which have different organizations in each city. The intellectuals, politicians, and enlightened figures who supported the Damascus Spring in 2000 need to be added to this group. It is also possible to categorize the national actors of the power struggle in different ways. For example, it is necessary to define the soldiers who recently resigned from the army to establish an opponent military army within the national actors.

The Position of Sectarian, Ethnic, and Security Forces against the Riots

It is really interesting that the individuals from different segments of society participated in the demonstrations, although some regime-minded authors argue that the anti-regime protests were organized by the opposition groups supported by some ethnic and sectarian groups in Syria (Interviews, 2011). For instance, the fact that the intellectuals leading the anti-regime opposition from 2000 to 2011, including journalists, lawyers, and

doctors with liberal and leftist orientations, came from Sunni Arabs, Kurdish, and also Christian ethnicities deserves attention. For example, after 2000, Michel Kilo—one of the symbols of opposition—is of Christian origin. He was in contact with the Muslim Brotherhood in the course of reform initiatives in 2005. Nonetheless, it is thought that the anti-regime opposition was supported by Syrian citizens, who are of primarily Sunni Arab and Kurdish ethnicities, as a social base. On the other hand, the position of the Druze is not clear. Especially, after President Salah Jadid was captured in As-Suwayda in 1966, Hafez al-Assad threatened to bomb the city and purged the majority of the Druze officers from the army ranks, resulting in a rift between the Druze and the regime. Before the intra-Baath coup attempt in 1966, Mansour al-Atrash—whose father was Sultan al-Atrash, the spokesman of Revolutionary Command Council (parliament chairman)—and the ousted president Amin al-Hafiz were arrested and sent to Mezzeh Prison. This event negatively affected the Druze. Furthermore, the policy the Syrian regime applied against the Lebanese Druze disturbed some segments of the Syrian Druze, particularly Kemal Jumblatt. Social support for the regime existed among the Druze despite economic problems and unemployment. In addition, Sultan al-Atrash's daughter Muntaha al-Atrash, who is a human rights activist, made a statement on April 12 that Syrian President Al-Assad put forward the sects as an excuse and never approved of launching reform initiatives; however, she emphasized that the sectarian tension would not take place, and thus the president should step down (Al-Tabaei, 2011).

The second opposition group is composed of Sunni Arabs, including the Muslim Brotherhood and the Atassi family. These groups have both rooted and efficient backgrounds throughout Syria's history. In this context, it is important to touch upon the opposition movement starting at the early 1970s, which transformed into an armed rebellion in 1978. During the civil war in Lebanon, the fact that the Syrian regime supported the Maronites and declared war against Palestinian and Sunni Muslims caused the Syrian Sunni Arabs to question their relations with the Syrian regime. The Sunni opposition first started to protest the policies of the regime in a non-violent way; however, they resorted to armed assaults after the government used force against them in 1978 and the Muslim Brotherhood became prominent as an organization that carried out the armed Sunni Arab opposition. The other Sunni dissident groups were either suppressed or forced to flee abroad because of the suppression of the regime. Nonetheless, Assad's regime tended to solve the problem through military methods against the first opposition movement, which had broad social support. He managed to suppress the opposition as a result of the 1982 Hama massacre. Nevertheless, the Sunni opposition movement carried on its presence in society over time. As previously

mentioned, the Sunni Arabs were leading the social group upon which the opposition movement was based during the first and second reform waves. The Sunni Arabs played a determinative role within the inception period and the continuation of the third opposition wave in 2011.

The other opposition movement was composed of Kurdish anti-regime groups. The Kurds emerged through the demands for enfranchisement and constitutional equality, which is different from the opposition of the Sunni Arabs. The relations between the Syrian regime and the Kurds have always been up and down. The Kurds, who faced Arabization policies after 1960, came to Syria from Turkey. However, some Kurds who had problems with the Arabs after the French left the region were disfranchised after the 1962 census in Haseki. It is estimated that the Kurds—who have two different statuses: “outlander” and “displaced”—number between 300,000 and 400,000 people. After the Iraq War in 2003, the Syrian regime seriously altered its point of view toward the Kurds, who were perceived to be in cooperation with the US. Within this framework, in 2004, after the conflicts between Arab and Kurdish football teams, the Kurds participated in mass protests in Al Qamishli, during which civilians were killed. Al-Assad’s government tried to prevent the conflicts from spreading by means of promises about the reform and forming a commission. Nonetheless, due to the fact that the government did not keep its word about reforms over time, the distrust of the regime increased. The regime protested during the mass demonstrations that were organized for Sheikh Khaznawi, who was tortured to death in June 2005. Many Syrian Kurdish politicians were arrested because of their political activities between 2004 and 2011. Kurdish figures including members of the Yekiti Party, Azadi Kurdish Party, Syria Future Party, KDP-Syria, and PYD were included amongst the arrested politicians. Unlike the political parties, the social organizations and the student associations faced suppression. On March 12, 2009, 12 students were arrested for allegedly organizing the demonstration to remember those killed during the clashes in Aleppo in 2004 (Human Right Watch, 2009). In 2011, the Kurds initially remained quiet against the incidents that commenced in Daraa, but due to the ongoing protests, they started organizing demonstrations in their region. It is important to note that the Kurdish groups continued protesting even though the census in 1962 was declared “null and void” and Bashar al-Assad talked to the Kurdish tribes directly. After the leader of the liberal Kurdish Future Movement Party was assassinated on October 7, 2011, the Kurds accused the Syrian government of killing Tammo; the next day more than 50,000 mourners marched through the streets of Qamishli in a funeral procession for Tammo. Syrian security forces fired on them, killing at least five people. Tammo's son, Fares Tammo, urged Syria's Kurds to

throw their support behind the revolt, telling the *New York Times*: “My father's assassination is the screw in the regime's coffin. They made a big mistake by killing my father” (Blomfield, 2011). As a result, the opposition movement continued, including the Kurds as well.

By identifying the other opposition groups in Syria, it is possible to unite all the segments that were supposed to be exposed to discrimination because of the political, constitutional, and economic practices of the regime. Consequently, it can be assumed that this group includes the youth demanding more freedom and democracy from different ethnicities and sectarian orientations, for which the corruption, unemployment, and wealth of the regime supporters caused considerable discomfort. In Syria, under martial law, different segments of society faced lawless arrests and suppression through the activities of the security apparatus. Numerous problems existed, including corruption, income injustice, and underemployment as well as political imprisonment. Furthermore, the Sunni Arab tribes have undertaken a serious opposition. Since the protests in Daraa were suppressed, the loyalty of the Arab tribes to the regime has been negatively affected, which forced them to participate in the opposition movement. The majority of tribes in Daraa play an important role in trade and relations with Jordan. During the border trade with Jordan, they had to remain silent when the security forces exerted violence upon them, which caused the regime to lose legitimacy over the tribes.

The possibility of a Sunni-Alawite conflict after the clashes deserves attention as well. Some Alawites have problems with the regime. The anti-Assad groups include Rifaat al-Assad, uncle of Bashar al-Assad, and Ribla Rifaat al-Assad, his cousin. Thus, it is not true that all Alawites support the regime. Some Alawites have even had trouble with the regime. In forming a new democratic system, including the representation of Sunni Arabs, Alawites, and other Syrian groups will help the construction of peace and stability. Indeed, the Alawites will ultimately stand with the regime.

Conclusion

For the first time, the Bashar al-Assad regime faces a serious opposition movement. The 2011 opposition movement has an important public support whereas the oppositions in 2000 and 2004 did not. Although Bashar al-Assad promised to launch reforms for 11 years, no changes have taken place, which has decreased the legitimacy and reliability of the regime. The loss of legitimacy and unreliability indicates that opposition will rise despite Bashar al-Assad's statement of reform initiatives. However, al-Assad's government proved that it would apply all methods necessary to stop the demonstrations when it recently sent troops into

Banias, Homs, and Daraa. Contrary to expectations, it is obvious that Syria is facing a difficult period including international intervention.

The impacts will be shaped by the ongoing social opposition crisis in Syria. If we categorize the possible scenarios, in the first scenario, the Syrian regime will provide stability in the country through partial reforms. Those who put forward this hypothesis assume that the al-Assad's regime has the capacity and competence to manage the crisis in the medium term (Landis and Abdulfettah, 2011). The first scenario is based on the assumption that riots will be prevented by means of affording some rights to Christians, the Druze, Alawis, Ismailites, and finally the Kurds. Apart from the support of these groups, the dissident protests will be prevented from spreading from specific regions and borders through the active intervention in the process of the security forces and the intelligence units; the system is expected to be stabilized by granting some economic and political privileges to these groups in the medium term.

Meanwhile, the second scenario is based on the spread of the crisis throughout the country and an internal conflict among the different social and ethnic groups. Within this scope, disintegration will occur in every department, from the security forces to political and diplomatic units; consequently, all groups will clash with each other. Such disintegration, especially amongst the security forces, is likely to let this kind of scenario emerge.

The third scenario assumes that the regime will take harsher measures to ensure its survival despite its failure in the management of the conflicts; as a result, Syria will face economic and diplomatic sanctions. Weakening the Syrian regime via economic and diplomatic sanctions imposed by the US, EU, and UN Security Council remains on the agenda. It will be extremely difficult for the Damascus government to overcome the possible economic problems in the long term if the decision of the economic and diplomatic sanctions is accepted. A possible crisis related to spare parts, access to raw materials, and food problems will have a direct impact on daily life, which will strengthen the anti-regime groups.

The last scenario involves an international intervention in Syria, such as in Libya. This scenario is the least likely; however, it is obvious that this scenario might be brought to the agenda in case the crisis escalates. Another scenario is that the Syrian regime will overcome the crisis by giving priority to the reforms, thereby initiating a democratic process. The minority groups who lead the security forces and the presidency may agree on switching to a multi-party system in the political field. Consequently, it is likely to prevent the ongoing crisis by means of initiating a process that includes all Syrian groups, particularly the Sunni Arabs.

END NOTES

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EUROPEAN UNION’S INEFFECTIVE MIDDLE EAST POLICY REVEALED AFTER REVOLUTION IN TUNISIA

Bahar Turhan HURMİ*

ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the successes as well as shortcomings of European Union’s policies in the Middle East region, and in Tunisia in particular with special reference to the effectiveness of these policies in tackling the problems of this area. The paper also makes recommendations and suggestions for the development and adoption by the EU of foreign policy prescriptions for increased stability, democracy and peaceful evolution of the region. It that Europe needs to behave more like a regional power and less like a big NGO in its dealings with post revolutionary Tunisia, asserting its own vision of how it would like to see the new polity develop and behave.

Key words: European Union, Revolutions in the Middle East, Tunisia, Middle East, European Security.

AVRUPA BİRLİĞİ’NİN TUNUS DEVRİMİNDEN SONRA AÇIĞA ÇIKAN ETKİN OLMAYAN ORTADOĞU POLİTİKASI

ÖZET

Bu çalışmada, Avrupa Birliği’nin Tunus’taki ayaklanma sürecinde başarılı ve başarısız politikaları ve AB’nin bu süreçte ne kadar başarılı olduğu analiz edilecektir. Aynı zamanda çalışma AB’nin bu süreçteki hatalarına bakarak Birliğin Ortadoğu’da istikrar ve demokrasinin evrilme sürecinde nasıl daha etkin politikalar üretmeleri gerektiği anlamında öneriler sunacaktır. Çalışmanın argümanı ise, Avrupa Birliği’nin sivil toplum kuruluşundan ziyade, daha çok bölgesel bir güç olarak davranması gerektiğidir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Avrupa Birliği, Ortadoğu’da Devrimler, Tunus, Ortadoğu, Avrupa Güvenliği.

Introduction

The events in Tunisia first and then spreading over the Middle East area were a bitter lesson for the EU’s indulgent policy towards Ben Ali’s repressive regime. Europe has remained silent for a long time and did not show any intention to intervene in Tunisia even

when Ben Ali removed various democratic rights and freedoms. European fear from any kind of destabilisation in the Middle East prevented the EU in supporting democracy in Tunisia. The EU's foreign policy towards the North African (Mediterranean and/or Middle Eastern) states focused mainly on economic matters. Security, counter-terrorism and maintaining stability remained at the second rank because of the shortcomings which are both inherent to the EU itself and the countries in the region. This approach and the policies implemented (or not implemented due to several reasons) to achieve this objective discredited the EU's foreign policy and considerably deteriorated its standing in the region.

The passive role of the EU is surprising since Europe is directly affected by the social tensions and the political turmoil in the Maghreb. The EU should be particularly concerned about the situation in the Southern neighbourhood, which can destabilise the whole region. As conflicts began first in Tunisia will spill over to the other countries,- not difficult to predict when we consider the unstoppable rise of the globalisation-, the economic and social situation could get worse, Islamist movements could gain more grounds and the pressures to migrate either legally or illegally to Europe could grow.

With the creation of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership with the Barcelona Declaration in 1995, the EU committed itself to consolidate stability, peace and prosperity in the Mediterranean region. It was clear that the Mediterranean and the Middle East was of a high importance for the EU. But when it comes to practice, it has been concluded that the EU remained ineffective in fulfilling these objectives which are laid down in Barcelona. The EU's efforts to support human rights and democracy in the region have not led to democratic structures, expected political change and good governance. This was partly due to the EU's inner problems but it should not be forgotten that, at the end, the demand for democratic change must come from the society itself.

This paper analyses the successes as well as shortcomings of European Union's policies in the Middle East region, and in Tunisia in particular with special reference to the effectiveness of these policies in tackling the problems of this area. The paper also makes recommendations and suggestions for the development and adoption by the EU of foreign policy prescriptions for increased stability, democracy and peaceful evolution of the region.

The importance of the Middle East for the European Union

The Middle East is a prominent region for both the EU and its Member States. The Middle East, specifically the Arab-Israeli conflict and the subsequent peace process has been a foreign policy priority for the EU since it was first able to act as a (more or less) coherent

international actor with the introduction of the European Political Cooperation (EPC) (Smith, 2002: 167). In the European Security Strategy (ESS), resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict is identified as the strategic priority of Europe and it stated that the EU must remain engaged and ready to commit resources to the problem until it is solved. It is identified by the EU officials as “mother of all conflicts in the Middle East” (Youngs, 2004; 2003; 2004). It is considered as a single strategic threat to Middle Eastern security, with which the solution of other conflicts is bound up. There are three main reasons for this:

The first one is the geographical proximity of the region to Europe; any social and political instability or insecurity like the rise of radical Islamism and terrorism in the Middle East would adversely affect the EU’s internal social and political stability and security due to spill-over effect. In terms of internal social and political stability, the presence of important Jewish and Muslim minorities in some of European states results in European concerns about disastrous impact of hardening of the Arab-Israeli conflict on internal social cohesion (Schmid, 2006: 9). Moreover, uncontrolled migration flow from the region is perceived by Europeans as a challenge to their security and stability. Particularly in the post-Cold War era, EU policy makers started to consider stability in the Middle East as an integral part of “security in Europe” (Bilgin, 2004: 274).

“Geopolitical reasons alone are important reasons for the necessity of an integrated Mediterranean Policy. For this, it is enough just to look at the map. Look first at the Balkans, and then at the entrance to the Atlantic Ocean. Take the Dardanelles and the oil-producing Middle East; and do not forget that the Mediterranean lies on a North-South axis, which is essential for the links between Europe and Africa. We have to ask ourselves seriously the question whether the Community could survive after a considerable disturbance in the Mediterranean area” (Natali, 1982: 1). Actually, as stated also by Lorenzo Natali, the Mediterranean and the Middle East has long been a unified space and an economic and cultural entity that boasts great wealth and diversity. The differences and conflicts this region has known since time immemorial have not affected the unity of the Mediterranean region. Fernand Braudel expressed this idea very well when he wrote: “...with a space which is conducive to creativeness with its free waterways, its spontaneous proclivity to free exchange, its diverse and yet similar expanses of land, cities teeming with unceasing dynamism and its wide assortment of integrated human breeds, the Mediterranean maintains a perpetual power of revival and reconstruction over successive generations” (Braudel, 1991: 120).

The Mediterranean began history on the edge of civilization. Egypt and Syria were already old when the maritime empire of Crete unified the Aegean in the second millennium BC and set up trading posts in Sicily and perhaps Andalusia. A thousand years later, Phoenicians and Greeks were still planting colonies in the Western Mediterranean as in a new World. Civilization in the Mediterranean migrated from east to west. And as Georges Duby stated: "... the source is over there, in the great site of Mediterranean – the deep source of our culture, civilization" (Duby, 1991: 132). Moreover, "the Mediterranean is not just a sea; it is composed of several seas and these are full of islands, interrupted by peninsulas and enclosed by toothed coasts. The life of Mediterranean is mixed with the land that of its poetry is pastoral whereas sailors are peasants... the history of the Mediterranean cannot be separated from the history of surrounding land" (Braudel, 1994: 18). Accordingly, the Mediterranean and the Middle East cannot be separated from each other since some countries are both Mediterranean and Middle Eastern like Egypt, Syria, Tunisia, Israel, Palestine, Lebanon and Jordan. In fact, the Mediterranean enjoys a strategic location at the junction of three continents: Africa, Asia and Europe. The countries of the Mediterranean are divided by variations in populations, ideologies, political regimes, social differences and the level of economic development. This area is also the focus of political tensions and conflicts. Political instability in the region threatens the world peace in general. Jesse Lewis emphasized the importance of the region describing it as a "vast political echo chamber where developments in any one country – and many events in countries outside the region – are reverberated and intensified, often exploding with violence that in turn is felt in other parts of the globe" (Lewis, 1976: 1).

The second reason behind the importance of the Middle Eastern security for world is related to energy security. European States are largely dependent on Middle Eastern oil and natural gas. European states wanted to ensure sustained flow of oil and natural gas at reasonable prices (Bilgin, 2005: 140).

Historically, colonial ties had already established relations between most of the Middle Eastern countries and the Member States of the EU. The third reason of the Middle Eastern significance is that some of the EU Member States; Britain and France have a special relationship with the region because of their status of being former colonial powers in the region. Due to these reasons, preservation of the security, stability and peace in the Middle East is very crucial for the EU Member States. That is why they have sought to actively involve and play an active role in the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) since early 1970s.

The EU and the Middle East Peace Process

The EU has been actively involved in the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) in the 1990s and its participation in the process has increased in the post 9/11 era. The EU is one of the members of the Quartet on the Middle East, which was designed for mediating the peace process and composed of the EU, the US, the UN and Russia. In addition to that, the EU has continued to be the largest donor of financial aid to the Palestinian Authority and the MEPP. The EU supported the reform process of the Palestinian Authority toward the creation of an independent economically and politically viable, sovereign and democratic Palestinian state. The EU encouraged the Palestinian reform process in areas of the advancement of judicial independence, promotion of accountability and transparency in the fiscal system, the security sector reform, reorganization of administration and the executive, holding of free and fair elections, development of a modern education system and media based on peace, tolerance and mutual understanding, the promotion of pro-peace civil society.

The EU also increased its role in the security dimension of the MEPP with the launch of two European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) operations: EUPOLCOPPS and EU BAM Rafah. In the post-9/11 era, the EU remained committed to a negotiated settlement resulting in two states, Israel and an independent, sovereign and democratic Palestinian state. They are also planned to live together in peace and security on the basis of the 1967 borders and in the framework of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, based on the UN Security Council Resolutions 242, 338 and 1515, the terms of reference of Madrid Conference of 2002 and the principle of 'land for peace'. Thus, it can be observed that the EU actively involved in the MEPP in the post-9/11 era. Since 9/11, the US policy towards the MEPP changed and the US decided to adopt a multilateral approach to the peace process, with cooperation with European governments (Musu, 2007).

As a result, the Quartet on the Middle East, which provided multilateral framework for the EU's participation in the political and diplomatic dimension of the MEPP, was established. The EU has played an active role in the political and diplomatic dimension of the peace process. Furthermore, during this period the EU has started to play a prominent role in the security dimension of the peace process through its EDSP operations. During this period, an increase in international recognition of the EU as a significant player in the political, diplomatic and security dimension of the Middle East conflict and also a revival of peace process which was blocked since the second half of the 1990s is observed.

Despite continuing mutual violence between the Israelis and the Palestinians especially, since the outbreak of Al-Aqsa Intifada in September 2000, with the launch of the

Road Map by the Quartet in April 2003, the closed road to the peace in the Middle East has been opened. Despite the international community's efforts, at the end of 2005, which constituted the deadline set by the Road Map for the final settlement of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, the Road Map stuck in gridlock. The Israeli unilateral actions including construction of Security Fence and Disengagement Plan and continuing mutual violence between the Israelis and the Palestinians decreased the prospect of the successful implementation of the Road Map and led it into a dead end. Moreover, in 2006, significant events, which had decisive effects on the MEPP, had taken place.

First one was Hamas' sweeping victory in the Palestinian legislative election of 2006, and the Quartet's decision to boycott the Hamas-led Palestinian Government when it refused to meet and implement the three principles put forward by the Quartet on the Middle East including non-violence comprising the laying down of arms, recognition of Israel's right to exist and acceptance and fulfillment of existing agreements and obligations, including the Road Map. The EU also decided to impose sanctions on the Hamas-led Palestinian government and suspend its direct aid. Due to the escalation of violence in the region, the EU's two ESDP operations in the Palestinian territories have been temporarily suspended.

Second one was Israel-Lebanon War of 2006 and subsequent huge military contribution of EU Member States to the expanded UNIFIL by providing the backbone of the force, which enabled the EU Member States' significant military presence in the region.

Actually, the importance of the Middle East generally for the West and specifically for the EU has been increased and intensified by the globalisation- which has often been perceived as largely equivalent to Westernisation since it refers to the spill-over throughout the globe of ideas and institutions of usually Western origin. In the Middle East, the decade of globalisation was marked by endless wars, US hegemony, economic dependency and insecurity (Hinnebush, 2003). Although it has been argued that globalisation strengthened Islamic fundamentalism and due to its ambiguity created a contradictory and tension filled situation (Griffel, 2011; Kellner, 2005: 177-188). However, against most expectations and arguments, the process of globalisation often acted as an impetus to democratisation rather than an obstacle. People with different ideas are now able to come together and participate in global culture and to make politics through gaining access to global communication and media networks. Peace, democracy and stability are spreading (at least sometimes in theory) by delivering economic prosperity which people would not keen on sacrificing in conflicts.

Globalisation and the Middle East

Globalisation is as the term itself implies: a global and indiscriminating sweep that standardizes the commercial, military, cultural, and human resources around it with respect to one nation or group of peoples at the top. In a 'globalized' society, the entire world bends to the will of global community and its institutions and follows standards set by them. It leaves no country or continent untouched, and is almost impossible to avoid. Globalisation has many effects that – in theory – bring some form of prosperity or greater good to all involved, but without a doubt it benefits most the group in power.

The problem with globalisation with respect to the developing nations of today is a simple one: the fact that it's already there. With the powerful nations already at the core, the very definition of globalisation dictates that they will remain there, and that the remainder of the nations and groups, especially the developing and Third World nations, will stay at the periphery, which means will be subject to the rules and restrictions as set forth by those in the lead. Here, one thing that matters most is whether or not it is possible for the status quo to change and for one or more nations, to move from the lower ranks to the higher echelons of world globalisation ladder; and is possible for the Middle East in particular?

The Middle East is an especially intriguing specimen in this context; where most countries have reached some sort of equilibrium with the world around them (the best recent example may be Caucasia), the Middle East has faced continuous violent turbulents for the past century, leaving its inhabitants focused on issues of every-day existence - more immediately important than globalisation, and the assertion of their role as a world power. However, trends from all components of globalisation have manifested themselves in recent years in the Middle East; which has the power to in turn lead to globalisation with portions of the Middle East as a major source of influence and/or power a possibility.

At the moment, the Middle East is in a temporary position of supreme economic power: with the rest of the world highly dependent on fossil fuels and not yet researching alternate fuels to the extent as they should; and therein the Middle Eastern nations have an opportunity to take things further, if it is taken promptly and dealt with rationally (Moreno, 2004: 13-22). With the Middle East being the number one provider of oil in OPEC, the rest of the world is at their mercy: no matter what leverage they hold, in the face of no oil, the Middle East will prevail (Morse and Richard, 2002: 5).

The Middle East is considered as an economic power due to a lucky coincidence with which thousands of years of fossil fuel collected and left the rest of the world dependent on them for energy and survival. Though it can be said that the Middle East already is a global

economic power, oil alone is not enough, especially when, sooner or later, it will either run out or be replaced with something cleaner, cheaper, more efficient, and better (Greene, Hopson and Li, 2005: 23-56). The true play for power needs to come in the form of a self-sufficing economy built on the manufacture of finished goods and services, and not just the provision of raw materials for processing and sale elsewhere (Whathers, 2004). For the Middle East to truly claim its role as an honest and official world economic power with the full intention of remaining that way, it must engage in large-scale manufacturing and goods business.

Given the current affluence in the Middle East and abundance of company start-ups and investments, the Middle East has a prime chance to ascertain its position and concrete its role if approached the right way. A political superpower can be defined as a nation or union/group with enough influence on the political process of the entire world, and can use this influence to accomplish almost anything (Soderberg, 2005: 43-46). For a nation to become a political superpower, there are many obstacles that must be overcome, and even more feats that need to be accomplished, but there are varying levels of importance within these ranks. A political superpower must have some means of reinforcing a decision should pure politics fail (military, economic, or otherwise), it must also be united in its stance from within, and clear in its goals (Soderberg, 2005: 66).

The Middle East has serious issues prohibiting it from becoming once more the superpower, "empire" that it once was centuries ago, that range from a lack of unity to governmental disarray and fear of modern progress, to constant conflict and disagreement amongst the various Arabi nations as well as between the Middle East as a whole and the rest of world (Wilson and Williams, 2005: 22). While it may possible to envision a joint Middle Eastern global economic power, it is much more difficult to imagine a unified Middle East of one political mind, largely due to the sectional and regional socio-political divisions in the region (William, 1999: 82).

Given the present political conditions in the Middle East, it becomes obvious that a political superpower rising from the ashes of a once-great empire is at present quite remote, and will require an enormous amount of effort and time for all the parties involved to realize the benefits and strength of their collective power-potential, to set aside their differences, and to accomplish something in the court of world politics. Although certain individual nations in the Middle East possess a fair share of political clout and power that may have at one point been enough to make that nation a global power and/or a leader in geopolitical world globalization, its current might does not enable it to steal the limelight from the current

superpowers and heads of political globalization, namely the United States, Russia, and the European Union (Evans, 2003: 20).

The problem is that politics alone is no more than a method, nothing tangible, and nothing spectacular. However, politics, once mixed with economic, military, and cultural aspects, politics becomes a formidable weapon. The steep requirements for political superpowers can be seen as stemming in a large part from the military prerequisites. So, without a military presence or the threat of military action, politics alone is of no avail; and without the military might, one can never escape the political trends set by other nations (Altman and Gubrud, 2004).

In the Middle East, the problem is compounded by the extent to which foreign military forces have infiltrated the landscape, such that not a single country remains physically uncompromised. It is hard to build a military presence to rival that of existing political superpowers, but it becomes an immensely harder obstacle when at the slightest indication of true military motivation results in punishments and threats from the superpowers at the top, making it all the more difficult for the Middle East to ever shed itself of the military shackles it imposed on itself when it invited foreign military forces to intervene in regional affairs (Sobhy, 2005: 14).

The Middle Eastern culture is one of the oldest and best-preserved traditions remaining. In globalisation, ethnocentricity is one of the most important and final blows that shape the true form of the world and the attitude the various peoples will take towards it. In an ethnocentric society, such as that of today, most nations/societies attempt to wipe and/or discredit any and all remaining traces of previous cultures after ascertaining their own cultural presence in the area (UIUC, 2006).

In the Middle East, according to Rubin, culture and religion have reached a point of interchangeability, where the Middle Eastern culture is built on the religion and is passed along with it. Largely due to its association with Islam, the Middle East has actually already taken the initial steps required to become a world cultural power by successfully rejecting almost all forms of cultural globalization from the West – something that no other nation or group has succeeded in doing (Rubin, 2003: 1-2). The steps required for ascertaining a people and their culture as a global power in that field are two-fold, namely first concretely holding onto their own original ideologies and beliefs, and then spreading them on to others. And in both of these fields, the Middle East seems to be succeeding spectacularly. As Rubin mentions in his article, the Middle East has successfully rejected all attempts to ‘modernise’ the region except those that the Middle East itself deemed to be positive and helpful, not a

detriment or a loss of identity. At the same time, the Middle Eastern culture, again, through Islam, is being spread across the face of the planet faster than any other religion, and is steadily gaining ground and heading straight towards number one (Young, 1997).

As a result, it becomes obvious that in order for any of the above-mentioned factors and components of globalisation to ever take place with the Middle East as a center of activity and innovation and a recognised and undisputed world leader, it is of the utmost importance that the Middle Eastern nations and peoples pool their resources and capabilities together, otherwise the sheer magnitude of the existing world globalisation order makes it physically impossible and not even thinkable for one Middle Eastern nation alone to take on the world order. Middle Eastern unity and a place in the status quo need not come in the form of all Middle Eastern nations uniting under one flag, but rather simply managing their resources more efficiently, establishing democracy and democratic institutions, forming a true representative Arab Union that is not built on talk and money but instead truly dedicated to making a difference for the Middle East and uniting them to make of the various nations a powerful entity capable of presenting itself solidly for the rest of the world to see.

Current Relations between the European Union and the Middle East

The European Union's southern neighbourhood is still being shaken by a revolutionary wave. Egypt and Tunisia have managed to overthrow autocratic regimes, Libya is struggling to get rid of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, and tensions are likely to persist in other countries for months to come. Whether or not regimes fall, EU policies will have to change drastically, whether to respond to successful regime change or to successful repression of protests. A number of increasingly accepted conventions about the Arab world – that democracy and human rights were perhaps not universally shared values; that privatisation and other economic reforms could be given priority over political change – have been thrown out of the window. But the success or failure of the regions' revolutions will be defined above all by what follows the overthrow of autocrats.

The question now is how to move from peaceful protests to stable and healthy political, economic and social systems in the region. The emergence of democratic, pluralistic and fairer societies is just one of the possible outcomes, and perhaps not the most likely in all cases.

The place to start the battle for the success of the post-revolutionary neighbourhood is where the wave of revolutions started: Tunisia. There are strong prospects that Tunisia could become the first country in the North African region to consolidate a genuine democratic

system. On the other hand, it could also still become simply another failed revolution. Either outcome would have great implications.

Jasmine Tunisia: Where things began

Tunisia is currently full of hope and excitement following what is known there as the karama (dignity) revolution. It is now focused on the question of how to support the country's transition to democracy. However, both the mood and the situation remain fragile. The streets of Tunis are still laden with armoured cars, the military still patrols the streets and the police are still mainly in hiding –and, as the main instrument of former president Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali's repression, they seem to remain discredited for a long time. In addition to this tension, there are substantial political uncertainties. There is no clear revolutionary leadership, substantial divisions are emerging between the political and civil society actors emerging from the fog of revolution, and ministers come and go, while escalating social demands complicate the picture.

Besides uncertainty existing in the relations with the EU, there is also a sense of bitterness vis-à-vis the EU's unconditional support for Ben Ali. This situation was disappointing for Tunisians since there occurred a sense that the EU wanted democracy for itself but not for Tunisia. This lack of confidence on the EU may come from colonial past and paranoid future. Whereas those taking part in the so-called colour revolutions in Serbia or Ukraine looked to Europe for inspiration, the revolution in Tunisia happened despite Europe. And, for most Tunisians, the EU is associated with France and Italy – the closest, most visible and present member states, which are seen as having been in close relations with Ben Ali.

Ineffectiveness of the EU in the Middle East Region

Overall, the EU is falling far behind of fulfilling its objectives in the Middle East. This is due to several reasons: three sets of problems can be derived. The first set of problems is that; although the EU is concerned primarily with political stability, it does not exclusively seek to achieve it through economic growth, which is itself supposed to flow from policies of free trade and internal economic liberalisation. Moreover, the economic policies advocated by the Barcelona Partnership¹ are based on hypothesis that seems not only simplistic but also far too optimistic. Instead of increasing productivity, free trade could increase redundancy and output levels in the Mediterranean (Marquina, 1997: 37). At the same time, the effects of free trade on investment could turn out to be negative rather than positive. If this dashes hopes for

an increase in exports, such an increase in itself will not become revenue available to pay back public debt (Kienle, 1998: 4).

Besides the proposed positive linkage between investment and job creation depends on additional factors such as transparency, efficiency and independence of the judiciary and political stability, including the countervailing effects of productivity increases. So, it becomes easy to come to the analysis that political liberalisation and the additional stability are difficult objectives to achieve solely through economic liberalisation. Neither general prosperity, nor the relative political stability that in the best cases could result from economic reforms, leads to a widening of political participation or increased respect for human rights.

The second set of problems concerns the problems, which are inherent to the EU's structure. To strengthen this argument, Jörg Monar explains that the EU's policy in the Mediterranean suffers from a gap between expectations and outcomes (Monar, 1998: 39). This discrepancy can be expounded in part by the particular institutional and procedural constraints of the EU's dual system of foreign affairs. The institutional constraints of the EU's "dual" system of external affairs clearly have an impact on the EU's Middle East Policy and it seems that it is negative one. Although the EU is trying to get rid of these constraints by several recent attempts, the decision-making process is still so slow, and often reduced to the lowest common denominator among the member states' interests; sometimes it is even paralysed. There are problems of continuity, because of the six-monthly rotation of the EU Presidency, and consistency on the EU side. Negotiations with the non-member Middle Eastern countries and the implementation of EU policies can be suspended by internal problems of the Union system. However, the Middle Eastern countries have to keep in mind that there exist two contradictory powers within the Union; which are sovereign member states in international relations on the one hand and strong supranational elements on the other. Accordingly, it is not fair to expect the Union to act like a unitary nation-state in its relations with them. Middle Eastern countries must accept that because of its internal institutional constraints, the Union has inbuilt limitations to its acting capacity and an important potential for blockages, not only in decision-making but also in the policy implementation process. Acceptance of this reality can help to reduce disappointments emerging from exaggerated expectations and give greater elasticity to relations between the EU and the Middle East.

Moreover, the weakness of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) prevents the EU from acting cohesively and decisively in bringing its weight to bear within the Middle East Policy². However, weakness of the CFSP is not the only reason behind the ineffective

Middle East Policy. There are other factors behind this. First of all, there is again an absence of a common security/military perception in the EU. Developments in the Middle East are followed its special attention by the EU's southern members and hardly even recognised in the North (Gillespie, 1997)³.

Another reason behind the ineffectiveness of the EU's Middle East Policy is the absence of trans-Atlantic coordination and common understanding with respect to the Middle East. In a sense, this lack of coordination is an aspect of the weak status of the EU's CFSP. In the 1990s, many Europeans maintained that the US did its best to prevent a European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI) to from emerging. However, others claim that European governments, not the Americans, were responsible for failing to enforce the CFSP. Whatever the truth, EU-US synergy in the region, explicitly mentioned in the first common goal of the December 1995 "New Transatlantic Agenda" (Krenzler and Schomaker, 1996: 9-28) , has not worked. Besides the issue of NATO reforms, there are other differences between the EU and the US over the Middle East ⁴. In general, the US would have preferred to see Europeans linking the Middle East and the Gulf to the Mediterranean area and taking more responsibility in the former arena. All these differences are reflected in the fact that, while the Europeans felt committed to the Mediterranean, the Americans (with some exceptions), (Lesser, 1996) , used to talk more about the "Greater Middle East" (Blackwill and Sturmer, 1997; Gompert and Larrabee, 1997). Above all, it is wrong to assume that the process of European construction through the EU will automatically spill over into the area of defence cooperation (Hayde-Price, 1991: 132). As Berndt von Staden has argued, the concept of a EU incorporating a defence policy component is ahistorical, and rests on a profound misunderstanding of the nature of community integration: "... it (the EU) will remain an entity which will only find the guarantee for its security in the backing of the Atlantic alliance" (Von Staden, 1990: 36-37).

Despite all these reasons behind the ineffectiveness of the EU in the Middle East in general and Tunisia specifically, Tunisians know they will need European help. There is a sense of pragmatism that the EU is a strong economic power on its doorstep, with relevant experiences to share and possible support for its transition. In other words, the EU has the opportunity to make amends for past failures by offering prompt and generous help that Tunisia needs and deserves⁵. Above all, this will serve European interests in helping to consolidate a more stable and pluralistic southern neighbourhood. The EU should not start where it usually does: teaching and preaching. This time a realistic approach is needed. The EU should offer advice where it is asked for, financial assistance and trade where it is able,

and also some quick eye-catching measures, across all sectors, to show that it stands with Tunisia's move towards democracy. Europe has an interest in supporting Tunisia in becoming an established democracy that could serve as a model in a turbulent but still predominantly authoritarian Middle East region.

Confusion Prevails

Since Tunisian independence in 1956, the Tunisian people have only known two presidents, who were both more or less authoritarian: Habib Bourguiba, who ruled from 1957 until 1987; and Ben Ali, who ruled from 1987 until 2011. This means that Tunisia has no previous experience of successful, ordered political transition. The revolution therefore marks not just the departure of a president but the end of an epoch. Yet the road onwards is already confusing. Tunisians seem to be united around the end goal of democracy, but there is a lack of clarity and – understandably – a divergence of views on how to get there. Some want gradual political reform, others want to preserve the economic and social origins of the revolution, and others still call for the Tunisian people to stop protesting and go back to normal life.

The population is increasingly atomised. While Ben Ali remained in power, the protesters were united by a single goal. But since his departure in January, the protests have become narrower in focus and sometimes more parochial. Some people protest in front of the Interior Ministry against former police abuses, while others, such as the staff of the national airline, go on strike for higher salaries. There are few structures – for example, political parties or NGOs – through which these demands can be channelled. It is striking that, six months after Ben Ali resigned, there is still no charismatic new leader in the mould of Lech Walesa or Vaclav Havel. Interim president Fouad Mebazaa has announced elections by 24 July to elect a constituent assembly that will write a new Tunisian constitution. In the meantime, however, the country's transitional government is struggling to enforce its authority over a population that does not accept its legitimacy or that of most local government.

On paper, the government has huge power, because the parliament, itself still filled with Ben Ali's people, has given the interim president the right to govern by decree. But, there seems to be little fear among Tunisians that the interim authorities will try to consolidate their position and stay in office. The danger instead is of a fluid and unelected transitional government that is unable to persuade the people to accept its decisions. The interim government has repeatedly been forced to make concessions following complaints that it had

not moved quickly enough. At the end of February, caretaker Prime Minister Mohammed Ghannouchi resigned, along with the two other ministers remaining who had served in Ben Ali's government. The interim president's decision to hold elections for a constituent assembly also meets one of the protesters' key demands (the earlier plan to vote first for a new president under the old constitution risked, in the eyes of many, inadvertently creating a second Ben Ali). A political reform commission appointed by the government in January will help devise the code under which the elections are held. But this sequence of reform extends the time for which an interim, unelected government will run the country, leading to a risk that the crisis of authority will only worsen in the coming months.

Another urgent question is what role people who were part of Ben Ali's political system should play in Tunisia's regeneration. Under Ben Ali's centralised and tightly controlled system, the party and the state were virtually the same. Tunisia now is at the edge of a twofold road. On the one hand, it needs to keep those people to be able to continue running the country effectively and offer elite networks a stake in the success of the post-revolutionary environment. On the other hand, it needs to weaken the former elites enough to make sure the revolution is not hijacked by the old guard and corrupt interests. A number of the new political parties are viewed as vehicles through which the old elite can get back into power through the back door. The issue will clearly be divisive.

Creating an independent civil society

Siheem Bensedrine is a journalist and human rights activist who was arrested and harassed under Ben Ali and who has lived in exile for the last few years. For years, she was the driving force of the opposition radio station Kalima, which broadcast only through the internet and satellite.⁶

Now back in Tunisia, Bensedrine has plunged into the political turmoil that could see her country transformed into a more democratic state. She is trying to obtain radio and television licences to start regular broadcasts and to provide the public with better and freer access to information. Ordinary citizens frequently knock on her door asking for help with everything from addressing injustice by state institutions to caring for sick relatives. Tunisian pro-democracy activists such as Bensedrine are full of energy and optimism, and although their organisations are weak, the expectations of them are already huge. Despite the will of the Tunisian people to consolidate the political change that they have brought about, counter-revolution – in other words, a quiet re-appropriation of power by wolves in democratic sheep's clothing – is not impossible. Without the development of checks and balances as the

new democracy emerges, the old elite could use its money, power, Networks and, in particular, its ownership of the majority of private media outlets to entrench itself successfully in the new system and push back many of the changes.

Under Ben Ali, it was difficult for political parties other than the leader's Democratic Constitutional Rally (RCD) party or civil society groups to develop, since they were subject to tight legal constraints and the country's political culture allowed no space for the idea of a "loyal opposition" (Christopher, 2010). The long-term success of Tunisia's transition to democracy is likely to depend in large part on whether it now develops national institutions and civil society groups that can organise debate and monitor the government effectively. Among the most important priorities are national representative political parties, an independent and Professional judiciary, and NGOs with countrywide reach.

Independent media will be equally important. Social networking websites – in particular, Facebook and Twitter, which have been accessible in Tunisia only since 2008 – were among the well-documented enablers of the revolution. WikiLeaks, which documented for the first time a level of corruption among the ruling elite that most Tunisians suspected, also had a big impact. The internet will undoubtedly continue to play a critical role in information dissemination and holding both the transitional government and whatever follows it to account. However, only around 27 per cent of the Tunisian population use the internet, and access can often be sporadic, so more traditional media will also play a critical role in the development of a democratic society (Christian-Peter and A. Möller, 2011).

The interim government has lifted restrictions on press freedom. But although the three main newspapers are now able to discuss issues facing the country, training is needed to improve their ability to carry out accurate and professional investigative journalism, as their operating environment has changed so radically. Television is likely to remain the most important medium for years to come. It will be difficult to establish diversity and choice on domestic television and radio in time to support genuinely competitive elections in six months' time. Currently there are only a few private channels, which are owned by Ben Ali, his family and his networks. While their broadcasting is not counter-revolutionary, some civil society groups fear that it could shore up the positions of many of the members of Ben Ali's administration, without providing support for, or coverage of, an effective opposition. Al Jazeera is more popular than the domestic television channels, but while contributing to pluralism in general, it is unlikely to support the development of democracy within Tunisia by hosting local political talk shows or investigating corruption.

An independent communications authority has been set up, but it is not yet clear how far or how quickly it will contribute to greater pluralism of the media by granting more licences to new media outlets. The development of a new press code is also problematic. There is plenty of legal expertise within Tunisia's universities, but, as with the constitution and the electoral code, there is little trust in the transitional government as a legitimate entity to oversee this process. Without clear guidelines on different candidates being accorded sufficient airtime to make their case for election to the public, it is unlikely that elections will be genuinely free and fair. On the other hand, until elections have taken place, a question mark hangs over whether the interim president and government are competent to approve the guidelines for developing this framework.

Challenges for a new democracy

Amine Ghali is the programme director of the Al Kawakibi Democracy Transition Center, a Tunisian NGO set up in 2006 which, as one of the few regional organisations working on democracy promotion, has been active in Tunisia in the run-up to and following Ben Ali's departure. According to Ghali, Tunisia needs to learn from previous successful transitions and failed revolutions, from South Africa and Argentina to Poland and Ukraine. He says Tunisians have a lot of questions regarding what they should do next and could benefit from the experience of others.

Despite the atmosphere of optimism in Tunis, it still remains possible that, in the coming years, the process of transition in Tunisia could produce a centralised system that is perhaps freer than that of Ben Ali but nonetheless quite authoritarian. In recent history, many revolutions failed to produce consolidated democracies – for example, in Iran in 1979, in 1989-91 in post-Soviet states such as Belarus, Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia, or in Kyrgyzstan in 2005. In Tunisia, just like elsewhere, democracy may not easily take root in one go, and may require more than one upheaval, moving between phases of centralisation and democratisation before it consolidates. Since most candidates for presidential or parliamentary office with experience of government in Tunisia will be those who have served under the previous regimes, the old guard is likely to gain more than a foothold under the new system if the electorate places confidence in experience.

One of the well-known reasons why Europe, the United States and the international community accommodated Ben Ali's regime and others like it for so long was a fear that Islamists were the only alternative organised political force. In fact, no strong leaders are emerging from this corner either. Indeed, Rachid Ghannouchi, leader of the Islamist party

Ennahda – who has been allowed by the transitional government to return to the country – has ruled out running for president, and some observers in the country predict that his party is likely to maintain a relatively low profile throughout the elections. Civil society appears broadly in agreement that the various Islamist groups should be included in consultations about the transition process. Many want to draw on the example of Turkey under the Justice and Development Party (AKP), which they see as a positive example of reconciliation between Islam and democracy.⁷

However, some European diplomats in Tunisia note that even if Islamists win only the expected ten per cent of the vote in future parliamentary elections, they may begin to play a decisive role in the development of legislation. Their financial structure in Tunisia is unclear, but there is a possibility that over time they could build up strongholds across the country, especially if economic grievances persist. This would follow a pattern of growing support for Islamist groups elsewhere in the region, such as Hamas, Hezbollah and the Muslim Brotherhood, who have organised an alternative system of welfare when governments have failed to do so. They could therefore have a bigger impact than expected in the first parliamentary elections if they are delayed much longer than six months, or in subsequent rounds. Tunisians feel that the regional context will play an important role in determining whether or not democracy takes root in their country. While a sense of being a pioneer of Arab democracy might help, isolation could be harmful, and there are no guarantees as to how the change of regime in Egypt, the armed uprising in Libya, or protests in Morocco, Bahrain, Yemen, Algeria and elsewhere might end. In any case, Tunisia is not likely to get too much help from the Arab world, since other countries' elites either would prefer the Tunisian experiment to fail or, as in the case of Egypt, will be too busy managing their own post-revolutionary transitions.

Economy without Democracy or Democracy without Economy?

The number one issue with the potential to make or break the democratic transition is the economy. Demonstrations continue daily in Tunis and around the country as people seek to highlight the many social and economic grievances – unemployment, low salaries, high-food prices – that were suppressed during Ben Ali's oppressive rule, and which ultimately triggered the revolution. Although the transitional government and its ministries are the target of many of these protests, they are increasingly also aimed at other employers too: the revolution has shown that protest works. So far, the interim government has been forced to accede to many of the demands of the protesters. Unless it can stabilise the situation, fears

around security may lead to the emergence of a strongman – whether from the ranks of the previous regime or elsewhere. As the ultimate guarantor of order, the army is currently very popular, and could possibly step in as a last resort if social tensions appear to be getting out of hand.

This on-going state of protest also risks paralysing the urgently needed economic recovery. The interim government puts the cost of the uprising to Tunisia's GNP at €6-8 billion, but with a different sector on strike each day, it is hard to see how growth can be kick-started. The governor of Tunisia's Central Bank, Mustapha Nabli, has said that social pressures are the major challenge to economic recovery in the next few months.⁸ This adds to investor uncertainty: in the aftermath of the revolution, Moody's downgraded Tunisia's credit rating to Baa3 from Baa2, and it may still drop further. It also does not provide a very encouraging image to the tourists that Tunisia badly needs to encourage to come back – bookings with Tunisian travel agents are down 50 per cent for the first three months of 2011 compared with last year (Jaouadi, 2011).

While concerns about the economy are shared by the entire population, the disconnect that the rural population (which makes up around 33 per cent of a population of 10 million) feels from the transitional government in Tunis further aggravates its sense that its concerns are not being addressed.⁹ Levels of rural poverty are high, and European trade policy has only really benefitted the larger farms of 200 hectares or more. An unfair system of land tenure which predates independence means that around 50 to 60 per cent of farmers with smaller holdings have no right to pass on their land to their children.

Clearly, there is no quick or easy solution to such a deep-seated problem, but it will be important that the transitional government at least communicates an awareness of, and attention to, these rural questions that contributed to bringing thousands of people onto the streets during the revolution. A high-profile initiative, such as the appointment of a commission to look into this question and to make recommendations to the new government once elected, could be an important step. So far, rather than receiving recognition for their grievances, the rural regions have had to suffer extra costs, such as treating those seriously injured in the protests in overstretched and under-resourced hospitals – not to mention the influx of refugees from Libya coming across Tunisia's south-eastern border. Without any indication of support, there is a risk that rural communities will believe that their revolution has been betrayed.

A chance to change

The Association of Democratic Women is an illustration of the EU's failure to challenge Ben Ali's regime. The organisation received a €30,000 grant from the EU in support for its activities, only to find that the money was frozen in a bank account by the authorities. Instead of putting pressure on the Ben Ali government to release the money, the EU requested the funds back from the NGO at the end of the financial year. Given such experiences, the emerging political class in Tunisia understandably sees Europe as having been at best silent about and at worst complicit in the abuses of the Ben Ali regime. They are aggrieved that, as the drama of their revolution unfolded, it took European leaders so long to come down off the fence and express support for those demanding change. In particular, Tunisians are well aware that the EU's neighbourhood policy, which was, in theory, aid and trade in return for progress on democracy and human rights, operated very differently in practice. Leading politicians from EU member states had largely uncritical relations with Ben Ali, and although the European Commission delegation tried to take a tougher line on political questions, it was frozen out by the regime and, in more recent years, has concentrated on technical collaboration on a project level. Useful co-operation projects with non-state actors on issues such as rural poverty had restarted in the last few years. However, the commission largely ignored the failure of Ben Ali's regime to live up to its commitments to reform in return for aid. The Union for the Mediterranean, with its clear focus on commercial projects, added further to this impression of EU hypocrisy.

A number of incidents in recent years particularly undermined the EU's rhetoric about the importance of political reform in Tunisia. The most recent of these was the opening of discussions on advanced status, or privileged partnership, for Tunisia within the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2010. The EU aimed to capitalise on the relatively open business environment but did not insist on the attendance of key civil society groups in consultations. Worse, this step took place while the legislative assembly was in the process of passing a bill that subjected human rights defenders to criminal penalties for contacting foreign organisations and institutions to raise concerns about abuses.¹⁰

Some member states were more principled than others in these instances, but unfortunately the different attitudes of member states only added to the impression that there was no unity behind an EU neighbourhood policy that supported political reform. Different member states were driven by different interests, but the prevailing European approach was always the lowest common denominator. Even specific written agreements on the importance

the EU places on on-going contact with civil society working for political reform, such as the EU guidelines on human rights defenders, seem to have been largely ignored.¹¹

The Mediterranean member states were particularly important, not only because they call the shots in EU foreign policy towards Tunisia but also because their national efforts are much more visible than the EU collective. This is no surprise: these are the states with the biggest business interests to protect and the biggest stake in the “stability” that could keep illegal migration in check. The pattern is familiar elsewhere: the less you have to lose, the more principled the behaviour. Tunisian activists are particularly critical of France and Italy for their ties to Ben Ali. Spain and Germany – the latter of which also has a large economic role in Tunisia – are also influential but not judged as harshly by Tunisians. This European approach continued even as the Ben Ali regime collapsed. Tunisians are particularly scornful of former French foreign minister Michèle Alliot-Marie for offering help to Ben Ali in dealing with the protests. Only when Ben Ali had fled the country did the EU move beyond relatively anodyne calls for respect for the rule of law and human rights to express support, through a statement on 14 January 2011 by Catherine Ashton, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and Stefan Füle, European Commissioner for the European Neighbourhood Policy, for the “Tunisian people and their democratic aspirations.”¹² Even then, there was little the EU institutions could do beyond what France, Spain and Italy allowed them to. Member states’ embassies in Tunis were focused on getting their own citizens out of the country, and then – particularly in the case of Italy – managing their borders to counter the flows of thousands of migrants leaving Tunisia, rather than supporting the Tunisians in consolidating democracy. The EU always seemed to be acting slowly and reluctantly in the face of events in the same way as the interim government in Tunis, rather than getting out in front with a clear and bold indication of support for the democratic revolution.

However, despite this history, Tunisian civil society does still seem to be open to the right kind of EU support. The EU is by far Tunisia’s most significant trading partner, with €9.9 billion of Tunisia’s €11.8 billion exports going to the EU and two-thirds of foreign investment coming from the EU.¹³ The EU also represents an important group of democracies with recent experience of democratic transitions. The US is not that visible in Tunisia, Maghreb integration has failed and, in any case, other Arab states are likely to be consumed by their own post-revolutionary transitions or will have few stakes in seeing the revolution succeed.

The EU therefore still has a chance to make amends for past failures by offering prompt and generous help with the transition. Although the Tunisians are still open to co-operation with Europe that can support their transition, the reputation of the current ENP towards the southern neighbourhood is rather damaged. If the EU wants to take the opportunity to be a supportive friend in Tunisia's transition over the coming months, it must frankly recognise that things cannot simply continue as before. The European External Action Service (EEAS) initiative led by Pierre Vimont to revisit the whole EU policy towards the southern Mediterranean is another important acknowledgement that a "post-Lisbon" EU should now be in a position to aim for a big change (Willis, 2011). The challenge for the EU is not to refocus its assistance from one region to another, but to sufficiently support countries that perform well in terms of reform, and most importantly to spend money on the basis of a political strategy.

The test will be whether there is political will over the medium and longer term. So far, the evidence suggests that the EU is not willing to take sufficient action to realise its ambition to be Tunisia's "main ally in moving towards democracy," as Ashton put it in her opening statement to senior officials meeting on Egypt and Tunisia in February.¹⁴ Ashton called for a historic response by the EU and should be given credit for making efforts to raise money from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the European Investment (EIB). Yet this effort was eclipsed in the Tunisian press by the pledge by member states of €17 million of extra financial aid that Ashton was able to announce during her visit. The offer looked particularly low when compared to the €100 million that Italy requested in the same week for support in dealing with the influx of Tunisian migrants at Lampedusa and elsewhere.

Recommendations

If the EU is serious about acting as Tunisia's closest partner in supporting its transition to democracy, it will need a plan of action that is, as former Tunisian industry minister Afif Chelbi put it in February, "up to scratch."¹⁵ An overhaul of the neighbourhood policy within greater economic assistance clearly linked to progressive transition towards democracy is absolutely necessary, but this will take time to bed down, and to prove itself to the Tunisian people. In the meantime, Europe needs a more ambitious, immediate response. At this critical moment, the EU should look for striking ways to show that it is now firmly committed to offering its support to Tunisia's transition. A few high-profile actions at this point would

demonstrate that the EU is sensitive to the enormous step that Tunisia has taken and the costs that it has incurred. These measures could include:

- identifying “crisis points” in the regions where the revolution started and where short-term aid would go a long way, such as overstretched hospitals running out of medical supplies and injured protesters in need of sophisticated medical treatment.
- continuing to send high-level politicians from the EU and member states to express support for Tunisia’s transition, as Spanish prime minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero did in early March, and to show that Tunisia has not been forgotten amid later dramatic events in Egypt, Libya and elsewhere.
- generous assistance for the south-east of Tunisia, near the Libyan border, which is facing an extra pressure from large influxes of refugees from its neighbour.
- a quick boost to the Tunisian tourist industry – which is a vital sector to kick start Tunisia’s economic growth. This could include a campaign to encourage Europeans to take their holidays in Tunisia, spearheaded by ministers and the high representative going there as tourists at their own cost.

In addition to the €17 million of additional aid, which should be increased if possible, the EIB has announced a lending fund of €1.87 billion to be placed at Tunisia’s disposal.¹⁶ This money should be closely targeted on the economically distressed regions, in order to demonstrate to protesters that their concerns are being listened to, and to allow the elections in July to take place amid relative calm. The potential that a void in offering social and economic support could be filled by Islamist groups that consequently gain a stronghold provides an extra incentive to provide immediate aid to the poor agricultural regions.

The immediate issues for Tunisia’s credit rating are security and political stability, which are priority areas for the interim Tunisian government. However, EU governments could support the recreation of a climate for investment and tourism through high-profile statements and visits to Tunisia with business leaders to encourage foreign direct investment and to provide a significant reinjection of dynamism in the economy. They could hold a European Council meeting in Tunis, combined with a major event profiling Tunisia as a stable and exciting environment for tourism and business. They could also support the upgrading of Tunisian infrastructure, particularly in internet and telephone communications and in ports, which business managers have cited as obstacles to investment (Alexander, 2010). Economic assistance, whether in agriculture or business investment, would not only benefit the country but also help shore up the position of the interim government, which would appear as a partner in these activities. In addition to economic support, the EU should offer support in

building the structures for a multi-party system. The EU has already committed to election observation, and this has been welcomed by the transitional government. But beyond this, there is enormous scope to share experience, particularly from Central and Eastern European countries, which have been through a similar process in recent memory. The EU could:

- help develop civil society and independent media so that they are professionally run and know how to monitor government effectively. Specifically, the EU could provide technical advice on how to set up a broadcasting council that could grant licences to contribute to developing the capacity of independent local media.

- help build political parties, with support from European political foundations. The EU could also use this moment to think about a more far-reaching commitment to democracy assistance by funnelling support to democratic transition in Tunisia and elsewhere with more speed and flexibility than the bureaucratic structures of the EU currently allow.

- help to develop mechanisms and electoral processes that can facilitate a political environment. This could include the development of an election commission to communicate with the regions to explain the steps being taken towards the transition to democracy and to encourage participation in, and registration for, the upcoming elections. In the medium to longer term, perhaps the most important focus for the EU is to ensure that its future neighbourhood policy is genuinely focused on supporting and entrenching political reform. Through negotiations with candidate countries, and agreements on partnership, co-operation, and association with neighbours to the east, the EU has a clear framework, and strong monitoring capacity, for developing and maintaining an institutional structure that provides a basis for stable democracy in countries moving through transition. If the newly elected government of Tunisia seeks support, the EU should follow up on the promise of close partnership in putting this framework and experience at Tunisia's disposal, while making sure that it contains clear benchmarks for a continuing transition to democracy, to which positive conditionality is applied. If this framework were applied more broadly and consistently across the neighbourhood, it should be possible to have a differentiated policy that genuinely rewards reform. In that case, the old problem of ad hoc advanced status would not rear its head again: Tunisia could achieve an elevated status because it is genuinely advanced in the region this time.

An invitation to Tunisia to join the Council of Europe would reinforce the supportive framework for its transition to democracy over the longer term, and the EU should push in Strasbourg for this invitation to be extended. Drawing on the EU's own resources there is also much that could be done to support the development of mature democratic institutions in

Tunisia over the longer term. It could offer to send a rule of law mission to Tunis with a mandate¹⁷ that includes:

- strengthening a more professional and independent-minded judiciary by sharing expertise and sponsoring training programmes.
- offering administrative support to the commission on corruption and helping to build anti-corruption measures into the new institutions.
- seconding administrative help and legal and casework specialists to the commission on accountability to share expertise on transitional justice. The caseload facing this commission is already unmanageable, and its mandate is currently restricted to the two months in the run-up to the revolution. In the longer term, there is much more work to be done to offer justice to the victims of abuses during over 30 years of repressive rule. Morocco, South Africa and Chile are viewed as relevant examples, as well as Romania. Prison reform will also be an important area where the international community can share experience and expertise.
- offering expertise and funding for security sector reform. Police reform will be the most difficult and important task in this respect. Engagement with the army will also be an important dimension. Joint EU-Turkey initiatives in this respect could also play a role.

The potential cost for Europe of failing to engage differently with Tunisia at this fragile historical moment is high. But, as the process of political reform gets underway in Tunisia, there is still every chance that, in the coming years, we may see it emerge as the first genuinely democratic Arab state.

The opportunity for the EU to play a new and supportive role in this process is there. Consolidated democracy in Tunisia would be an enormous success story both for the Tunisian people themselves who will have secured it and for the EU. Moreover, may be the most important one, it would also be a model for the other states in the region emerging from the other side of the momentous wave of protests that we are currently seeing across North Africa and the Middle East.

Conclusion

The European record in pre-revolutionary relations with Middle Eastern countries has not been glorious. Responding to events on the Mediterranean's southern littoral – and, at least implicitly, to the failures of European policy thus exposed – Commission President José Manuel Barroso and High Representative Catherine Ashton jointly proposed on 8 March a new policy framework, entitled “A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the

Southern Mediterranean”.¹⁷ In general, it wisely focuses the “partnership” proposal on the countries of the southern Mediterranean littoral. It thus offers a prospect of developing trans-Mediterranean relations in a way that will not immediately be jeopardised, like the EU’s previous efforts to develop a “southern neighbourhood policy”, by getting caught in the mangle of the Arab/Israel dispute.

The new proposal’s central thrust is the need for the EU to exercise conditionality properly in the future (“more for more”); and it proposes the simple but important proviso that entry to the partnership should depend on a “commitment to adequately monitored, free and fair elections”. The main areas where reforming North African states may look for help can be summarised as “mobility, markets, and money”. In particular, it proposes:

- *A Differentiated, Incentive-based Approach.* In the future, European aid and trade should be made available to North African states on the basis of real progress on democracy and human rights. The proposal says that “a commitment to adequately monitored, free and fair elections should be the entry qualification for the Partnership”.

The Ashton/Barroso proposals are a good start in terms of targeting those areas where Europeans could and now should do more to respond to the historic events across the Mediterranean. Mobility (i.e. easier travel to Europe), better access to European markets and financial help certainly hit the mark. But the implicit offers are cautious in the extreme – and this in a document that has not yet been watered down by the member states and the European Parliament, as will surely happen in response to European political and sectional pressures. The EU should take a much bolder approach in four areas: mobility, market access, money, and democracy and institution building.

- *Democracy and Institution-Building.* Various forms of enhanced support to civil society. The Ashton/Barroso proposal also talks of increased help; in these areas. Yet Europe clearly has an interest in ensuring that liberal forces – political parties, NGOs and think-tanks – develop their capacities and influence the transition from authoritarianism, even if they will struggle to win the forthcoming elections. One way to address this conundrum – wanting to be supportive, but avoiding destroying those in need of help – may be to set up a intergovernmental system between the UN, the EU, and private foundations and corporations prepared to offer support to those who want it. A good way of doing this would be to create a European Endowment for Democracy that could operate in the EU’s southern and eastern neighbourhoods, as recently proposed by Polish Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski (McCain and Sikorski, 2011).

Last but not least, a final element of developing and implementing an effective foreign policy towards post revolutionary Middle East will be EU cooperation with the US. Obama's skilful repositioning of the US, first in his June 2009 speech in Cairo, and subsequently his decision to tell Mubarak to go, has limited the damage done by the revolution to America's predominant position in Egypt. Links with the Egyptian military will remain strong (as long as Congress continues to vote for the aid), and Egyptians know that the US role in the search for a wider Middle East peace is indispensable. But there is no doubt that the "new Egypt" will be readier to assert its independence of US foreign policy, and in particular to take a tougher line on Israel/Palestine. There, it may find European views and policies closer to its taste. These shifts open up the prospect of the EU and the US playing usefully complementary roles in the Middle East in general: both supporting the transition to a genuine democracy; the US holding the hand of the Middle Eastern military; and the EU working with the new democratic governments on issues which the US will not touch.

- *Mobility*: The prospect of easier travel to the EU, in particular for students, researchers and business people, in exchange for tougher action by North African states to control illegal immigration, better law enforcement cooperation, and better arrangements for the return of illegal immigrants.

Cautious visa liberalisation for certain categories of visitor is proposed, in exchange for major efforts by the North African states to curb illegal migration. Any Arab reading the concluding sentence on this topic ("In the long-term, provided that visa facilitation and readmission agreements are effectively implemented, gradual steps towards visa liberalisation for individual partner countries could be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the overall relationship with the partner country concerned and provided that conditions for well-managed and secure mobility are in place.") will understand that Europe does not plan to throw open its doors. Immediate steps should be taken to ease travel and study by halving the cost of European visas (Dennison, Dworkin, Popescu and Witney, 2011).

The EU should also think creatively about Student Exchange initiatives such as joint campuses, or the opportunity for Egyptian students to spend a year in European universities and vice versa (a "Dido" programme, modelled on the successful European Erasmus programme).

- *Economic Development*: An extra 1 billion euros of European Investment Bank (EIB) funding by the end of 2013, hopefully with a matching contribution from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

Here, the proposal to make available an extra 1 billion euros of EIB funding by the end of 2013 (a 20 percent increase) and a similar sum from the EBRD (assuming that body agrees to extend its lending to North Africa) will be welcome news in Egypt. So too will the offer of macroeconomic assistance. As described above, Egypt's public finances will inevitably deteriorate this year, as the direct and indirect costs of the revolution take their toll, inflation worsens [economist Nouriel Roubini expects the consumer prices index to be at 13-14 percent (Gurushina, El Said and Ziemba, 2011)], and the cost of government borrowing on the markets increases (Standard and Poor's lowered Egypt's long-term foreign currency sovereign rating from BB+ to BB in February).

- *Trade and Investment:* Better access to European markets, including for agricultural and fisheries products, leading ultimately to Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade, subject to North African states achieving "regulatory convergence" in areas such as competition policy and phytosanitary standards. But market access only works if Tunisia and other Middle Eastern countries are able to produce – and allowed to export into Europe – products and services that benefit their own economy as well as Europe's. The EU has already granted a complete dismantling of customs duties and quotas for Egyptian industrial products and some agricultural products. But this is not enough. The Ashton/Barroso proposal rightly calls for accelerated conclusion and EU approval of certain trade liberalisation agreements, notably on agricultural and fisheries products with Tunisia and Morocco; Egypt now needs similar treatment. And the repeated references in the proposal to such dull-sounding matters as "conformity assessment" of industrial products and "sanitary and phytosanitary measures" recall that there remain major non-tariff barriers to trade across the Mediterranean. To address the full range of obstacles to trade, the EU should consider funding a task force of policymakers and businesspeople from Europe and North Africa to produce a study on "EU-North African Trade 2020", akin to the Reflection Group created by the European Council in 2009.

- *Enhanced Sectoral Cooperation* in energy, education, tourism, rural development, transport, and electronic communications technologies.

- *EU Financial Assistance:* Starting with Tunisia and Egypt, the EU bilateral assistance programmes (worth respectively 240 and 445 million euros for 2011-2013) will be "screened and refocused". EU macro financial assistance (loans to governments) will also be available to back up International Monetary Fund (IMF) lending.

Unfortunately, however, the Ashton/Barroso proposal envisages European help being offered only in support of IMF assistance. It is hard to envisage IMF assistance being

provided without a requirement to slash state subsidies, notably on petrol and bread, which account for some 25 percent of public spending. But, in Egypt's post-revolutionary situation, any government that moved to cut subsidies in the next couple of years would be asking to be unseated. A group of Tahrir Square activists are therefore launching a grassroots campaign aimed at cancelling Egypt's huge debts, which could hamper growth. EU governments should give this a fair hearing. Cancelling the debt that Egypt owes in exchange for a long-term programme to address subsidies and a benchmarked process for democratic reform would be an important sign of support for the moderates and a lever for post-election reforms.

As a result, in the short term, the EU should strengthen the Ashton/Barroso proposals in the way described above. In the longer term, however, both the Brussels institutions and member states also need to keep in mind that an important root of European failures in North Africa in the past has been its excessively bureaucratic and insufficiently political approach. Europeans therefore need to think more clearly about the extent and nature of the leverage they should be able to exercise, and the size of the stakes that should encourage them to do so. The access of post-revolutionary humility that has led European leaders to defer to those who have made the revolutions makes a welcome change, but now risks being overdone. Europeans should be prepared not just to listen, but also to transmit – and preferably in ways more pointed than the usual statements couched in bureaucratic language and tiresomely focused on Europeans' own emotional states: "encouraged", "disappointed", "dismayed" and so on. For example, when the military resorts to summary tribunals, Europeans should be prepared to tell them in clear terms that they are offending against basic principles of human rights, and tarnishing their reputations. Even the old regime was sensitive to outside criticism; they took considerable pains to defend themselves against cases brought before the African Union Court of Human Rights in Gabon. Indeed, while Egyptians see themselves as the Arab world's leaders and can therefore take a dismissive view of the Arab League, they tend to be more concerned for their reputation in the African Union (AU). The EU should push the interim government to invite a European election-monitoring team, perhaps in association with the AU, to cover this autumn's elections.

In the EU's case, the very idea of developing such relations has seemed distasteful. But if the EU truly wants to play the sort of international role of which it talks, then one small but useful step in the right direction would be the appointment of a defence and security adviser in the European delegation.

In short, Europe needs to behave more like a regional power and less like a big NGO in its dealings with post revolutionary Tunisia, asserting its own vision of how it would like to

see the new polity develop and behave. To be taken seriously in that mode, however, Europe will have to be seen to offer more than a set of technocratic incentives with strings attached. A more political response by Europe to the Arab awakening must involve the eventual articulation of a vision of how the EU would like to see relations between the two shores of the Mediterranean evolve.

What is needed is not so much European altruism as European imagination. Helping Tunisia will, however, also benefit Europe. Moreover, framing future cooperation as a joint endeavour that will help both parties is likely to be met with more enthusiasm than another series of technocratic diktats, which EU policies often resemble. Tunisia could over time allow European firms to cut shipping times and transport costs by moving their production away from China and India. In short, North Africa could give the EU an economic edge, just as Spain, Portugal and Greece did in the 1980s and eastern Europe did in the 1990s. As Jean Pisani-Ferry of the Bruegel think-tank has pointed out: “Not only for goods but for services too, Europe needs to promote much more than it has so far the adoption of an outsourcing model in the most labour-intensive segments of the value chain, as Germany has done with great success – and which in part explains its bounce-back in global markets. While this model entails job losses in the North, it also preserves jobs by keeping production sites competitive and creates jobs by paving the way for development of the South” (Pisani-Ferry, 2011).

In sum, Europe needs to replace the defensive, arms-length posture it has displayed to its neighbours across the Mediterranean with a declared readiness in due time to embrace them in the sort of intimate and interdependent relationship that both will eventually need. That sort of message – of a “NAFTA-like” vision for the relationship between Europe and North Africa is of course a hard sell in a Europe that is only slowly recovering from recession, with low growth and high unemployment, and populist alarm over immigration. But it is the job of politicians to find ways to plant the indigestible truths – that the only sure answer to uncontrolled immigration is the development of the economies of the southern littoral, and that though outsourcing economic roles to North Africa may look like exporting today’s jobs, it will actually be securing Europe’s export competitiveness for tomorrow, not to mention creating new export markets. It is time for European politicians – beginning with those in the north of the continent, for whom it is easiest – to start to lay out a direction of a march which, over time, should lead to prosperous, democratic and economically complementary societies on both shores of *mare nostrum*.

END NOTES

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² On historical and institutional analysis of pillarisation, see: N. Winn and C. Lord (eds.), *EU Foreign Policy Beyond the Nation-State: Joint Actions and Institutional Analysis of the Common Foreign and Security Policy*, Houndmills, Plagrave, 2001.

³ for more detail, see: "Special Issue on Western Approaches to the Mediterranean", *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol.1, No.1, Autumn 1996, pp.157-211.

⁴ For more detail on the different perceptions of the EU and the US on the Mediterranean and the Middle East, see: Ayşe Bahar Turhan (Hurmi), "EU-Turkey Relations in the context of the Barcelona Process", unpublished Doctorate Thesis, Leicester University, UK, 2004, Chapter III.

⁵ "The European Union and Tunisia have agreed to set up an ad hoc group to work on a roadmap to achieve an advanced status between the EU and Tunisia", 11 May 2010, European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument (ENPI), Latest News, available at: <http://www.enpi-info.eu/mainmed.php?idtype=1&id=21537> and "A majority of Tunisians think that the EU is an important partner of their country and that Tunisia and the EU have sufficient common values to be able to cooperate. Among other findings, the latest poll revealed that nearly two thirds of Tunisians believe that education in their country has improved as a result of EU policies...", 4 May 2011, European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument (ENPI), Latest News, available at: http://www.enpi-info.eu/mainmed.php?id=226&id_type=3&lang_id=450. Perceptions of the other Middle Eastern countries toward the EU can be found in the official site of the ENPI available at: <http://www.enpi-info.eu/>.

⁶ See: <http://www.kalimatunisie.com>.

⁷ See: "Tunisia's opposition leader hails Turkey as model, ahead of visit," *Agence France-Press*, 25 February 2011, available at <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=tunisias-opposition-leader-to-visit-turkey-report-2011-02-25>.

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⁹ The World Bank, *World Development Indicators for 2009*, available at <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator>.

¹⁰ For more detail on the NGO law, see <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/06/18/tunisia-move-against-human-rights-defenders>.

¹¹ For the text of the guidelines, see: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/GuidelinesDefenders.pdf>.

¹² "Joint statement by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton and Commissioner Stefan Füle on the events on [sic] Tunisia," *European Union Press Release*, Brussels, 14 January 2011, available at http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/118865.pdf

¹³ Export figures from Eurostat; investment figures from Alexander, "Tunisia".

¹⁴ See "EU to rush trade deal with Tunisia as 'exodus' continues," *Euractiv.com*, 15 February 2011, available at <http://www.euractiv.com/en/global-europe/eu-rushtrade-deal-tunisia-exodus-continues-news-502150>.

¹⁵ "Tunisian minister slams 'ridiculous' EU aid," *EUbusiness*, 17 February 2011, available at <http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/italy-tunisia-aid.8ny/>.

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¹⁷ European Commission, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, "Joint Communication to the European Council, the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions", 8 March 2011, available at http://eeas.europa.eu/euromed/docs/com2011_200_en.pdf.

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LIBYAN UPRISING AND INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION: NATO'S MISSION AND LIBYA'S GRIDLOCK

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ABSTRACT

Although neither NATO's documents nor the UN Security Council resolution in 1973 legitimizing the use of force allow for the direct overthrow of Gaddafi, some NATO member Heads of States have stated that the goal of the Libyan operation was clearly explained as overthrowing Qaddafi. As such, the NATO member states clearly have different policies in the Libyan crisis, despite the fact that NATO overtook command of the Libyan mission. In addition, on June 5, 2011, it was understood that—in military terms—neither the opponents nor Gaddafi's forces had enough power to take control Libya, which resulted in the subsequent NATO strategies to gain considerable importance.

Key words: Libya, Libyan Uprising, NATO, Middle East, Security.

LİBYA İSYANI VE ULUSLARARASI MÜDAHALE: NATO'NUN GÖREVİ VE LİBYA ÇIKMAZI

ÖZET

Her ne kadar NATO belgeleri ve 1973 tarihli Birleşmiş Milletler Güvenlik Konseyi kararı Kaddafi'nin iktidardan indirilmesini engellese de, NATO'ya üye bazı önemli ülkeler Libya operasyonunun Kaddafi'yi devirmek için yapıldığını belirtmişlerdir. Yine her ne kadar NATO Kaddafi'yi devirmek için görev almış olsa da, NATO üyelerinin Libya krizinde farklı amaçları vardır. Ayrıca, 5 Haziran 2011 tarihinde Libya'nın kontrol edilmesinde ne muhaliflerin ne de Kaddafi güçlerinin yeterli olabileceği anlaşıldı. Ki bu durum, NATO stratejilerinin büyük önem kazanması sonucunu doğurdu.

Anahtar kelimeler: Libya, Libya İsyanı, NATO, Ortadoğu, Güvenlik.

Introduction

The arrest of the attorney and dissident Fathi Terbil on February 15, 2011, in Benghazi sparked civil war in Libya. The detention took place in a metropolis located in the middle of ancient Cyrenaica, which was the administrative center during King Idris's reign. Although the security forces' crackdown against the peaceful mass demonstrations and the civilian life

lost during the incidents caused the crisis to escalate, the aforementioned tension led to rallies on the Day of Rage through the call to the opposition on February 17. In a short time, the incidents in Libya became a full-scale rebellion of the Libyan tribes that had been excluded from the Gaddafi administration or had restricted access to the echelons of power. The rebellion resulted in an international intervention as Gaddafi continued using force against the protesters. The aim of this essay is to analyze the structure of the social opposition movement in Libya and the effect of the international intervention in the process.

Libya: Society, Tribe, and Revolutions

Libya's social and socio-economic structures are somewhat similar to those of the Gulf countries. Known for its energy reserves, Libya is home to approximately 6.5 million people, including foreign workers and residents. The ratio of foreigners to the total population varies from year to year, but on the whole they constitute about 25-30% of the population. In addition to Arabs, the inhabitants of Libya include Berbers, also called Amazigh, once the dominant ethnic group throughout North Africa, as well as Christians, Jews, Bahais, Buddhists, and Hindus. (OPEC, 2009:11, 22-23; Lipton, 2002:27). Whereas the majority of the Arab tribes in Libya adhere to the Maliki sect, the IbaniBanu al-Khattab tribe, which is Oman-centered, has contributed to the spread of the Ibadi sect in Libya (Ahmida, 2009: 24-25). The Arab population has increased in the coastal and inland areas from East Libya to Algeria. The Berbers of Libya live primarily in remote mountain areas or in desert localities, where successive waves of Arab migration failed to reach or to which they retreated to escape the invaders. In the 1980s, Berbers, or native speakers of Berber dialects, constituted about 5%, or 135,000, of the total population, although a substantially larger proportion is bilingual in Arabic and Berber. Berber place names are still common in some areas where Berber is no longer spoken. The language survives most notably in the Jabal Nafusah highlands of Tripolitania and in the Cyrenaican town of Awjilah¹

The other significant characteristic of Libya's population is its age structure. Approximately 30% of the population is younger than 14 years old and 50% is younger than 20 (Javdan, 2011). The unemployment rate was 30% in 2004 and 21% in 2009, despite the rich energy reserves in the country. Considering the fact that the youth are most affected by unemployment, the growing economy could not make serious contributions to employing the youth. In additions, more than 16% of the country's population has no stable income, while 43.%of the households have just one source of income.

More than 5% of the population lives in unhealthy housing conditions, including city slum shacks (Tripoli Post, 2009). Libya has failed to diversify its economy, although it has a young and dynamic population. The Libyan economy depends primarily upon revenues from the oil sector, which contribute about 95% of export earnings, 25% of GDP, and 80% of government revenues (CIA Fact Book, 2011). Libya has an estimated 46 billion barrels of oil reserves and 1.5 trillion cubic meters of natural gas.

Within this framework, the economic and political problems in Libya have caused an anti-regime social base to appear in society organized along tribal lines. In Libya, 85% of the social structure has been organized in terms of a tribal structure; apart from the Arabs, the Berbers live as tribes in the region from Chad and Niger to Sudan, and the political and administrative structures have historically been directly affected by the social structure of the region. Therefore, the tribal allegiances, numerical proportions, and regions under tribal control play a primary role in the constitution of political and administrative structures. The tribes were known to influence economy and security issues during the Ottoman era as well as following the Italian and the Senussi periods. "Tribal influence in Libya is extremely important, particularly since the 1970s, with tribal affiliation being important with regards to obtain their rights, and for protection, and even in order to find a job, particularly in the state apparatus" (Hatitah, 2011). Indeed, from the Fatimids to the Ottoman eras, the political and administrative structure composed of three separate provinces was formed based on the distribution of tribes. These political and administrative regions are Cyrenaica, which is situated between Egypt and Tripoli, the Fezzan region, which constitutes the border of Libya with Chad and Niger, and Tripoli, which is located from Sirte to inland (Martínez, 2007:98).

The main reasons affecting the spread of the anti-Gaddafi demonstrations to Fezzan and Tripoli after they started in Cyrenaica (the East Libyan Territories) relate to the Ottoman era. The historical background of the incidents dates back to the first Arab immigration. However, this paper will focus on 1830 onwards. The Ottomans moved toward the Fezzan region 50 or 60 years after they first formed their authority over the tribes in Cyrenaica. Nevertheless, the control in Fezzan was unsatisfactory until the end of the 1800s, and the tribes maintained their independence. During Sultan Abdulhamid's reign, the Ottomans cooperated with the Senussi Cult, which was active in Cyrenaica and Fezzan. As a result, they tried to dominate the tribes that supported the cult, particularly in the Cyrenaica and Fezzan regions. After the Senussi Cult first declared its autonomy in 1890 in Al-Jaghbug, it tried to organize the society in religious and social domains by building hermitages in different regions, such as Fezzan, Kufra, Tripoli, and Darnah, in a short period. After a while, the

Senussi movement transformed into emirates under the leadership of Amir Idris, with English support in 1949 in Benghazi-centered Cyrenaica territories; in 1951, it became the Kingdom of Libya, which had a federal structure through the merge of Tripoli and Fezzan. However, the tribes in Cyrenaica, who were the administrator of the region as it had been during the period before the independence, had the power in real terms instead of King Idris. Contrary to Omar Mukhtar, King Idris revealed administrative weaknesses and preferred coming to terms with the English, the Americans, and later the Italians. Meanwhile, Libyan soldiers were impressed by the Free Officers Movement, and Colonel Gaddafi overthrew King Idris, who had lost the support of many tribes, and subsequently came to power in 1969. Colonel Gaddafi accepted the tribes as a guarantor of the social stability and security and established the state in terms of the power of tribes, their commitment to government, and leverage in the social domain (Obeidii, 2011: 116). After 1970, the fact that the administration was mainly handed over the Tripolitania tribes from the tribes of Cyrenaica and Fezzan within the political, administrative, and security dimensions caused the support for the Gaddafi government to be limited in these regions.

During Gaddafi's rule, many groups adhering to the East Libya-centered Beni Salim Tribe failed to produce the desired effect. The most powerful tribe in Libya, the Beni Salim tribe originated from the Arab Peninsula and settled in Cyrenaica while the Beni Hilal settled in western Libya around Tripoli. Some Libyan researchers and experts have shown that approximately 15% of the Libyan population have no tribal affiliation whatsoever, being descendents of the Berber, Turkish, or other communities (Hatitah, 2011: 98). Libya has an estimated 140 tribes, only about 30 of which are viewed as having any real significance (Issachar, 2011). Some of the branches of the Libyan tribes live in Egypt, Chad, and Algeria as well. For instance, the majority of Awlad Ali and Al-Haraba tribes also live in Egypt. After the tribe members—who had supported the rebellion from the very beginning—had directly taken control of both sides of the Egyptian-Libyan border, they provided the tribe members in Libya with arms support and fundamental needs such as food and healthcare products (Ismail, 2011). However, the other tribe members in Egypt sent 400 members to Libya to fight on behalf of Gaddafi (Fattah, 2011).

Eventually, the inter-tribe relations became seriously decisive in determining the regime, although the rhetoric about direct popular rule, green socialism, or local government emerged during Gaddafi's rule. The Gaddafi tribe, which held the power in Tripoli carried from Benghazi, was not well known as an effective tribe in Libya or with a large population until 1969. The Warfallah tribe, the largest tribe in Libya with one million members, the

Magariha tribe, the Al-Awaqir tribe, which fought against the Ottomans and the Italians, the Al-Mujabra tribe, the Obeidat tribe, and the Farjan tribe played a significant role in Gaddafi's government. The Warfallah tribe provided effective military forces, especially air forces, until 1993. After the 1993 assassination attempt against Gaddafi, the Gaddafi tribe took control of this unit. The Magariha tribe was one of the more prominent tribes that supported the regime. Three tribes provided significant social support to the regime: the Gaddafi tribe, followed by the Magariha and Warfallah tribes (Wehrey, 2011).

However, General Abdul Sallam Jalloud, the second in command, was loyal to the Magariha tribe as well, which held the key positions in the system. General Abdul Sallam Jalloud, who participated in the 1969 coup d'état and was a member of the Revolutionary Command Council, had been excluded from the government since 1995. The most powerful members of the Magariha tribe is Colonel Abdullah al-Sanussi, the head of the Jamahiriya Security Organization (JSO), which includes both the Internal Security Organization and the External Security Organization, and Abdel Basset Ali al-Megrahi, known as the Lockerbie bomber (Issachar, 2011). Major General AbdulfattahYounis Al-Obaidi, one of the tribal leaders of Al-Obaidi tribe—one of the most powerful tribes in East Libya—held the position of Interior Ministry until February 23, 2011. After major protests in Benghazi in 2006, the appointment of Major General al-Obaidi as interior minister in 2008 represented a concession to the East Libyan tribe (Liu, 2011).

The tribal allegiances played a primary role in the distribution of political and bureaucratic responsibilities. Gaddafi not only played the tribes against each other, but also integrated the trusted tribes in the political system; he granted privileges to these tribes in terms of security, intelligence, and bureaucracy. Limiting the effect and the power of the dissident tribes, Gaddafi prevented the coup attempts against himself. Consequently, the power structure he established through the tribal structures remained successful until 2011.

February 17 Rebellion in Libya: Loss of Gaddafi's Legitimacy amongst the Tribes

The power shift also influenced the opposition movement in Libya after the mass demonstrations organized in Tunisia and Egypt at the beginning of 2011. Gaddafi's harsh measures against the anti-regime protests intensified the crisis. On February 15 in Benghazi, where the center of ancient Cyrenaica is located and which served as the administrative center during King Idris's reign, attorney and dissident Fathi Terbil was arrested, sparking the civil war in Libya. The protests spread due to the police crackdown in front of Benghazi Police

Station. The number of participants demonstrating for the release of Terbil reached 600 to 700 people in a short time; coupled with the police crackdown, this caused the anti-regime protests to be organized in different regions, particularly in East Libya. The protests spread to Benghazi, Al Bayda, Tobruk, Darnah, Zawiya and Zwara in West Libya, and Gharyan and Yafran in South Libya in a short time after 40 protestors loyal to different tribes, particularly in Zintan in southwest Tripoli, were injured during the incidents. While the crackdown by the security forces against the peaceful mass demonstrations and the civilian loss during the incidents caused the crisis to escalate, the tension culminated in rallies on the Day of Rage thanks to the opposition's call on February 17. On the Day of Rage, the Gaddafi administration used Special Forces and African mercenaries, which resulted in civilian loss that transformed the crisis into inter-tribal conflict (Daoud, 2011:209). Nevertheless, the Gaddafi government preferred using the trusted units and soldiers during the incidents because Gaddafi knew the tribal allegiances of the army. However, Gaddafi's approach to the incidents generated the rebellion of the tribes, which were excluded from the administration for years or could not take part in the administration as much as they wish. The demonstrations have focused directly on terminating Gaddafi's government.

The Warfallah tribe, the largest tribe of Libya, has been the prominent other groups that engaged in a direct rebellion against the Gaddafi regime after February 15. On February 20 Akram al-Warfalli, a senior member of the Warfalla tribe, declared that it was withdrawing support from Qaddafi, saying "he is no longer a brother" (Alexander, 2011). Some of the Warfallah members, who are effective in southern Tripoli, live in the capital city. Another significant tribe, the Tarhuna, also supported the rebellion (Beals, 2011). The Tarhuna has 900,000 to 1 million members in the capital, in Tripoli, and in the west. The majority of the Tarhuna tribe members who supported the Gaddafi regime held positions in the military bureaucracy. The other tribe that supported the riot in Tripoli was the Zintan tribe, whose members in Zintan and Tripoli have shown great resistance since February 16 (Basu, 2011). The prominent tribes that supported the rebellion in Cyrenaica are the Zuwayya, the Awagure, the Misurata, and the Obeidat. The Zawiya tribal leaders threatened to cut off the oil flow unless the government gave up attacking the public. They did not cut off the oil flow, but they supported the resistance. The Misurata tribe, which is effective in Missurata, took control of the city. They have not let Gaddafi's forces take control of the city since March 21, 2011, when the clashes intensified in the city. Gaddafi's forces failed to seize the control of the city in May despite intense attacks. The tribe members also played a primary role in the demonstrations in Darnah and Benghazi. Hussein Sadiq al-Musrati, the former Libyan

ambassador to China (resigned), is a member of this tribe as well. Taking control of the Egyptian-Libyan border, the Awlad Ali tribe in Cyrenaica removed all government forces from the region. The other significant riot support group in this region was the Obeidat tribe in Tobruk, whose prominent leaders—Suleiman Mahmud al-Obeidi, commander of the Tobruk military region, and Major General Abdel Fattah Younis, the former interior minister—participated in the coalition against Gaddafi at the very beginning of the riots. The Awaguiere tribe, which is effective in Al-Bayda, has formed a resistance in Al-Bayda since the rebellion started. The Awaguiere tribe has also drawn attention not only because they fought against the Ottoman Empire and the Italians, but they also sympathized with the Senussi movement. However, when this conservative group took control of Bayda, the Gaddafi regime claimed that Islamic emirates had been established in Bayda (Lévy, 2011).

Increased conflicts and Gaddafi's use of disproportional force caused the tribes supporting the opposition to capture the eastern cities in a short time. The rebels took control in East Libya in a short time during the clashes, capturing the cities since the second half of February, but they had to retreat in western cities due to the attacks from the regime forces. The intensified battles in Zintan, Misurata, and Zawiya including the capital Tripoli in the very beginning resulted in the opposition forces gaining the upper hand at the beginning of March. In particular, the dissidents took the control in East Libya, expending significant effort in forming an alternative political structure in this region. They arrived at a consensus on a transitional government in a meeting the rebels attended on February 24, 2011. Representatives from different regions of Libya were to participate in the transitional government led by Mustafa Mohammed Abdul Jalil, the former Minister of Justice during Gaddafi's rule and the Secretary of the General People's Committee. In the National Transitional Council, comprising 31 people, included Al Buntan, Al Gubbah, and Benghazi as well as those representing Ajdabiya, Zintan, Misratah, Nalut, and Ghat, who were not disclosed due to security reasons. The distribution of tasks in the council is as follows (Official Web Page The Interim Transitional National, 2011): Mustafa Mohammed Abdul Jalil, Chairman of the Council; Abdul Hafiz Ghoga, Vice Chairman of the NTC and official spokesman; Othman Suleiman El-Megryahi, Batnan Area; Ashour Hamed Bourashed, Darna City; Dr. Abdelallah Moussa El-Myehoub, Qouba Area; Zubiar Ahmed El-Sharif, representative of political prisoners; Ahmed Abduraba Al-Abaar, economics; Dr. Fathi Mohamed Baja, political affairs; Fathi Tirbil and Dr. Salwa Fawzi El-Deghali, representatives of youth and women; Mohamed Al-Muntasir, city of Misrata; Omer El-Hariri, representative of the Military Affairs for Safety and Security of Libya; Dr. Mohamed Jebril Ibrahim El-

Werfali and Dr. Aziz Al-Eisawi, representatives of foreign affairs. The chairman of the council stated that the elections would be held within three months. Meanwhile, the opposition decided to form the Libyan National Transitional Council during a meeting on March 5, 2011.

However, criticisms of the National Transitional Council soon emerged, particularly as there was no institutional association amongst the council members and the council did not represent the entire Libyan opposition. According to a report by Abdul Hafiz Ghoga, Vice Chairman of the NTC, the elections that the Chairman of the Council announced and the Benghazi-centered Transitional Government were criticized and they decided to form a transitional political presence. Declaring that their aim is to maintain the unity and the territorial integrity of the country and that a free Libya would be founded after the capture of Tripoli, Ghoga resisted the statements of the Benghazi-centered transitional government (Abbas, 2011). Nevertheless, after Ghoga's declaration, being powerful in Benghazi, Abdul Jalil, the Chairman of the Council, had to claim that they did not aim to form a government, but to generate a structure to coordinate the civil war. Despite the lack of coordination in the council, significant developments in foreign policy emerged in a short time, which is important for the association (Stratfor, 2011). The Council, which wrote a letter to the Arab League and demanded to be recognized officially, achieved great success through the statements from the US and France. The Arab League declared its support of the council's demand for a no-flight zone instead of directly recognizing it after the meeting. United States Secretary of State Hilary Clinton recommended negotiating with the opposition leaders while French President Sarkozy stated after the meeting with the council members on March 10, 2011, that France recognized the Libyan National Council as a legitimate representative of this country and they would open an embassy in Benghazi and that the council would assign an ambassador to France. This served as a big step in official recognition of the council. After France's initiative, many EU countries took action to recognize the Libyan National Council as a legitimate government (Trt News, 2010).

While the National Council was achieving success in foreign affairs, it made decisions to intensify the military operations in order to ensure successful military resistance in Libya and capture Tripoli from Gaddafi's forces. No coordination occurred directly amongst the opposition groups, and every group maintained resistance in their own regions even after the council was formed on March 5. This situation became significant as Gaddafi used the Air Force intensely during the civil war. The fact the rebels could not carry out the military operations outside of city centers led Gaddafi to extend the regions under his military control.

Despite the opposition of the international community, Gaddafi launched intense assaults in the cities under dissident control, including in the west in Zuwara, Zawiya, Tarhuna, Zintan, Misurata, Gharyan, Ras Lanuf between Sirte and Benghazi, Brega, Ben Jawad, and Ajdabiya, thereby affecting the position of the opposition groups. In the ongoing struggle in these settlements, the regime used Special Forces in the west in Sahban, Hamis, and Kweldi in addition to the Air Force while tribal forces were used in the east. Western countries, particularly France, reacted because Gaddafi continued intensely using military forces despite the sanctions that the UNSC resolution 1970 brought. Gaddafi managed to maintain military control in the west on March 16 and in the settlements between Sirte and Benghazi in the east, except for Misurata. Meanwhile, the Warfallah and the Tarhuna tribes announced their loyalty to the regime through the official TV channel at the same time. "In a call to the Libyan satellite channel the tribes of Tarhuna and Warfalla in Benghazi confirmed their support for the leader" (Karouny, 2011). Thus, on the one hand, Gaddafi moved forward in a military sense in the east Libyan territories; meanwhile, he tried to make the opposition tribes be loyal to the regime once again. This drew attention to the fact that Gaddafi continued moving forward to Benghazi, the center of the opposition during the days when France and England were struggling to make the decision about a no-flight zone for Libya in the UN. Gaddafi had already reached west Benghazi whereas UNSC gathered due to the crisis in Libya on March 17.

UN's Intervention in the Process: International Intervention in the Civil War

The attack attempts by the pro-Gaddafi forces with the contribution of intense air forces brought the issue to the attention of the world public. This was an important step forward to resolve the problem through peaceful methods in terms of the sanctions that the UNSC resolution 1970 brought about on February 26, 2011 (UN S/RES/1970, 2011). The welcomed independent research commission sent by the Human Rights Council to detect the crimes and the bids in Libya in the decision text as well as identify those who interfered in these crimes and the bids, revealing the human rights abuses in terms of the decision dated February 25, 2011, and numbered A/HRC/S-15/2. The UNSC evaluated the systematic and large-scale attacks within the scope of the crimes against humanity and emphasized that the government should take responsibility for the assaults, including forces under the control of the government in Libya. It stated that the International Criminal Court would carry on the investigations according to the terms of the 16th article of the Rome Convention unless the UNSC asks for the contrary. In the same decision, the UNSC called for the immediate

cessation in the ongoing violence and take care of the public demands in accordance with the Section VII of the UN Agreement and its 41th article.

According to the decision recommended by the Libyan authorities, to obey the human rights and international human rights arrangements and cooperate with the International Criminal Court's Chief Prosecutor about the incidents that have happened since February 15, 2011, UN countries cannot trade arms or ammunition, provide Libya with arms, or take part in any circumstances that will cause the arms trade. Moreover, no precautions can be taken against the arms and ammunition trade or its supply. All countries, particularly the neighbors of Libya, were asked to take these stipulations into consideration and not transport materials by air or by shipping from Libya to their country borders in terms of their national laws and the international law, especially in accordance with the maritime law and the international civil transportation regulations. Finally, the UNSC decided to impose travel bans and freeze assets of some high echelons, including Gaddafi and his family.

The Gaddafi regime intensified the strikes to capture the cities under the control of the dissidents, although it took an important step to make the Libyan government stop the civil war and give up using violence against the civilians by means of the UNSC resolution 1970. UNSC members gathered to discuss the issue once again as the conflicts continued even after the UN asked for the immediate ceasefire and sanctions. Claiming that the crisis in Libya became a threat to the international peace and security, UNSC members put the issue on the agenda again within the framework of Section VII, allowing the use of force, of the UN Agreement. Within this scope, the resolution draft prepared by the cooperation of France, Lebanon, and England was revised after they debated the different proposals in the council. With the revisions, the resolution draft proposed the establishment of a no-flight zone to protect civilians, calling for an immediate ceasefire in Libya and intensifying the sanctions toward the regime as well as extending them. The resolution draft passed by 10 votes, although Russia and China—who have veto power in the UNSC—abstained. Although the temporary members—Germany, India, and Brazil—abstained from voting, in addition to the permanent members Russia and China, resolution 1973 allows for both the no-flight zone and the use of military force to protect civilians (UN S/RES/1973:2011). The resolution—same as resolution 1970—states the respect for Libyan sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, and national unity and calls for an immediate ceasefire between the parties in Libya and ending the conflicts and all the strikes toward civilians. The preamble of resolution 1973 condemns the Libyan government because of the violence toward the civilians and demanded that the government abandon the use of force immediately. The resolution includes the call for

a no-fly zone by the Islamic Conference Organization on March 8, the African Union on March 10, and the Arab League on March 12 as well as the call for an immediate ceasefire by the Secretary-General on March 16. Thus, resolution 1973 clearly had international support. All UN member countries in cooperation with the UN Secretary-General took all necessary measures to protect civilians and civilian-populated areas under threat of attack in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, including Benghazi, while excluding foreign occupation force of any form on any part of Libyan territory. The “establishing no-flight zone” section of the resolution banned all flights in Libyan airspace except those for humanitarian relief and evacuation of foreigners. In this context, the resolution authorized UN member countries to take the necessary measures on their own or act within the framework of the local establishments and regulations, provided that they inform the UN and the Arab League Secretary-General in coordination with them in order to ensure the no-flight zone. Resolution 1973 imposed sanctions once more on seven people in addition to the Gaddafi family, including one of the leaders of the Magariha tribe, Colonel Abdullah al-Sanussi, the Libyan Intelligence Chief, and decided to freeze the assets of the Libyan National Oil Corporation and Libyan Central Bank.

The Military Intervention: Libya’s Gridlock

Despite resolutions 1970 and 1973 of the United Nations Security Council, the ongoing uprising in Libya against the government of Gaddafi was the subject of domestic and international debate about potential international military intervention. After Gaddafi broadened the scope of the military operations to capture Benghazi, France, the US, and many other countries were prompted to take action. After Gaddafi’s forces were poised to attack Benghazi on a large scale, military operations under Odyssey Dawn commenced on March 19, 2011. The U.S. and coalition forces quickly established command of the air over Libya’s major cities, destroying portions of the Libyan air defense network and attacking pro-Gaddafi forces deemed to pose a threat to civilian populations (Gertler, 2011: 7-8).

The coalition forces’ military operations that began after the UNSC resolutions 1970 and 1973 came under the NATO command after the London Conference, which sparked debates about NATO’s mission in Libya. Rasmussen, the Secretary-General of NATO, announced on March 27, 2011, that NATO will undertake all military operations in Libya in order to ensure that UNSC resolutions 1970 and 1973 are fully implemented. After member countries’ negotiations about the Libya mission, NATO took over responsibility on March 31. The NATO announcement on April 1 declared that the Libya mission consisted of three

elements: control of the international arms embargo against Libya, enforcement of the no-fly zone, and protection of civilians against an attack or the threat of an attack (NATO, 2011).

Although neither NATO's statements nor UNSC resolution 1973 allow for directly toppling Gaddafi, some NATO members explicitly announced that the aim of the intervention was to oust Gaddafi (Mangasarian, 2011). UK Prime Minister Cameron and French President Sarkozy stressed that Gaddafi had lost his legitimacy and needed to step down immediately. Interestingly, the two leaders called the pro-Gaddafi elements to stop supporting Gaddafi before it was too late (The Guardian News, 2011).

Furthermore, Turkey initially expressed several times that the mission did not mean that NATO was taking sides in the Libyan Civil War. Foreign Minister Davutoğlu said he was satisfied with NATO's statements to conform to the UNSC resolution and reiterated "Now what is important is to ensure the success of the mission that is based on the UNSC Resolution 1973. No more or less... The mandate is clearly defined as ensuring truce and protecting civilians" (BBC Haber, 2011).

In this context, it is obvious that no clear consensus existed among the NATO members regarding the Libyan mission. In addition, despite Prime Minister Erdoğan's statement that they do not intend to arm the opposition, the US administration stated that it can arm the rebels. Susan Rice, the United States Ambassador to the United Nations, reiterated that the US administration considered the option to arm the rebels fighting against Gaddafi. Rice said, "We have not made that decision but we've not certainly ruled that out." US Secretary of State Clinton subsequently declared at the end of the London conference on Libya that UNSC resolution 1973, which authorized military action to protect civilians, had relaxed the arms embargo (Watt, 2011). Despite all these statements, NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen stressed the importance of respecting the arms embargo. "The UN mandate authorizes the enforcement of an arms embargo," he said. "We are not in Libya to arm people but to protect people" (Newton, 2011).

Although the military intervention was conducted under NATO's responsibility, no diplomatic or political coordination existed among the members. In addition to the arms delivery, France and Italy diplomatically recognized the Transitional Council in Benghazi, while Turkey maintained its relations with the Gaddafi regime for a long time. Thus, although NATO assumed command of the operation, the member countries have different policies towards the Libya crisis. In May 2011, neither the rebels nor the Gaddafi regime could claim superiority over the other. Therefore, NATO's strategy became increasingly important.

In this context, UNSC resolutions 1970 and 1973 put forward the scope of NATO's Libyan mission. NATO defined its mission as ensuring a ceasefire, finding a political solution in accordance with the Libyan people's legitimate demands, controlling the arms embargo and the no-fly zone, and protecting civilians. However, some arguments emerged. First and foremost, it was debated as to how the ouster of Gaddafi, the arms embargo, the no-fly zone, and the protection of civilians would be coordinated. Both the US and EU leaders called on Gaddafi to step down. However, some commentators argued that resolution 1973 bans the call for Gaddafi's resignation as it does not directly imply the ouster of Gaddafi, but rather proposes a sustainable and peaceful solution (Boot, 2011). In addition, the issue of protecting civilians raised questions about who the civilians are. It was further debated as to whether the rebels are civilians or not. It is also obvious that the rebels are well armed and use force to capture cities. Therefore, it should be discussed as to what kind of policy NATO will pursue when the civilians are threatened by the rebels. It is obvious that NATO provides little protection for the civilians that the rebels oppress. NATO's missions of enforcing the no-fly zone and protecting the rebels will cause its future undertakings to be debated. Such a mission will also make it difficult for NATO to find a solution to the Libyan crisis.

Therefore, NATO needs to consider specific proposals for a diplomatic solution to avoid a serious crisis in Libya and discuss it both among the members and with Libya. On March 29, 2011, foreign ministers from 35 countries as well as UN, Arab League, Islamic Conference Organization, and African Union representatives gathered in London and debated the strategy for Libya. However, the London Conference achieved no concrete result except for reiterating that Gaddafi had lost his legitimacy. During the conference, the sides reached a consensus on the protection of civilians, establishing a contact group, holding the Gaddafi regime responsible for the developments, and defining the self-determination of the Libyan people, but defined no common policy on recognizing the rebels as the legitimate government of Libya and providing arms (FCO, 2011).

While the debates on Libya continue, it is interesting that the rebels are allowed to sell oil, and there have been talks about selling arms. After all these developments, NATO carried out strikes that directly targeted Gaddafi, which shows that the limits defined by the UN resolutions were breached. Moreover, NATO did not have clear plans for the post-Gaddafi period (O'Sullivan, 2011). It is also unclear as to how NATO will react if Libya is dragged into a civil war among the tribes. Indeed, countries such as France, Italy, and England declared that they aimed to overthrow Qaddafi and that they had organized aerial attacks in many regions of the country, including the capital Tripoli after March 19. Nevertheless, after

the 2003 Iraq crisis, any international crisis relying on military force to solve the conflicts is not enough, which was confirmed once again in Libya. While finding a solution to the conflicts, both diplomatic and military solutions should be highlighted. If the Western countries do not pursue any diplomatic alternatives with the groups involved in the conflicts, solving the problem becomes more difficult. NATO members should also develop alternative solution options in addition to the security policies while defining the Libyan mission. It would be good to discuss what kind of peaceful settlements have been proposed for the solution of the problem in Libya by many countries, especially Turkey. Therefore, in order to prevent NATO from going through a severe crisis in Libya, member states should also emphasize certain specific proposals for a diplomatic solution, discussing them with both the Libyans and the allies.

The framework of NATO's Libya mission puts forward resolutions 1970 and 1973. In this context, as well as the documents declared by NATO, the fact that the NATO mission was defined as supervising the arms embargo, supervising the no-fly zone, and protecting the civilian people is noteworthy. However, at this point, different arguments are highly possible. The leading argument focuses on the supervision of the arms embargo, how to impose the no-fly zone, and how to protect the civilians. Although the first two elements can be relatively understood, what kind of method will NATO follow in the face of the recent discourses related to arming the opposition? Is NATO going to prevent opponents from acquiring arms in order to ensure the arms embargo? Another question is whether NATO will control the arms entries into Libya via land, outside of the Mediterranean region or not. NATO has not still made any statement as to whether it will control the arms entries from Egypt into Libya. Turning a blind eye to the opponents in terms of the arms flow over Egypt brings up the question as to whether NATO is fully implementing resolution 1973 or not (Ayhan, 2011).

A second issue is the protection of civilians. For instance, no discussion is made as to whether the opponents are civilian or not, which is particularly interesting. However, as can be clearly seen in the media, civilians are also armed and they resorted to military force in order to take control of the provinces under Gaddafi's control. In this context, the protection of the civilians whose lives are in danger in light of attacks from opponents requires a discussion as to what kind of role NATO plays. Thus far, NATO has considerably absented itself from ensuring the protection of the civilian people under the oppression of the opponent forces. NATO's assumption of a mission such as protecting opponents who possess military capacity from aerial attacks and protecting the no-fly zone would make NATO's role in similar crises problematic in the future. Defining such a mission would cause difficulty in

NATO's finding strategies that would bring solution to the Libyan crisis as well (Ayhan, 2011).

Consequently, the military intervention in Libya changed its direction and transformed into an operation that aims for a regime change as it could not achieve its aims in a short time. As the rebels will rule Libya in light of Gaddafi's death, the presence of pro-Gaddafi tribes implies that the instability will continue in the post-Gaddafi period.

Conclusion

Libya's political structure reflects its social structure. It does not seem possible that the military and political structure, which was reconstructed in 1969 within the tribal system, will be disintegrated despite the international intervention. The intervention might only replace the existing administration. Therefore, it would not be realistic to expect that the tribalism in Libya will vanish in a short time. In order to abolish tribalism, a primary condition is that all individuals have the same privileges and access to economic, social, and other resources. However, as of today, tribalism plays a great role in the structure of both the regime and the anti-regime forces.

The initial success of the international intervention that commenced on March 19 was that it forced the forces loyal to Gaddafi to abandon their offensive position near Benghazi, the center of the National Council, and adopt a defensive position—particularly due to France's, England's, and America's initial attacks. In the next phase, the objective will be to force pro-Gaddafi forces to retreat from the other cities in which the rebels are strong. This is a serious point of debate: Despite Gaddafi's call for war and resistance, the regime lacks the military capacity and technology to carry on fighting; therefore, the regime will most likely get weakened and collapse after a while. The attacks need to go on intensely for a while in order for this to happen. Such an outcome might be possible in the short term; nevertheless, pro-Gaddafi tribes will be very important in this process.

However, civilian losses that might occur during the military intervention will spark discussions on the intervention in the international community. Gaddafi's efforts to carry the civilian losses to the agenda are aimed to reduce the public support for the intervention. In this respect, an increase in civilian losses and the duration of war might result in reduced support for the intervention in the Arab and Muslim public.

It is also a serious concern as to what kinds of policies NATO will adopt in the post-intervention period if the tribes are engulfed in a civil war now that Gaddafi has been killed. The Libyan society is divided into two parts with the civil war; in particular, the opposition

groups have a fragmented structure in terms of geographical and societal links. It would not be realistic to assume that the Western and Eastern anti-regime tribes coordinate in every aspect. The sole common point among them is their anti-Gaddafi positions. Therefore, it is questionable as to how NATO will manage potential instability after Gaddafi's death. As NATO declared to end its mission in Libya on October 31, international community understood no common plan exists among NATO members for the post-Gaddafi period.

But another problem, which could come out in the post NATO mission in Libya, is about what kind of regime the tribes, which were subject to the oppression and violence of the Gaddafi regime for years and which had to resist against the killing policy for the last 6 months, would put forward. Even if people recently coming into the power come to terms among themselves, what kind of relation they are going to establish with the pro-Gaddafi groups is uncertain. As is known, vendettas between the Arab tribes sometimes last for hundreds of years. Therefore, after the government changeover, implementing a new revenge, ignoring from the government or discrimination policies against the Gaddafi supporters could lead to major problems in Libya. In case the problems turn into vendetta, bringing stability back in Libya would be considerably difficult. Of course, it is necessary to once more indicate that each of these are only a possibility.

In conclusion, it should be indicated that it is too early, right now, to announce that the conflicts in Libya are over and the victory is gained by NATO interventions. Nevertheless, it should not be ignored that both the U.S. and the other members of the NATO learned important lessons from the recent history. As a matter of fact, the fact that the Western forces did not announce the end of the war early like they did in Afghanistan and Iraq, should be taken into consideration. Following the experiences, which were obtained over the two countries, the U.S. and the NATO forces are expected to launch a more careful structuring process that would comprehend all of the groups in Libya. Otherwise, a pure military-based and ally tribe-based restructuring processes would not bring peace to Libya; it would also cause the instability dynamics to continue. The states taking part in the NATO mission have great responsibility for preventing such initiatives. Otherwise, the transition of the state into democracy may turn into a target attempted to be accomplished only on paper.

END NOTES

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ARAB SPRING AND ISRAELI SECURITY: THE NEW THREATS**Dünya BAŞOL*****ABSTRACT**

The aim of the article is to evaluate Israel's security perceptions about the Arab Spring. The study argues that The Arab Spring is the reshuffling of the Middle East by re-aligned U.S.-Turkish common policies. For Israel the devil you know is more acceptable than the unknown future. Bearing in mind all the results of the surveys showing that Arabs can easily fall into radical Islam, Israel prefers not to enter such a dangerous and risky game for toppling down the old dictators and establishing new regimes. Israel could resist such a change and force U.S. to postpone or cancel their new policies if it were a decade ago, but today she is extremely isolated in international arena thanks to Bibi's government. On the other hand, Israel struggles to counter the Turkish offenses in diplomacy, has to avoid the "Iranian Trap" that is being set by Iran slowly and carefully for the past few years, and also domestically facing serious crises. All those dynamics are forcing Israel to remain silent unless it breaks the isolation that it fell, and watch carefully the games played by U.S., Turkey and Iran in the Middle East.

Key words: Israeli Politics, Arab Spring, Radical Islam, Israel's Security Perception, Iran's Foreign Policy.

ARAP BAHARI VE İSRAİL GÜVENLİĞİ: YENİ TEHDİTLER**ÖZET**

Bu çalışmanın amacı İsrail güvenlik algısının Arap Baharına nasıl baktığını analiz etmektir. Bu çerçevede çalışma, İsrail'in güvenlik perspektifi bağlamında, Ortadoğu'da çıkan karışıklıkları bölgeye belirsizlik ve istikrarsızlık getireceği için temkinli baktığını iddia etmekte ve İsrail'in bölgedeki otoriter rejimlerin yıkılmasını, siyasal İslam tehlikesinden kendisine tehdit oluşturduğunu düşünmektedir. İsrail daha çok bölgede önemli rol oynayan 3 aktörün –ABD-Türkiye-İran- hareketini izlemektedir. İsrail Türkiye'nin bölgede kendine uyguladığı diplomasiye ve İran'ın Tel Aviv'i tuzağa düşürecek olan politikalarına karşı bölgede izole olduğu için ABD'nin Ortadoğu politikalarına karşı çıkmamaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: İsrail Siyaseti, Arap Baharı, Radikal İslam, İsrail'in Güvenlik Anlayışı, İran Dış Politikası.

A MOMENT OF DEMOCRACY IN THE ARAB WORLD

Rising food prices and harsh economic conditions has fueled the protests in Arab states just like in Europe of 1848 when initial spark in France caused a chain reaction of unrest in Austria, Italy, Spain, Romania, Prussia, Saxony and Bavaria. This year historically low Russian wheat harvest resulted with high grain and bread prices worldwide. However the revolutions are not only about rising food prices, but also against the dictatorships and corruption. The uprisings are supported widely by poor and middle class, many times together with even upper middle class. Analysts who were talking about the “domino effect” were to some extent right. At the very first period of Arab revolutions, some were claiming that there wouldn’t be a dramatical change in the region since oil prices are tolerably high, security services loyal, elections thoroughly manipulated, Islamists repressed, international support strong.¹ But it turned out to be wrong. True, the mass movements cannot be compared to Eastern Europe in 1980s, but it is surely an important cornerstone for Arabs, Israel and U.S..

The wrath of Arab people under the autocratic regimes has finally exploded by the year 2011. As some call this an “Arab Spring”, which is a hope for bringing democracy to Arab countries, these protests and changes are raising the security concerns for Israel. After the 1979 Peace Treaty with Egypt and 1994 Peace Treaty with Jordan, Israel was no more surrounded by a circle of fire, but these so-called “Arab Spring” can return everything to 30 years back if simply “things go wrong”. Not surprisingly, Israel is once again accused for “pushing the button” and conspiracy theories are floating around, as Yemen’s Ali Abdullah Saleh has claimed “There is an operations room in Tel-Aviv with aim of destabilizing Arab world and this is run by the White House.”² Latest reports are saying that even Aden is surrounded by Jihadists, some linked to Al Qaeda³, but still Israel is being accused for each and every single thing taking place in international arena, as usual.

For the first time in a generation, it is not religion, nor the adventures of a single leader, nor wars with Israel that have energized the region. Across Egypt and the Middle East, a somewhat nostalgic notion of a common Arab identity, intersecting with a visceral sense of what amounts to a decent life, is driving protests that have bound the region in a sense of a shared destiny.⁴ For an Israeli this is something like an Iranian revolution that is supported by Al Jazeera for whatever the reason is and Barrack Obama is stupidly allowing what is taking place in the Arab streets. A very radical regime changes in Israel’s neighbors may even result with renewed wars; historically, revolutionary regimes become more radical in response to international conflict. Jacobins gained the power thanks to war with Austria while Iran found

a chance to drive out Iran's seculars with the Iraq war. Radicals hijacking contemporary revolutions may lead to new provocations⁵ and Israel is fully aware of this possibility.

When Tunisian protests started, Israel was alarmed immediately. Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Silvan Shalom expressed that the Tunisian events might lead to regime change in other countries. Originally from Tunisia himself, Shalom expressed disquiet that a more democratic Middle East might not share the same concern with Tel-Aviv on fighting radical fundamentalists, who he said threaten Israel.⁶ Tunisia itself can be seen as a marginal concern but as another Israeli official says, Israel cannot afford dramatic changes in Egypt or Jordan⁷ which are the only states that has a peace agreement with Israel sharing a border. There are plenty of reasons to be alarmed. Iranian Islamic Revolution began as a revolt against tyranny of Shah, but the strength of socialists in the Iranian streets couldn't prevent a theocratic regime. Such fears are worsened by the triumphant return to Egypt of Sheikh Yusuuf al-Qaradawi (who supports suicide bombings against all Israelis, including women and children), the most prominent Sunni scholar in the Arab world with longstanding ties to the Muslim Brotherhood.⁸

A moment of democracy during the revolutions does never mean it will result with a democratic regime. Washington has insisted 2006 Palestine elections to be free and fair but what they got was a victory of Hamas in Gaza. Same goes for Lebanon, after the assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in 2005, "Cedar Revolution" drove Syria out of the country and pushed Hezbollah to the periphery. Today both are back.⁹ After the free elections in Lebanon, militant Shiite Hezbollah backed by Iran and Syria has a bigger say in national politics than ever.¹⁰ Frankly speaking, apart from theoretical discussions about whether democracy is the ideal regime or not, it's obvious that free elections does not guarantee peace and prosperity. Eyal Zisser, senior research fellow at Tel-Aviv's Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, points to another historical analogy. "This is not like eastern Europe in the late 1980s," he says. "This is not a region where stable dictatorships can be replaced with stable democracies. Here the alternative means chaos, anarchy and - radicalism."¹¹ Netanyahu in Knesset also shared his concerns on "democracy":¹²

"...recent history shows us many cases in the Middle East when extreme Islamist elements abused the rules of the democratic game to gain power and impose anti-democratic regimes. It happened in Iran; it happened in Lebanon; and it happened when the Hamas took over the Gaza Strip. Does Iran enjoy freedom? Is there a real democracy in Gaza? Does Hezbollah promote human rights?

We must ensure that this does not happen again. We must do everything in our power to ensure that peace triumphs.”

Prime Minister Netanyahu is right. It is still unclear where these revolution will lead, but an August 2010 Brookings poll showed that only 10 per cent of Arabs regard Iran as a threat; instead they consider the U.S. (77 per cent), and even more Israel (88 per cent) as the major threats.¹³

During the protests Arab opposition movements have not made overt and covert cooperation with Israel a central issue, if for no other reason to mobilize Arab masses; Israel was an issue frequently but not the central one. Israel was not the rallying point.¹⁴ Yet, a democratic election campaigns following the toppled governments can easily manipulated by populist leaders, and the same old anti-Israeli slogans (though those slogans were banned during Cairo protests)¹⁵ can catch the votes of Arabs who has a deep fear, even a paranoia, towards Israel.¹⁶ Israeli government has already said that over the next two decades: "Security needs will increase and security budgets will be enlarged."¹⁷ This is a very clear example of security dilemma, Arabs regarding Israel as the major threat, Israel increases security budget, and the mutual suspicions results with continuous tensions.

Between 1949 and 1979, every revolution against a sultanistic regime resulted with left-wing pro-communist or an Islamist government. Yet since 1980s, these models are widely perceived as failures at producing economic growth and popular accountability, two major goals of all recent anti-sultanistic revolutions. However, for all western analysts, memories of the 1979s Tehran Syndrome, the 1992 Algiers Syndrome are still fresh and the danger is very close.¹⁸ In both cases pro-western dictators are thought to be replaced by free and democratic elections, but it simply failed. Both states radicalized and torpedoed regional stability. Algerian revolution had limited impact, but Iran, center of Shia Islam under Shah was pivotal for U.S. strategic and geopolitical interests across West Asia, was lost. Today Egypt, center of Arab World, is also the centerpiece of American stability in the Arab world and center of gravity in the Arab-Israeli peace process. Loosing Iran was a serious blow, but has been balanced as time passed by. However if Egypt will be lost like Iran, all U.S. policies in the region will collapse.¹⁹

An autocrat firmly in charge can make concessions more easily than can a weak, elected leader – just witness the fragility of Mahmoud Abbas’s West Bank government. And again, it was democracy that brought the extremists of Hamas to power in Gaza.²⁰ Another point; it was not the democratic leaders but autocrats such as Anwar Sadat or King Hussein who made the peace with Israel. Six years ago Condoleezza Rice in Cairo quoted that United

States pursued stability at the expense of democracy in the region, but now with taking a different course they were now supporting the democratic aspirations of all people.²¹ Though these words will only float in the air as American national interests are above everything including democracy, for Israel it is a serious anxiety to hear such a policy decision even if it will never be realized. At the final, when it comes to the aspirations of ordinary Arabs for genuinely participatory politics and true self-determination, those vaunted American values are suspended, even when "special relationships" and hydrocarbon riches are not directly at issue.

Seeing other Arab people bringing down a dictator, streets from Morocco to Yemen has filled with masses. The success of the rebellions doesn't lie in numbers but in the unity and persistence. It never got to be more than 300.000 people or so in Tahrir Square, the crowds of Arab revolutions cannot be compared to Eastern Europe in 1989 or Iran in 1979.²² Before the Arab Spring, similar revolts such as the protests in Iraq for electricity during the summer of 2010 couldn't succeed because of ideological divisions at the political level, mostly encouraged by foreign powers to divert Arabs from their real common interests.²³ Now the "revolution trend" that took place in Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia and similar countries has spread to Arabs, but in a region of powder keg one must pay closer attention to events taking place in Middle East.

Egypt: A Democratic Revolution or Military Coup?

It is hard to call what happened in Egypt as a "revolution". Tahrir Square was some kind of a political chess, awaiting the opponents' next move. A true revolution cannot "play games" with the crowds. What we saw was a military intervention that used the cover of protests to force Mubarak out of office in order to preserve the regime. When Mubarak finally showed that he was not going to step down, military staged a coup and forced for resignation.²⁴ Today Egyptian military cracks down all Tahrir Square protesters after the overthrow of Mubarak. Not surprisingly military took over the existing regime by a military council. This is similar case to what happened in Mexico after Díaz was overthrown, Jean-Claude Duvalier's departure in Haiti, Marcos' fall in Philippines and after Suharto's overthrow in Indonesia.²⁵

While Israeli and U.S. intelligence did "predict" possible civil unrest and/or regime change in the Middle East (namely Egypt and Saudi Arabia) and a possible mass uprising that would be caused by either high food prices or lack of water supplies, "a popular uprising like

this was completely unexpected."²⁶ IDF intelligence chief is being criticized for failing to predict the "timing" of the current popular uprising in Egypt.²⁷

An immediate change in Egyptian foreign policy is not expected since officer corps of Egyptian military has been educated at U.S. defense colleges for 30 years. Army has American arms, which some of them such as M1A1 Abrams tanks to be built on Egypt.²⁸ Egypt is by far one of the biggest countries that have U.S. foreign aid for the military. Egyptian army has mostly dependent on American equipment and the spare parts or contractors. Unlike 1970's, there is no Soviet Union to replace the military staff, or an alternative power that would patron Egyptian military (probably China or Russia) will need decades of re-equipment and training process which will limit the power of army, meaning that breaking the Camp David accords will not be possible. According to the Congressional Research Report submitted to Congress in September 2009, the U.S. had subsidized the Egyptian regime with over 64 billion dollars since it signed the peace treaty with Israel in 1979, including \$40 billion in military hardware and security gear²⁹, second only to Israel in that respect.³⁰

Though U.S. has been claiming that it supports "democracy" in the region more than ever, at the end it needs a friendly Egypt no matter how or who rules it. Whether the issue is Israel-Palestine, Hamas and Gaza, Lebanon, Iran, security for Gulf oil supplies, Sudan, or the spread of Islamist fundamentalist ideas, Washington wants Egypt, the Arab world's most populous and influential country, in its corner. That's the political and geostrategic bottom line.³¹ For the U.S. interests, peace treaty with Israel must be maintained, Suez Canal must preserve its status quo and guaranteeing American passage freely, allow American military to stage major operations from its bases and Cairo must continue to give its intelligence support which started after 9/11 which helped to undermine al Qaeda.

An Israeli official told Agence France-Presse, "It is in the fundamental interests of Egypt to maintain its privileged ties with the West, and maintaining peace with Israel." An Israeli researcher took a fallback position. "Even if the Muslim Brotherhood, who have criticized 'illegal ties with Israel' come to power, the army and Egyptian security services would oppose it with all their might."³² It is true that Egyptian security services, at least in short and middle term will stay pro-western thanks to the military bureaucracy established by U.S.. No surprise that Military Council which is the de-facto ruler of Egypt is saying that Egypt will continue to respect international treaties it has signed.³³ Not only Egyptian but also Tunisian revolutions were aborted, the overthrown dictators were replaced by people or

groups who were either part of the old regime or have not effectively embraced the goals of the popular revolutions.³⁴

Pessimists have enough reasons to fear from a possibility of radical Egypt. Compared with Tunisia, it has 85 million people with explosive untapped potential, increasingly demanding civil rights, literacy rate of only 66 per cent and a miserable GDP of only 22,70\$.³⁵ Post-Mubarak Egypt is even worse, security vacuum has led to a dramatic surge in crime, economic problems are deepening, productivity has been disrupted during protests, exports are hit and tourists are scared. All those factors, together with corrupted politicians and elites make Egypt a time bomb. A recent poll found that 59 per cent of Egyptians favor democracy (probably “democracy” is only something equal to “free elections” for Egyptians) in almost all situations, 60 percent is very or somewhat worried about the specter of religious extremism in their society and also 61 per cent do not even think there is a struggle between modernizers and religion in Egypt. Among the ones who see a struggle (which makes up 31 per cent in the poll) 59 per cent favored religious forces while 21 per cent favored the modernizers. For the optimists, the statistics shouldn’t be misread, only 59 per cent of 31 per cent is 18 per cent of the whole Egyptian population who favor fundamentalists over modernizers.³⁶

The other half of the coin is very pessimistic. Half of Egyptians support Hamas according to polls. Thirty percent supports Hezbollah and 20 per cent support Al Qaeda. Moreover, 95 per cent of them would welcome Islamic influence over their politics. 82 per cent of Egyptians support executing adulterers by stoning, 77 per cent support whipping and cutting the hands off thieves. 84 per cent supports executing any Muslim who changes his religion.³⁷ Demography of Egypt and the polls indicates clearly that a fundamentalist Egypt in near future is possible. Yoram Meital, Middle East analyst quotes the main Israeli concern:³⁸ "Be careful what you wish for – you may get something worse. The biggest geopolitical nightmare for Israel is to have the most populous Arab country on its doorstep with political instability. Believe me, it changes the whole balance of the Middle East. It makes everything else look very simple because suddenly we go back 30 years."

Going back 30 years may not mean much for an outsider, but Israeli people who are tired of living in a terror environment will have an extremely negative psychological effect once they see a hostile post-Mubarak Egypt. Israeli military might as well as an excellent intelligence service is still there, and though lacking manpower, IDF’s quality to fight against a joint attack from its neighboring states and terrorist organizations is enough. But peace treaties with Egypt, and also Jordan, had not only given a strategic military advantage to

confront Syria and terrorist groups, but also gave hope to Israeli people that peace, even if it is a “cold peace” (a really cold one, where Israeli books are forbidden in Egypt), was possible. Going back to 30 years will simply shatter the optimism of moderate Israelis and give the hawks, which are already becoming more and more powerful every day, an upper hand. But at the same time, Israel must also ask itself what, exactly, it has done in the 30 years in which peace with Egypt has opened up the opportunity to reach other peace agreements.³⁹

Peace Treaty with Egypt is one of the most important pillars of the Israel’s national security. 1948, 1967 and 1973 “wars of existence” for Israel had always contained a threat coming from Egypt. Today a joint attack of Arabs without Egypt will not even have a blueprint. Wars without participation of Egypt are only a matter of interests, but not survival, like 1982 and 2006. Israel was able to crush Palestinian uprisings between 1987-1991 and 2000-2003, carried operations in Iraq (1981), Tunisia (1988), Syria (2007) and various times in Gaza without thinking about Egyptian army. If Egypt abrogates the Camp David agreement and starts building a force whose only objective is to carry an offense against Israel, Yoram Meital’s words will come into reality and everything will be turn back to 30 years ago. Reiterating that Israel has military power enough to counter the attacks, unlike the 1973 war it does not have military capability (due to limited manpower) to occupy and control Sinai. Leaving much of its southern borders to mainly border guards, a hostile Egypt will force Israel to shift some of its forces from other fronts and its power will be divided. The uncertainties in Egypt already caused a major re-deployment of forces to Philadelphi Corridor between Sinai and Gaza, which is the major route for Palestinian terrorists to use supplies. Israeli analysts have already speculated that Israel might need to revamp its operational doctrine and to beef up its forces in the south.⁴⁰

Sinai Peninsula, the “Wild West” of the Egypt, is the most important short-term threat for Israeli national security. Before the uprisings the biggest trouble was the flow of immigrants, mostly Sudanese, Ethiopian and Eritreans via Sinai desert. It may seem quite controversial, but while harassing most of the travelers for the sake of “security” at Ben Gurion Airport, Israel did not take any precautions at Sinai border at all, except endless plans talked for years on “monitoring better” the Sinai borders.

However, the type of threat coming from Sinai has dramatically changed within past few months. In August 18 attacks in southern Israel left eight Israelis dead. Israeli government claimed that the attackers were from Gaza Strip and crossed into Israel through Sinai border. As retaliation Israel attacked various locations in both Gaza and Egypt, which resulted with five dead Egyptian soldiers and several injuries. On the same day another attack was carried

by a suicide bomber who blew himself up at Egyptian checkpoint next to Gaza and killing an officer. Most of the police and security forces fled shortly after the continuous attacks on police stations and Bedouins stormed the Sinai Prisons, freeing unknown number of Bedouin smugglers and Palestinian militants without any resistance from prison staff. Local Bedouins are well armed and was already in conflict with Egyptian authorities for smuggling activities before the uprisings. Sinai do not carry an important role for only Israeli security, but it is also traditionally important for Egypt. Though starting from the very beginning of Egyptian Dynasty, it has always been accepted a part of Egypt for several thousands of years, but also regarded apart from the Nile Delta and mainly hold for military and strategic reasons, resulting with the failure of integration of local population to rulers based on Nile.

Lately it became more than a tradition, some kind of a culture, for Bedouins of Sinai to smuggle. Ibrahim al-Menaei, a leader of the Swarkeh tribe of Bedouins has honestly expressed that “he will not let a single police officer into this region until they give in to their demands” and added that he get 50 dollars for every Palestinian he smuggles into Sinai, explaining that Hamas supervises the smuggling operation from the Gaza side of the border.⁴¹ This smuggling “culture” has been politicized lately as the interaction between Islamic movements and Sinai Bedouins are higher than ever. The cooperation between Bedouin and Gazan smugglers is growing and apart from goods and arms, Salafi ideology is also exported to Sinai.

Also Al-Qaeda finds this as a golden chance to extend its influence; Gaza is a barren land with only a little control of Egyptian forces and according to Camp David accords Egyptian military presence is very weak in the region. Another thing is natives of the Sinai Peninsula are not socially, politically or even economically integrated to Egypt and have always criticized Cairo for discrimination towards Bedouins, while the Egyptian presence can be traced back to the First Dynasty, thousands of years ago.⁴² The “Bedouin” identity is still strong, and though they have the same ethnicity, language and culture with the Egyptians they are struggling in poverty, government still sees the region only from a perspective of military and strategical point while having no efforts at all to control unruly, armed Bedouins and no steps have taken to solve social problems of the people.

In the absence of security forces and power vacuum, Al-Qaeda and the movements sympathetic for it, such as al-Shabaab al-Islam, have formed in the Peninsula. On July 29, the residents of el-Arish found a flier labeled “A statement from Al-Qaeda in the Sinai Peninsula” distributed throughout their neighborhoods.⁴³ Demands of the Salafi groups and Al-Qaeda sympathizers are for Sharia, revocating the Camp David and other treaties with Israel,

establishment of an Islamic Emirate in Sinai and Egyptian military intervention to the conflict between Palestinians and Israel.

For the short term, hands of the Egyptians are tied because of the Camp David accords. Well-armed Bedouins has nothing to fear for now though Cairo has sent 2000 troops from the Egyptian Second Division backed by police and border guards to al-Arish.⁴⁴ The only good thing for Israel is aside from suspicions of Israeli involvement to the unrest, some Egyptian commentators see the hand of Hamas behind the disturbances in the Sinai.⁴⁵ It can be expected a temporary revocations in the Camp David accords (mutually agreed with Israel) until the return of status quo before the uprisings in Egypt. It also would not be surprising Egyptian government to tolerate basic smuggling activities of Bedouins except supplying arms to terrorist organizations.

Israel also faces the threats of simultaneous attacks from all fronts. Israeli General Avriel Askhenazi recently said Palestinian resistance cannot occupy Negev, and Hezbollah cannot occupy Galilee.⁴⁶ Of course a terrorist organization following guerilla tactics cannot control a specific area against a regular army since it will be simply a suicide. But even discussing such a possibility and answering terrorist assertions by General Staff members shows the psychological dynamics of Israel. Regretfully, Israel is on the defense against the terrorism today, thanks to its international isolation.

Not a very short term expectation, but once Israel breaks its isolation, and solves the manpower problem in the army (possibly by recruiting Orthodox Haredim or by a new immigrant wave), it can consider reoccupying Sinai if the U.S. will be unable to exert its influence in radicalized Egypt. Looking from the other side of the coin, Egypt may seek to restore its sovereignty in Sinai by renegotiation of the Camp David Accords. Ayman Nour, former presidential candidate during Mubarek regime has weighed against Camp David accords. Even Mohammad Al Baradei, former head of the UN Atomic Agency and an important key figure in the country running for presidency declared that upon his election he would consider going to war with Israel for protection people of Gaza.⁴⁷

A passive Egypt under Mubarak was in full harmony with Israeli security strategies. This is why Benjamin Netanyahu has campaigned among world leaders to go easy on Mubarak during the protests, the Israeli Ha'aretz daily newspaper reported⁴⁸. Another leading politician put it, "Israel cannot do anything about what is happening there. All we can do is to express our support for Mubarak and hope the riots pass quietly."⁴⁹ According to some others, Israelis sent planes with full of supplies to the Egyptian security forces.⁵⁰

Being the center of gravity and the trendsetter in the Arab world, any changes within Egypt will result with the change of dynamics in the Arab World. For many decades Arab nations thought they could rise up only with the Egypt. However 2006 war and Tunisian revolution showed that Arabs can, and should, do it without Egypt. Egypt has lost its leading role in Arab and International affairs during the three decades of Mubarak's rule. The country had no visions during these years. Economic developments can be impressive, but it lacked an ideological or symbolic mission which it traditionally had.

However post-Mubarak Cairo has opted for normalization of relations with Iran; begun whittling down security cooperation with Israel; and in a stunning move reconciled the Palestinian groups without consulting to U.S., Saudi Arabia and Israel and is probably encouraging them to seek United Nations recognition for Palestinian statehood.⁵¹ A delegation of Egyptian academics and civil society leaders visited Iran in June 2011 and one delegate, Mustafa Nagar, expressed the view that "Iranians believe Egypt is a strong country, not only to put Israel under pressure, but to benefit from the Egyptians themselves, that's why Egypt must restore ties with this great civilization".⁵² Official discourse has also changed recently. Egyptian Foreign Ministry's spokesman, Mehna Bakhom, declared that "We are prepared to take a different view of Iran. The former regime used to see Iran as an enemy, but we don't."⁵³ This reconciliation is one of the last things that Israel likes to see. "We are troubled by some of the recent actions coming out of Egypt," said one senior Israeli official, citing a "rapprochement between Iran and Egypt" as well as "an upgrading of the relationship between Egypt and Hamas." "These developments could have strategic implications on Israel's security," the official said.⁵⁴

Energy security of Israel is also in a deep trouble after Egyptian uprisings. One of the main reasons that light the fuse anti-Mubarak protests with slogans such as "Leave, leave you traitor, you sold your country to Israel"⁵⁵, was exporting gas to Israel for a fixed price of 1.25\$ per million British thermal units (Btu) – while Global gas prices in the meantime jumped to 4\$ per million Btu for 15 years.⁵⁶ Egypt was subsidizing Israel with hundreds of millions of dollars in energy purchase until Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz exposed the secret and reported that Israel was receiving gas from Egypt at a 70 per cent discount. The scandal was swept aside by the former Egyptian prime minister who refused to divulge to the parliament the terms of the contract. Subsequently when the government was sued, a judge ruled against it and invalidated the contract, which the government totally ignored it.⁵⁷ However, according to Israelis, this is yet another manipulation of the truth - as Israeli National Infrastructure Minister Uzi Landau pointed out last week, "The price Israel pays Egypt for the gas isn't low,

it's twice as much compared to [what] Syria, Jordan and Lebanon [pay Egypt]. The rate the Israel Electric Corporation pays the Egyptian gas company is identical to the rate it pays Israel gas suppliers."⁵⁸

As we stated earlier, even under the authority of Mubarak, The Sinai Peninsula was a de facto red zone, security is weak, local Bedouins rules here, weapon smuggling to Gaza and to other parts of Middle East flows through Sinai. According to SITE Intelligence group, which monitors Al Qaeda and other Islamist websites, jihadists are suggesting Muslims in Sinai to take advantage of Egyptian unrest. Israel is receiving 40 per cent of its natural gas from Egypt in accordance with the peace agreement⁵⁹ and jihadists are calling for striking at the pipelines that deliver the gas supplies. Jihadist calls found the answer, security weakness has shown its first sights by the blown up of Arish-Ashkelon gas pipeline⁶⁰ and the pipeline has continuously been attacked until now. Some 36 per cent of Israel's power generation supply is fueled by natural gas and two fifth of this comes from Egyptian East Mediterranean Gas Pipeline.⁶¹ For all those reasons Israel has already started following a new Energy Security policy. Israel and Egypt are renegotiating the gas prices, while simultaneously Israel searches for alternative options. A recently discovered Tamar gas field has enough supplies at least for a decade, but it is uncertain when it will be operational. There are also Hezbollah claims for Tamar gas field and Hezbollah openly warned that they wouldn't hesitate to use weapons to defend it. Coal, which already makes 62 per cent of the energy generation, is a solution for short term but it is already polluting the environment too much. A different alternative can be Liquefied natural gas but it is very expensive and can be only used for some kind of "insurance".⁶² Israel will be accepting paying to pay a higher amount for Egyptian gas in short term, until Tamar gas field be operational.

One WikiLeaks cable helped fueling the anger of masses, Mubarak's intelligence chief and briefly vice-president told the Israelis they were "welcome" to invade the Philadelphi Route, a narrow strip of land between Egypt and Gaza, to deter arms smuggling by Hamas.⁶³ Tel-Aviv has openly described Mubarak as an ally, and he has shown himself to be the Israel's hammer against Gaza by blocking it for three years aimed at weakening Hamas government. This is why Hamas imams in Gaza has described Mubarak regime as dictatorship and offered strong support to overthrow him.⁶⁴ Shaykh Hussein bin Mahmud, a Salafi-Jihadi ideologue expresses the common feeling of Arabs. He accuses Egypt for "protecting the Jews from outside [Israel's] borders" by preventing entry of mujahedeen into Palestine, and suggests a military campaign should begin outside Israel, since any mujahedeen must fight with Arab border guards in order to enter Israel.⁶⁵ Salafi ideology not only targets

Jews but also Christian Copts too. 100.000 Copts have left Egypt since March. According to Naguib Gabriell, the director EUHRO, "they (Copts) are coerced into that by threats and intimidation of hard line Salafists, and the lack of protection they are getting from the Egyptian regime."⁶⁶ Salafi slogans are becoming more and more provocative everyday against Copts and seculars Arabs.

Calls similar to Shaykh Hussein bin Mahmud's will not turn into reality, but it is certain that Egypt will not play the role of Israel's strategic partner anymore. Rather, Egypt is likely to begin treating its relations with Israel as a bilateral matter. This in turn will place significant pressure on Israel's relations with other Arab states, as well as the framework for domination through negotiation established with the Palestinians.⁶⁷ Mubarak and Palestinian Authority tried to silence and suppress the relations between Egyptian and Palestinian people for a long time, but the links cannot be broken in such a short period of time. Recently thousands of Egyptian protesters gathered in front of the Israeli Embassy in Cairo and stormed inside demanding an end to ties with Israel⁶⁸.

There is great deal of concerns in Israel that the political opening is being made for Muslim Brotherhood. Brotherhood is the oldest and largest Islamist movement in the world founded in Egypt in 1928, having ties in nearly every Muslim country having supporters in Europe and U.S.. Egyptians knows and to the great extend approves fact that Muslim Brotherhood opposes Camp David accords and doesn't recognize Israel in many of their statements.

Muslim Brotherhood during the anti-Mubarak protests formed people's committees to protect public properties and coordinated demonstrators activities including supplying them with food, beverages and first aid.⁶⁹ Currently the Muslim Brotherhood is the strongest political alternative, but is weak and more ideological than practical⁷⁰, facing troubles transforming from a social religious movement into a political movement. Even so, Muslim Brotherhood will probably have a very dominant role in parliament if free elections are hold. U.S., already accepting Brotherhood as "moderate", may be planning to shift Egypt into a somewhat Pakistani model, a politically Islamic regime under U.S. control that cooperates in military and intelligence affairs. If the plan goes well and Brotherhood will be under covert U.S. patronage, Israel will be left free to control West Bank,⁷¹ but at the same time radical change in Egypt will probably mean a radical change in Palestine as well.

An uncontrolled Brotherhood potentially creates similar fears for U.S., Israel and Iran. Iran is extending its influence with radical Islam and already became the emerging center of it. However, if Egypt under Brotherhood becomes radicalized⁷² this will not be welcomed by

Iran. Egypt is geographically much closer to Israel, Gaza and West Bank and can easily become the magnet for Arabs. A radical Egypt and Iran are not expected to be allies. It's true that Syria is currently the best ally of Iran and Shiite-Sunni differences does not seem to be a matter at all, but this alliance is only a necessity more than sharing common aims. This is why, in the long term when Egypt will be competing with Iran in the region, she will be more attractive partner for Syria, especially against Israel. An Islamist Egypt would be a catastrophe for Israel and U.S.. When Sadat left its alliance with Soviets and formed a new one with U.S. it undermined Soviet military and strategical strategies in East Mediterranean and Middle East and changed the balance of power for the favor of the West.

The crucial point is that the Brotherhood is adamantly opposed to violence against civilians - and thus resolutely dismisses Al-Qaeda. Abu-Futouh in one of his interviews expressed that "We as the Muslim Brotherhood know that the Jews in Israel are human beings and we know they should live, and should not be killed."⁷³ Deep in their hearts, Muslim Brotherhood may hate Israel, but they also know they have to respect the geopolitics and see the limits of their powers. As an established party of political Islam, the Muslim Brotherhood could not be a better antidote to Al Qaeda style fanatics.⁷⁴ "The Brotherhood hates Al Qaeda and Al Qaeda hates the Brotherhood," said Shadi Hamid, director of research at the Brookings Doha Center in Qatar. "So if we're talking about counterterrorism, engaging with the Brotherhood will advance our interests in the region."⁷⁵ Right now, the Brotherhood is exposed to foreign manipulations; it has been facing with splits and many minor groups that are leaving Brotherhood are establishing new groups.⁷⁶ Not only Brotherhood, but also the approximately 200 "Revolution Coalitions" and Egypt's traditional opposition parties are seeing a great degree of fragmentation.⁷⁷

Though American State Department suggests that Brotherhood poses no threat as it has adopted a low profile and becoming secularized⁷⁸, one should never forget that Hamas is an outgrowth of Muslim Brotherhood. The Egyptian police, at least for some period after the rebellion, no longer patrolled on the Rafah border crossing into Gaza. Hamas armed men are entering into Egypt and are closely collaborating with the Muslim Brotherhood.⁷⁹ If Egyptians was successful for not only overthrowing Mubarak but also in forcing a real regime change, Hamas would be already dramatically increasing its power. Linked to an anti-Israel, pro-Hamas Cairo, the Gaza Strip returns to its old status as a bayonet pointed at Tel-Aviv. Certainly, it would be a base for operations and a significant alternative to Fatah.⁸⁰ Hamas was rearmed in a very short period of time while the border was closed. With the open borders now it will increase its firepower in a very short period of time.

If all goes well and pro-Western factions wins the struggle in Egypt, they'll be primarily concerned with domestic issues. They are secular and would not want to return to the wartime state prior to Camp David, because that would simply strengthen the military. If they win power, the geopolitical arrangements would remain unchanged.⁸¹

Another point is a kind of Egyptian nationalism – rather than Islamism – has made itself felt at the demonstrations.⁸² It is a double edged sword for Israel, a new ideology of nationalism can seek an “external enemy” and aggressive nationalist feelings can be turned towards Israel, as usual. On the other hand, abandoning the Islamism can lead Egypt to a rapid modernization process on social life and the new “Egyptian Nationalism” can leave Palestine issue apart in the Middle Eastern affairs of Egyptian state.

Fall of Mubarak has also been welcomed by AKP government and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Mubarak has always perceived Turkey as a rival and a “dangerous model” for Arabs, especially after the Erdoğan government which is labeled as “moderate Islam”. Turkey, already distanced from the west and put itself into the Middle Eastern swamp, has been playing a complex set of games with Hezbollah, Hamas and Iran, without a strong rival such as Egypt to counter its actions. Egypt may also follow the policies of Erdoğan in its foreign affairs, especially while Egyptian people are willing to do this. Erdoğan was greeted by thousands of people during his visit to Egypt and people chanted the slogans “Erdoğan, Erdoğan, a real Muslim, not a coward”, and “Turkey and Egypt are single fist”.⁸³ Egyptian reconciliation with Iran and Hamas “will not undermine the security of the Gulf States because the security of Gulf States is important to Egypt’s national security” according to an Egyptian official.⁸⁴ It is a sign of multidimensional policies that Egypt will follow. It may be expected to play a leading role amongst Arab states and Palestinian affairs again and counter Iran, Turkey and Syria which have filled the power vacuum of Egypt in the last decade.

But beyond all, the new foreign policy priorities are already given; Sudan was the first destination for Prime Minister Essam Sharaf. This is not a coincidence; one of the most important documents expressing the strategies of Israel is the article of Oded Yinon’s entitled “A Strategy for Israel in the Nineteen Eighties”.⁸⁵ The commentary argues that Israel must put its efforts for the division of the whole area into small states by dissolution of existing states into ethnic or sectarian based states and make them Israel’s satellites. Sudan has been a center of the Israeli strategies for a long time; in the 1960s and 1970s Israel supported Southern Sudanese rebels as a reward for keeping Sudanese Army out of Six Days War, and today as Southern Sudan is preparing for declaration of statehood, it is viewed potential serve as a non-Arab ally along the periphery of the Middle East.⁸⁶ Sudanese Minister Hag Majid Swar has

warned that disintegration of South is a new plot to create another Israel in the region⁸⁷. Many states, including Egypt have declared their intention to recognize Southern Sudan. No matter what happens in domestic affairs or in Middle East, Nile River has always the highest priority for Egypt, as its military has many times made it clear that it considers any effort to disrupt the flow of the Nile a *casus belli*. The Egyptians claims that their share from Nile will not be reduced as Sudan's share will be divided between north and south after the new borders, but already being under the Israeli influence, Southern Sudan can always create troubles for Egypt in such a case, especially if Egyptian-Israeli relations gets tense in the future.

Yinon's Plan is also applicable to Libya. Cities such as Benghazi and Darnah always had association with Islamic movements, while many of them found their way to Iraq to join the insurgency against U.S.⁸⁸ Now Benghazi based Transnational Council controlling most of the Libya, it has a chance to break up just as Yugoslavia, where many people worries it may be a "giant Somalia". Most probably China and Russia will oppose the ongoing split and will try to unite Libyan tribes and opposition, but break up of Libya may work for Israel just as it did in Sudan for similar reasons.

Iran: Extending the Influence

The uprisings in Arab World are a golden opportunity for pursuing Iran's short and long term interests on political and military domination of the Gulf and East Mediterranean. Militarily, politically and ideologically Iran started accumulating its capabilities, a process started after the fall of Iraq and accelerated after Hezbollah-Israel war. It is the only serious threat for Israel at the moment. U.S. is also aware of rising power of Iran; "There's much more upside than downside for the U.S.," said Martin S. Indyk, the vice president for foreign policy at the Brookings Institution. "We have an interest in counterbalancing the advantages Iran has gained in the rest of the region. That makes it an unusual confluence of our values and interests."⁸⁹

Iran has extended its influence even to Gaza Strip after the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah. Sunni Arabs of Gaza has expressed admiration of Hezbollah and Hassan Nasrallah, ignoring his Shiite cleric status after the war which is celebrated as a victory against Israel. Sunni dictators are trying to lower the image of Hezbollah without success since Iran is already stealing the flag of Arab nationalism while Sunni dictators had sold out on all the causes Arabs cared about.⁹⁰

Iranian presence in Gaza and West Bank goes back to early 1980s when Islamic Jihad Organization in Palestine was established by Dr.Fathi Shaqaqi, receiving most of its funding

from Iran in the form of “charities” operating in the Gaza Strip such as al-Ahsan and the Fathi Shafaqi Forum.⁹¹ The charitable activities until now have resulted with large number of people that has converted to Shiism after the Hezbollah-Israel war of 2006. Iranian activities in Gaza have led indirectly to sympathy for the Shiite concept and identification with Hezbollah and the Army of the Guardians of the Islamic Revolution (Revolutionary Guards). It is not surprising to see Shiite ritual ceremonies such as Hussainia in Gaza, which is completely contrary to the Sunni faith as normally practiced in Gaza.⁹² Hamas has very little to do against the conversions to Shiism and been caught in a dilemma. Iranian support to Hamas with funding and weapons⁹³ can be in danger if Hamas plays a strong hand against the Shia activism as it will be perceived as an hostile action by Iran, but simply ignoring these conversions can lead to harsh reactions from Sunni countries towards Hamas.

Iranian “Shiitization” is a silent, but quite dangerous threat. Apart from Gaza, especially conversion rates to Shiism Syria are rapidly increasing. Shia missionaries are targeting economically vulnerable regions and are succeeding on their goals. In a 2009 discussion with two tribal leaders, the Baggara Sheikh stated that fully 25 per cent of his tribe had converted to Shiism.⁹⁴ Also, those who have been in Southern Iraq can see Ayatollah Humeyni’s posters inside the police stations, which is a clear sign that many parts of Iraq is de-facto ruled by Iran.

In Lebanon, Hezbollah gives a great leverage to Tehran-Damascus alliance. Now Hezbollah is not “a state within a state” anymore but the most powerful political force of Lebanon. Not only has Hezbollah rearmed, with Iran and Syria's assistance, since its month-long war in 2006 with Israel, amassing an estimated 40,000 rockets. It now has longer-range rockets, some with the range to reach Tel Aviv, boosting its leverage over Israel by making the stakes of any future confrontation that much higher. Needless to say, Hezbollah has the power to undermine any Israeli-Palestinian peace talks today.⁹⁵

Coming to Egyptian coup, Iran is without doubt happy to see it beleaguered by domestic troubles as it will have little energy to counter Iran’s nuclear program. Iran did not directly involve to protests in Egypt. However an alarmed Israel for an Egypt with an unknown future leaves more room for Iranian maneuver. Until the final solution, Israel’s attention will remain on Egypt more than Iran.

Though there is no clear proof, yet Iran is accused for encouraging Egyptian protesters and having presence in Cairo streets by its intelligence members, and trying to destabilize Mubarak regime two years ago by sending some Hezbollah members to Egypt via Gaza.⁹⁶ It is true that Iranians are excellent for using their covert capabilities to shape the political

realities in countries. Anywhere that Iran has presence in the Middle East, it gathers intelligence against primarily Israel, and uses their influence to encourage public for anti-Israeli feelings. Also militarily, now Iran is an important player though it has a poorly disciplined army that has mostly obsolete weapons. However, during the Iran-Iraq war “culture of martyrdom” is professionalized and unorthodox tactics on the battlefield are frequently used, resulted with an asymmetrical warfare doctrine, inspiring many terrorist organizations.

Animosity between Arab regimes and Iran after the 1979 Islamic revolution had long acted as a buffer for Israel, and its security apparatus rested comfortably in intimate relations with autocratic leaders forged by the signing of the peace treaty with Egypt in the same tumultuous year. Three decades of confidence have now been shattered in the revolutionary wave sweeping the Middle East.⁹⁷ Before the Arab “Revolutions” not only Israel but regional Arab powers such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan were worried about Iranian nuclear arsenal. Saudi Arabia, as a traditional rival of Iran may continue to worry for a nuclear Iran but a democratically elected and a more radical Jordan and Egypt are expected to welcome Iranian nuclear arms to counter Israeli deterrence, even though they would continue to compete for hegemony with Iran.

Tehran will continue to use the opportunities to establish closer ties with the Arab states exposed to rebellions and to break the regional isolation and encirclement imposed by U.S.. There is already a Tehran sponsored government in Baghdad and a Hezbollah dominated politics in Beirut. Unlike 10 years ago, there is also a harmony with Turkey. Hamas is now the voice of resistance after the Al Jazeera leaks the secret talks between Abbas, U.S. and Israel.

Notwithstanding, politically Iran is losing many battles, particularly in the Security Council. In long term it is very hard to export Iranian regime while there is a moderate Islamic Turkish model out there, which takes more attention from Arabs. Shiitization worries many Sunni Arabs but it is not an easy task.⁹⁸ But from a wider perspective, Iran is not isolated strategically. Iraq and Lebanon are in the Iran’s sphere (even Iranian Revolutionary Guards were found dead in 2006 Lebanon War)⁹⁹, has great influence on Afghanistan, an ally of Syria and backing Hezbollah and Hamas while having the Turkish diplomatical support as we stated above.

Iranian state from official mouths expresses their sympathy to rebellions in Egypt. Iran’s Supreme Leader Seyyed Ali Khamanei stated that: “This is what was always referred to as the Islamic awakening created by the victory of the great Revolution of the Iranian nation”.

Mirhoussain Mousavi said "The slogans of the Iranian nation who took to the streets in 2009 . . . have reached Egypt". Speaker of Iran's Parliament Ari Larijani tells "What is happening these days in Tunisia and Egypt is a kind of Islamic awakening that the Westerners should pay attention to".¹⁰⁰ Mass media also has a keen interest and will to perceive these rebellions something similar to 79' Islamic Revolution.¹⁰¹ From now on it will be hard for Israel to trust an Egyptian government torn apart by internal strife."¹⁰² And Israel has full rights for not trusting to Egypt; the new military rulers just after they held the power have approved the passage of two Iranian naval vessels through Suez Canal to Syrian Latakia Port.¹⁰³ On March 15 Israeli navy have intercepted a freighter carrying arms, apparently from Syria, bound for Iranian-backed Palestinian militants in the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip, and the freight sailed from the same port, Latakia.¹⁰⁴ Together with the hundreds of Islamic radicals escaped from prison during uprisings and many of them made their way to Gaza Strip,¹⁰⁵ Israel is right on its concerns. As we stated before, a radical change is not expected for the reasons written in the previous parts, but there are plenty of reasons to be wary.

In near future Iran may cause Israel to face even more acute regional isolation. A commentator in the Israeli daily Ha'aretz newspaper noted, "The fading power of ... Mubarak's government leaves Israel in a state of strategic distress. Without Mubarak, Israel is left with almost no friends in the Middle East; last year Israel saw its alliance with Turkey collapse and Assad has expressed the plans for Iran, Syria and Turkey to rise together."¹⁰⁶ It is clear that the Iranian trap, which is carefully planned and played, is successful and neither Israel, nor other Middle Eastern states has a counter-plan for Iranians.

Saudi Arabia: The Loyal Ally of Israel & US

As we stated, Iran benefits from the growing assertiveness of Shiites. Shiism is not at all monolithic and Iran cannot speak on behalf of all Shiites. However, the Shiites in all countries (except Iran and Azerbaijan) have the common faith of facing with discrimination. Bahrain is a typical example with a Shiite population of some 70 per cent, under the rule of a Sunniroyal family. Shiites have been long arguing about their discrimination at work, education and politics. Mass demonstrations that took place in Bahrain centered on these issues. Some Bahraini protestors carried pictures of Iran's Ayatollah Khamenei and Lebanon's Hasan Nasrallah.¹⁰⁷ The head of the largest Shiite party, Al Wefaq said his party rejected Iran's Islamic regime, but Shiites of Bahrain, as all other Shiites in the region, is falling into the Iranian trap slowly.¹⁰⁸

Shiite card also is highly profitable for Iran. Uprising in Bahrain places the US 5th Fleet's basing in jeopardy, puts U.S. in a difficult position and threatens the stability of Arab states in the Gulf. A "Safavid Plan" is said to be successful in Iran, Yemen is being taken via Houthis, and Kuwait is becoming divided while Kuwaiti Shiite television channel al-Anwar showed Kuwaiti Shiite demonstration for supporting Shiites in Bahrain. Kuwaiti state officers also claimed to have uncovering Iranian intelligence members and investigations are made for Iranian intervention on the events.¹⁰⁹

From Morocco to Indonesia, Saudis are watching the Iranian cleric's activities with eyes full of fear, and trying to establish their own religious propaganda in the same places. Egypt, after losing Iraq, was the last pillar for preventing Iran to enter the Middle East at all. Wikileaks cables revealed that Saudi King Abdullah repeatedly implored Washington to "cut off the head of the snake" (Iran) while there was still time.¹¹⁰ Recently Saudi Arabia has conducted tests to stand down its air defenses to enable Israeli jets to make a bombing raid on Iran's nuclear facilities.¹¹¹ As a result, Saudi Shiites are holding protests in the kingdom's oil-producing Eastern Province and other Shiite populated regions. Saudis fear that Bahrain protests can lead larger Shiite demonstrations in the oil wealth regions¹¹² and has sent its military (together with Jordan) to Bahrain for suppressing demonstrators¹¹³ and according to King Abdullah "The security of Bahrain and Saudi Arabia is indivisible – two bodies with one soul."¹¹⁴ Saudi Arabia seems to be ready for any kind of uprisings as in September U.S. announced the biggest ever arms sale to Saudi Arabia, including Uh-60 Blackhawk and MH-6 Little Bird helicopters which are extremely useful in counter-insurgency operations.

Saudis have backed Mubarak until the 11th hour. Frankly, Egypt was the last strategic hope of Saudi Arabia. Lebanon, Iraq, Palestine, Syria had all fallen into hands of the "hostiles" (namely Iran and Turkey) before stepping down of Mubarak. Now Saudi Arabia is alone, just like its boss Israel, and has no power at all except invading midgets of the region such as Bahrain. Israel needs Saudi Arabia to delay any international or Arab plan to pressure Israel on establishing a Palestinian state cannot be done anymore.¹¹⁵

An expert in international affairs with the RAND Corporation Alireza Nader said that Saudis are worried that they're encircled by Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, with an unstable Yemen and Bahrain. "They worry that the region is ripe for Iranian exploitation. Iran has shown that it is very capable of taking advantage of regional instability" he adds.¹¹⁶ Saudis may even use their covert capabilities for a Saudi-led counter revolution in the countries which falls under the Iranian influence, but Iranians proved that they are far better in covert activities.

Jordan: An Island of Stability?

Stability of Jordan is also questionable. Again the rising food prices are the main cause for the demonstrations and most of the slogans in Jordanian protests are imported from Tunisia.¹¹⁷ King Abdullah has a popular support (thanks to the legacy of his father), but he and Queen Rania are being subjected to criticism for a long time. During Abdullah's tour on Coronation Day (Anniversary of Great Arab Revolt), crowds in the supposedly loyalist city of Tafileh greeted the king with rocks and bottles.¹¹⁸ Arabs may protest the monarchies, but rarely do they make calls to end monarchies. Yet, the latest protests are early warning for the monarchs in the region. Democratic pressure may force King Abdullah to give more power to Islamists and Palestinians in Jordan.¹¹⁹ In such an era while all states and nations are becoming radicalized, it is expectable to see Jordanian people calling King not to follow pro-Western policies and peace with Israel anymore.

Currently "Arab Spring" seems to bypass Jordan, but if there will be strong protests, the real trouble will be the control of Jordan by Salafis, which view Alawite Syrian regime as a government of infidel Nuseiris. A Sunni controlled Syria and Salafi controlled Jordan will smuggle weapons from Jordan or Lebanon or simply to reverse the smuggling routes into Iraq's Anbar province. This could lead to tensions with Hezbollah in Lebanon and with the regime in Iraq. Civil unrest in Syria will spread to Lebanon easily in this case.¹²⁰

The most important reason for Arab Spring to bypass Jordan (for now) lies in the "Jordanian Identity" and power of Monarchy. Monarchy in Jordan dominates the role of Cabinet, Parliament and Judiciary in accordance with the Articles 26,34,35,36 and 98. Article 30 of the constitution further states that "The King is the Head of the State and is immune from any liability and responsibility", while Article 195 of the Penal Code criminalizes any criticism of the King making it punishable by a prison sentence of one to three years.¹²¹ Jordanian identity is pre-loaded with the pre-requirement of complete loyalty to the regime. Any opposition who wants to change this identity will automatically be considered as "Palestinian" (which makes up nearly 1/3 of the Jordan population).

It will be the real nightmare if Jordan will also be lost and Monarchy is toppled, but if this will lead to Jordan to be controlled by "Palestinians", it'll be more than welcome by Israel. Ariel Sharon in 1970 claimed "Jordan is Palestine"¹²², and many Israeli right wings are advising that Palestinians has already got a state, which is called Jordan. A Palestinian state in the future can include Jordan, Gaza and "most of the West Bank", leaving the large settlement blocks to Israel.

The Peace treaty with Israel is like the Sword of Damocles for Monarchy. The Jordanian-Palestinian identity “split” in the country has arisen as a result of the forced migration of Palestinians displaced by the Israeli occupation of their land and homes in Palestine.¹²³ Palestinians in Jordan acquired nationality, citizenship and makes up nearly half of the population. Two people can easily unite against a common threat, which are generally the fears for expansionist policies of Israel. The struggle for justice, equality and individual rights may also be a uniting force. However, the prejudices amongst two identities are quite strong to work for a common aim, at least for now.

The Spring for Palestine: Unification

A poll by the Nablus An-Najah University on 24-26 February among Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, revealed that 70-90% of the Palestinians in the occupied territories support the new Arab revolutions and believe they will help towards ending the occupation. At the same time, only a minority (22-29%) at present considers a similar upheaval in the West Bank or the Gaza Strip to be possible.¹²⁴

The challenge of Hamas to PLO was a chance for Israel to split Palestinian resistance. It is true that PLO has been fatally weakened by the coup in Egypt, but Hamas, thanks to international community and media lacking to understand the realities in Gaza, is now seen by “freedom fighters” struggling to break the open-air prison and save Palestinians. The public image of PLO hits the bottom when the police allowed a small pro-Mubarak demo to take place in early February, but violently dispersed a larger anti-Mubarak demo at the same spot in Ramallah.¹²⁵

The results of Arab Springs have a few dimensions for Palestinian politics. First of all, no one can deny the mass protests and their effect on the new unity between Hamas and Fatah. Palestinian youth have launched their own “revolution” for unity via facebook and twitter organized protests. Freed from the pacifist Mubarak, Cairo is following a more active role in Arab affairs, and Egypt pushed for reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah.¹²⁶ The clues of the new dynamic role of Egypt can be seen from the words of Ambassador Menha Bakhoun, spokeswoman for the Foreign Ministry. “Egypt is resuming its role that was once abdicated.” Invitation of Hamas leaders to HQ of Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs instead of merely meeting at a hotel or the intelligence agency is a signal that Egypt is now prepared to treat Hamas as a diplomatic partner rather than a security risk.¹²⁷ Both Yasser Arafat and Mahmoud Abbas continuously complained for Syrian and Iranian interference to Palestinian politics, which prevented reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah. Now Syria losing its power on Palestinian politics, Hamas is moving its HQ from out of Syria¹²⁸ though

Iranian interference is increasing every day and Egypt is said to be “resuming” its role on Palestinian politics.

The protests and mass marches on Israeli borders are another result of the Arab revolutions. It can be also said that the attempts to breach Israel border are supported by the current autocrat regimes to draw attention from rebellions back to Israel (Syria in particular is accused by Israel¹²⁹), and with people shot, to cause another international pressure on Israel. Every person killed today is the martyr of tomorrow’s funeral, the funeral itself becoming a violent protest, and its victims, in turn, becoming the next day’s martyrs.¹³⁰ A rise in casualties will negatively affect the already notorious image of Israel and cause more international pressure. In response to mass marches to Israeli soil, IDF is completing a new operational doctrine¹³¹ and has already started planting new landmines along the Golan Heights.

Another issue is the declaration of Palestinian State. It can be said that Palestinians became more determined for going to United Nations and ask for a formal declaration of statehood, where Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak has warned of an impending “diplomatic tsunami”. The poll results of Nablus University makes it clear that an upheaval is not expected in Palestine, but the Palestinians after the mass demonstrations in Arab world (and with post-Mubarak Egypt) has full confidence for declaration of statehood in autumn. The declaration will have no use in peace process and even make the things more complex, especially for Jewish settlements. However if declaration will be postponed, there are rumors for coming of a third intifada. Once Palestinians fill the streets, the anger can also be directed towards corrupted Abbas government and he can be toppled down. "After Egypt and Tunisia, God knows who might be next," said Abbas in a speech in and added "Don't laugh. It might be me." Abbas is surely not joking and knows the rage of Palestinians towards his government.¹³²

Palestinian terrorist groups may also be thinking a limited, but sharp shock to take international attention away from Arab revolutions and back to Palestinian problem. Hamas will use the Israeli responds to terror attacks in order to launch a broader Arab movement focused on Israel. Coming to Israel and the armed conflict, it is trying to limit retaliations with a few airstrikes and trying to avoid a large assault on Gaza, since another assault might generate forces that benefit Hamas. But given the political situation in Israel, its ability to carry another large scaled operation is limited, which Hamas is counting on.¹³³ Israeli hard-liners, too, may calculate that a short war could serve their purpose: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's far-right government may sense weakness and quietly dream of finishing off

Hamas once and for all.¹³⁴ If Netanyahu follows a weak and hesitant policy, Israel's red lines will turn to pale pink lines and this will break the psychology of war-weary Israelis, and cause to bow down to international pressure. If one may remember, the release of IDF maps of Hezbollah positions in civilian areas of Lebanon were clear messages to Hezbollah that Israel is preparing an international ground for a "justified" strike. Mossad is convinced that Hezbollah can fire about 400-600 rockets daily in the next round of hostilities and in two months it can send 24000-36000 rockets, 6000 targeting Tel Aviv.¹³⁵ An excellent mobile air defense system, Iron Dome, provides Israel protection for limited attacks until serial production and full deployment takes place and until then, the number of missiles in Hezbollah's hands cannot be tolerated by Israel. However, Nasrallah recently declared that they will not be provoked and are not seeking a new battle.¹³⁶ Nasrallah assures that overtime demographic factors would intervene, the Israeli economy would decline, the IDF's ability to strike its enemies hard, and at will, would be voided by mutually assured destruction and enough Jews would leave Israel out of pure self-interest and fear - or agree to democratic power sharing - that a new, unified state of Palestine would come into being.¹³⁷ To prevent a surprise attack, Israel may even carry a simultaneous operations on Hezbollah and Hamas by choosing the right time for itself, as it is now more prepared for an operation thanks to upgraded Merkava Mk4 tanks with active protection system against RPG's and Iron Dome.

Syria: A Deadlock

Syria is the only country that used to have decent food sovereignty and security, under a central planned economy. The bread prices did not hit Syria as Egypt or Tunisia. Also freedom of belief is seriously respected issue in Syria for many decades. In Syria "there is a solution for everything, except two things: Do not involve into politics, do not make religious propaganda and discriminate other beliefs". Syria for last two decades has largely remained stable in domestic and international affairs, but couldn't prevent the uprisings in 2011.

Some 400.000 Palestinian lives in Syria, they have got many factions settled there. Assad has blamed Palestinians for unrest in Syria.¹³⁸ Eyewitnesses to protests in Syria are reporting that all the protesters are from Muslim Brotherhood or Palestinian refugees. "Christians to Beirut, Alawites to Coffin"¹³⁹ slogans are chanted by these two groups. One must carefully note that Muslim Brotherhood in Syria is financed by Saudi Arabia, and maybe by also U.S.. There are also ongoing rumors that Palestinians are randomly firing Kalashnikovs in Alawite neighborhoods and afterwards doing the same in Sunni districts to create a sectarian clash. All the arrested people are reported to be Palestinians in Lazkiya,

according to witnesses. However the demonstrations are not widely spread to the country and the only serious demonstrations were made in Darra, where Palestinian population is dense. Again according to locals arms used in the protests are provided from Jordanian border and financial and other logistical support is supplied by Saudis.

It's surely not a coincidence for Israel to remain silent largely over the events in Syria. True, both states are technically at war and Israel normally should not miss a chance to overthrow a leader with the strongest anti-Israeli stance in the region. But an unknown future of post-Mubarak Egypt doubles the fear of unknown Israel for a possible unknown post-Assad Syria. Every step of Syria at Assad's hands is predictable. This is why the demands of George W. Bush's top Middle East adviser Elliot Abrams to Israel for bombing Syria during 2006 war were rejected.¹⁴⁰ Lately, US politics also tried to break the ice between two states, Assad, in January Barack Obama bypassed congress and sent an ambassador to Damascus in five years. Hillary Clinton says "There's a different leader in Syria now. Many of the members of Congress from both parties who have gone to Syria in recent months have also said they believe he's a reformer."¹⁴¹ U.S. supported Assad by remaining largely silent to protect Israel's northern borders. Another scenario that both Americans and Israelis fear is the fall of Assad's will lead to Sunni extremism to fill vacuum and make Damascus more radical.

However "infollution" is always there. Some media resources are claiming that US, Israel, Jordan and Saudi Arabia formed joint operational headquarters in the Saudi Embassy in Belgium to direct the riots in southern Syria. Abdul Halim Khaddam, who held the highest political, executive and information posts in the Syrian government for more than 30 years, is said to have been transferred from Paris to Belgium to direct the unrest. It is also reported that Jordan is equipping Muslim Brotherhood in the two cities with logistical facilities and personal weapons.¹⁴² U.S. probably demanded some reforms from Assad and gave limited support to protesters for blackmailing him, but as time passed by it put all the pressure on Syria via Turkey. Geopolitical stance of Russia also limits the American power in Syria. Syria provides Russia its only naval port (Tartus) in Mediterranean and traditionally cordial relations Syrian-Russian relations continues, which immunizes Syrian regime towards a large scale American covert operation.

In post-Mubarak Egypt, the secret visit undertaken by the new Egyptian intelligence chief who succeeded Omar Suleiman, Brigadier General Murad Mawafi, to Syria and his meeting with senior Syrian officials to discuss the areas of security and strategic coordination between the two countries over several files is highly interesting. Also the Hamas leaders in Gaza Strip to leave for Damascus via Cairo clearly shows that there will be no more

blockades.¹⁴³ These may be accepted as signals for the new chapter between Egypt, Syria and Iran.

Unlike Egypt, few Syrians look at the army as a benign institution. Rather, it is as a palace guard, meant to keep the ruling Alawite sect in power.¹⁴⁴ Assad is aware of its military weakness and cannot confront Israel in a battle between two states. His main goal is to keep the current status-quo, make the toughest anti-Israeli stance in the region, keeping Lebanon as its “colony” and patronize fundamentalist movements against Israel. There are at least 10 Palestinian factions including Hezbollah, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad operating in Syria. This tacit support comes not from interest in Arab causes but a desire to gather cards to play against Israel and U.S. in negotiations to win back the Golan Heights.¹⁴⁵ Assad’s tough stance towards Israel has contributed his popularity domestically and in the region, as a Syrian says “He is the only president in the Arab region that did not accept any offers from Israel, like other presidents. I, and most Syrians, if not all, can’t accept a president who will hold hands with Israel.”¹⁴⁶

Contemporary Syrian-Iranian alliance seems to trouble Israel, however Shiite politics aside secular-Baathist Syria and Islamist Iran are not ideological allies nor are they true Shiite brethren — they came together and remain allied for mostly tactical purposes, to counter Sunni forces.¹⁴⁷ No matter what lies in the future, Iran has full support for Syria today. Iran’s IRNA state news agency reported from Damascus that a group of “agitators” had confessed on Syrian state television they had been hired by Israel to create disturbance and insecurity in Syria.¹⁴⁸ Israel said on Sunday it was worried that Iran might be participating in the suppression of protesters in Syria.¹⁴⁹ It’s no secret that Israelis were, and probably still, training the Iraqi Kurdish forces for information gathering, sabotage and destabilization operation in Iran and Syria as Seymour Hersh revealed in 2004. The Kurdish and Druze population are probably Israel’s only tools to destabilize Syria today, and it has little or no control at all amongst protestors in Syria.

A weak possibility may give Israel an upper hand. If a democratic, less hostile, and probably a Lebanon-like regime which would grant full and equal rights to all Sunni, Druze, Kurds, Palestinians and Alawites can open a door for peace with Israel. In such a case Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran will be seriously weakened. It probably may fall under the Saudi influence and Turkish-Syrian entente will take a final deathblow. It is also possible to see the end of Turkish-Syrian entente within next months with a point of no return. Assad feels betrayed by Turkey, since Erdoğan government seems to be cutting all its ties with Syria, and propagates Turkish public with ongoing “Syrian massacres” made by Assad’s forces, calling

protests as a “fight for freedom”, hosting conferences of Syrian opposition and organizing them. There are even rumors of Turkish government is supplying arms and training opposition members at Antakya.¹⁵⁰

Right now Syrian uprising is deadlocked. If Assad successfully crushes the opponents, and Iran prefers an alliance with only concentrated on Egypt rather than Syria, he also may seek to strengthen ties with Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates for economic reach¹⁵¹, and start efforts to revive ties with Washington especially after the Hillary Clinton’s expressions for negotiations on Golan Heights.

Conclusion

One must know that the outcome of rebellions will not determine by those who launched it. There is also a great danger for revolutions to be hijacked by certain Jihadist groups like Al-Qaeda. More than two decades Al-Qaeda called Arab dictators as puppets of west. True, when uprisings started Bin Laden’s popularity was very low in the Arab street. Lacking to start an Islamic uprising, Al-Qaeda danger may begin at next level. Knowing the highly-effective propaganda techniques they use, it is easy for Al-Qaeda to agitate societies.

The Arab Spring indirectly affected Israeli domestic politics too. Still having a way more life quality and economics compared to Arab States, things surely do not go well in Israel. Officially 27 per cent of Israeli workers are earning minimum wage or less, while in the reality numbers are seem to be much higher. 25 per cent of Israelis are considered officially poor.¹⁵² Rents in Israel has skyrocketed in past few years, it is a really exceptional thing for a young Israeli to find a permanent job, gasoline, electricity and water prices has increased dramatically. Though the construction of public housing has ended, West Bank settlers are enjoying the benefits of Israel as a welfare state; public housing, state controlled prices on main products, tax exemption, loans with low interests, cheaper transportation and an extraordinary security precautions taken by the army. Ultra-Orthodox community, which makes up most of the settlers in the West Bank, has always been criticized by most of the Israelis since most of them does not go to military service, makes many children and do not work but only “pray” for the State of Israel. The social solidarity amongst Israelis are still strong due to external pressure, but Tel-Aviv had no chance to face with the nationwide protests calling for social justice. Mass protests have taken place not only in major cities, but also in periphery for a long time.

The major effect of the protests was the opening of communication channels between Israeli Jews and Arabs. Many Arabs have showed their support by joining demonstrations at the major cities and has joined the night-long discussions at Rotschild Avenue. For the first

time both sides talked to each other not from a nationalist lens. Both sides are on a common understanding that they all suffer from Bibi's right-wing economic policy, and feel that they're on the same boat. The protests stopped after a long time, but the common understanding and dialogue between two communities are surely undermining the ongoing Israeli hardline policies mainly lead by Liebermann.

Iran is clearly the winner for the moment. Shiite card is played quite well in Iraq and Lebanon, as well as ongoing Shiitization process, and all diplomatic games of Iran ended with success. The "Safavid Plan" of Iran cannot be challenged by any U.S. or Israeli policies, but could only be countered by neo-Ottomanist utopia of AKP government.

The Arab Spring is the reshuffling of the Middle East by re-aligned U.S.-Turkish common policies. The contemporary situation clearly shows that "The Greater Middle East Project" is on the track, a unitary state with a nation-state model is forced to be changed and Turkey has become the pawn of U.S. in this sense. Americans are by far the most hated nation in the Middle East excluding Israel, and any of their activity or plans would simply backfire. Knowing all the negative image that U.S. carries, today Turkey has undertaken the role of U.S. in the Middle East while the Arab street has full support of Erdoğan-led Turkey as a subcontractor of U.S. projects on the region. Erdoğan is ranked the most admired world leader in a 2010 poll of Arabs by the University of Maryland in conjunction with Zogby International. In countries where young people have risen against dictatorial regimes, many cite Erdoğan as the kind of leader they would like to have instead.¹⁵³

As we have expressed before, for Israel the devil you know is more acceptable than the unknown future. Bearing in mind all the results of the surveys showing that Arabs can easily fall into radical Islam, Israel prefers not to enter such a dangerous and risky game for toppling down the old dictators and establishing new regimes. Israel could resist such a change and force U.S. to postpone or cancel their new policies if it were a decade ago, but Israel is extremely isolated in international arena, has to counter the Turkish offenses in diplomacy and domestically facing serious crises. These all force Israel to remain silent unless it breaks the isolation it has fallen, but watch carefully the games played by U.S.-Turkey and Iran just beyond its borders.

END NOTES

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BACKGROUND OF THE TUNISIAN REVOLUTION

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the uprisings in Tunisia by examining the country's historical transition from Ottoman Empire rule to the recent events of today. The main focus of the article is to demonstrate how Tunisia has evolved historically by focusing on the Ottoman Era, French protectorate, early independence years, the transition from one party system to a multiparty system, and opposition movements. In this respect, the article aims to serve for a more effective analysis of recent uprisings and the democratic transition of the country.

Key words: Tunisia, Ottoman Empire, France, Economy, Foreign Policy, Uprisings.

TUNUS DEVRİMİNİN ARKA PLANI

ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı Tunus'taki ayaklanmayı Osmanlı'dan bu yana dönüşüm süreci içerisinde analiz etmektir. Tunus'un Osmanlı'dan, Fransız sömürgeciliğine geçişine ve daha sonra bağımsızlık döneminden çok parti deneyimine kadar olan dönemi ve muhalif hareketleri çalışmanın ana hareket noktalarını oluşturmaktadır. Bu çerçevede çalışma, bugünkü ayaklanmaları ve demokrasiye geçiş sürecini tarihsel arka planı da göz önünde bulundurarak değerlendirecektir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Tunus, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Fransa, Ekonomi, Dış Politika, İsyanlar.

Introduction

The ongoing uprisings in the Arab world began in Tunisia, where earlier in 2011 President Ben Ali's 23-year-rule ended when he fled the country after several weeks of popular protests. The uprising did not subside until the protesters received assurances that politicians associated with Ben Ali's rule had been excluded from the interim government. The persistence of the Tunisian public was the most determinant aspect behind the transition process, meaning the chances for a successful democratic transition are high. Such a conclusion is based on many reasons, but the most significant one lies in the country's

political history, which includes mobilization, long-term struggle for a multi-voice political atmosphere, and social mobilization.

The economic policies that have been highlighted by many in order to analyze the uprisings in Tunisia deserve special interest. Tunisia's economic structure and structural issues share many common features with the rest of the Middle East and the North African region. The unemployment rates, sectoral problems, and scarcity of supply of the increasingly young population can be counted as general examples. However, the economic explanations have some limitations to understanding the recent developments in the country narrowly and in the region in general. The political discontent fed by the region's authoritarian regimes is another significant determinant, while the historical process gives many clues in analyzing the factors behind the uprisings. At this point, this article provides a broad historical perspective, including a briefing on Tunisia's foreign, political, and economic policies.

Historical Process in Tunisia

Ottoman Rule in Tunisia

Northern Africa and the southern Sahara, which covers the area from Egypt to the Atlantic Ocean, including Libya, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, and Mauritania, is named Maghreb in Islamic texts. This region became an object of competition for dominance between Spain and Portugal in the 15th century (Şeyban, 2007: 16). As the struggle between these two countries continued, the Ottoman presence in the region emerged by the beginning of the 16th century. Navarch Sinan Pasha, Aruj (Oruç Reis), Hizir Khaired-Din Reis, and Turgut Reis embarked on expeditions to Tunisia, Tripoli, Algeria, and Egypt on behalf of the Ottoman Empire starting in 1513. Khaired-Din Reis ended Hafsid rule in Tunisia by forcing al-Hasan, Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad's son and his successor, into exile in 1534 while Sinan Pasha and Uluj Ali (UluçKılıç Ali) Pasha ended the Spanish dominance and ensured the Ottoman rule over Tunisia in 1574 (Maksudoğlu, 1966: 189-190).

Sinan Pasha left a unit of Janissaries in Tunisia before he left the country and appointed Haydar Pasha as beylerbeyi (governor). During Ottoman rule, Tunisia was divided into 22 sub-districts: Bizerte, Kal'a-iTabarka, Kâfmaa Amdûn, Mikne, Sinan, Testûr, Tabarsûk, Ifrikiyyemaa Bâce, Matar, Dâhilmaa Süleyman, Kal'a-iKalîbiya, Kal'a-iHamâme, Sâhilmaa Sûsa, Lecm, Mehdiye, İsfakusmaa Kekrene, Kayrevân, Cerîd Cerbe, El-Araz, and Zarzîs. The political and administrative system structured by Sinan Pasha remained in place until 1591, when the era of beys and deys started. The junior-level janissary officers, called dey (dayı/bölükbaşı), gained more power and limited the authority of beylerbeyi; in this

process, Dey Othman provided stability and achieved relative control over Tunisia (Maksudoğlu, 1966: 194,196-198). This political situation continued until the 18th century. In 1702, Husain bin Ali ended the political fragmentation and the prominence of deys by forming the Hussainid Dynasty, which governed Tunisia until its independence. (Nasr, 1987: 173).

Turkish nobles who settled in regions far from the central government in Istanbul established strong provincial orders and ruled autonomously. Under contemporary conditions, the region was neither controlled to the full extent nor governed directly from Istanbul. In particular, the Karamanlı Rule in Tripoli, the Husainid Rule in Tunisia, and Muhammad Ali Pasha (Kavalalı Mehmet Ali Paşa) and the Khedive rule in Egypt had been granted a kind of autonomy from other provinces of the Ottoman Empire with their own dynamics. Great Britain, the Netherlands, and Spain created a collective initiative to block champions of Ottoman mariners in North Africa to Mediterranean coasts, especially coasts of Italy and Spain, and secure the Mediterranean for their own interests. France's occupation of Algeria in 1830 ended the champions of Ottoman mariners in North Africa (Şeyban, 2007: 135-136). In addition, France became a neighbour of Tunisia, which paved the way for the rise of French dominance over Tunisia ruled by the Hussainids. Great Britain reacted to France's occupation of Algeria, generating fears that the French invasion would spread to other North African parts, resulting in France becoming a dominant power in North Africa that would lead to French dominance in the Mediterranean. This fear prompted Great Britain and other European countries to counter France (Swain, 1937: 359-361). The European countries had competed for domination over North Africa throughout the 19th century. This struggle brought a total change in the power balance in the region.

French Rule in Tunisia

The French impact on Tunisia stemmed from France's occupation of Algeria. The impact, which started as good and close relations between France and the Husainid Dynasty, was changed by the power change in France—namely, Napoleon's ascension to the throne, the policies of Ahmad Bey, a Tunisian bey, and his support of the Ottoman Empire in the Crimean War. Napoleon moderated his country's foreign policies because he thought that the French policies in North Africa were creating a disturbance for Great Britain. Meanwhile, Tunisian governor Ahmad Bey made reforms to strengthen the central administration. In addition, he sent military units to support the Ottoman Empire in the Crimean War—a decision that meant the recognition of Ottoman supremacy over Tunisia. These developments

affected the French foreign policies in the region while leading the European presence in North Africa to direct the local leaders to reform movements. This interactive relation played a prominent role in changing balances in the region (Nasr, 1987: 274).

The control and balance instruments enabled the Tunisian province to survive France's occupation of Algeria. It is hard to accept these instruments as a kind of "separation of powers" as they were defined or limited by law, yet they functioned until the 19th century (Brown, 1975: 111). The concept of internal and external threats delineated by the French presence in the region pushed Ahmad Bey to enact reforms, legal definitions, and regulations. The balances existing in Tunisia were affected by the weak reform process, which ensued as a result of the external threat

Three prominent developments took place after Ahmad Bey's death in 1855. First, Tunisian Bey Mohammed accepted the Fundamental Pact (*Ahd Al-Aman*), which protected the rights of non-Muslims living within Tunisia. With this pact, joined courts and new property regulations were formed and work on the Tunisian Constitutional Law was started (Perkins, 2004: 18-19). The Constitutional Law, which was established by a council appointed by Mohammed Bey, was accepted in 1861, thereby forming a Tunisian constitutional monarchy. Second, Tunisia entered a rapid process of integration into the European economic system after the constitutional reforms that began in 1857; the new regulations in the taxation system created dissatisfaction among local producers. Third, the first reaction to this rapid socio-economic change was uprisings, which began in 1861. Oppressing the uprisings with force, arresting protestors, and appointing some members of *ulama* (compromised of bey) to official posts simply postponed the uprisings, but did not prevent them from reappearing later. In 1864 the population once again revolted to protest against heavy taxes and demand the abolition of the Constitutional Law. The uprisings rapidly spread to the coastal part of the country when the army lost control over the rebellion (Perkins, 2004: 28-29). The Ottoman Empire sent a high-level diplomat to Tunisia with a financial contribution for the campaign against the rebels. Although the uprisings were quashed, the Tunisian bey recognized the fact that the domestic dynamics could not completely ignore popular demands and thus abolished the Constitutional Law, with the support of France and Great Britain.

The rise of Germany under Bismarck rule as a European power changed the balance of power in both Europe and European countries' domains. In 1873, Germany later became involved in the struggle among Great Britain, France, and Italy over Tunisia. Although Italian and French officials met to find a joint solution in 1881, France opted to use military pressure

against the Tunisia bey to maintain its control over the country, asserting that frontier tribes had transgressed the border (Langer, 1926: 261).

French occupation lasted from 1881 to 1956; the Husainid Dynasty provided the beys of Tunisia within the framework of the French protectorate. France took charge of domestic political issues, foreign affairs, and the military, leaving jurisdiction and taxation of the Muslim population to the Tunisian beys while European settlers came under the realm of French authority. France's policy to leave a jurisdiction area to the beys was based on two prominent reasons. Initially, France estimated the regulation of the jurisdiction to be expensive and requiring functionless investments given its experiences in Algeria; it did not desire the re-emergence of uprisings like those in 1860. However, limiting the old jurisdiction in the framework of family law despite establishing new regulations created a base for a dualistic structure in jurisdiction. In the educational system, contrary to early French colonies, the attempts to use the education mechanism as a tool for social transition were not applied in Tunisia; the protectorate did not force the colony to teach French. New schools opened in the country for the education of European settlers; these schools were also used to create a Tunisian elite class of educated aristocrats. This policy succeeded in making the French language one of the symbols of privilege, spreading it throughout the region without much resistance (Perkins, 2004: 65-66). The intellectual class who both spoke French and Arabic played a dominant role in the future of Tunisia. In addition, the judicial dualism created by the Foncier Law on property and land in 1885, the Civil Code of 1906 established and approved by French lawyers and Tunisian ulama, and the juridical laws of 1921 (Perkins, 2004: 47-48) framed the historical background of the fundamental tension in Tunisia's politics.

Independence Movements and the Destour Party

The first generation to be educated in French schools propounded the belief that the ideals of the French Revolution would make Tunisia a state like France. This belief revealed the group Young Tunisians, which existed in North Africa before World War I and demanded equal rights for both Tunisians and foreigners in the country instead of complete independence; they called for democratic reforms and a republic instead of a monarchy. Labour unions were formed, gaining limited rights between 1919 and 1923. In addition, the Destour Party, which marked an important turning point for Tunisia's modern history, was established in June 1920. Under Abdelaziz Thâalbi's leadership, the Destour Party mainly sought to establish a parliamentary based on general elections, a national government that would be responsible to that parliamentary, freedom of the press, a right to education, and

equal rights for Tunisian civil servants (same as the French). Initially, the Destour Party did not address the end of the French protectorate's rule or Tunisia's independence; but the arrest of Abdelaziz Thâalbi and many members of the party on 31 July 1920 led to the party making such demands (Ataöv, 1977: 116-117; Ashford, 1965: 215).

The arrest of Abdelaziz Thâalbi led to mass uprisings; when the French rule could not put down the masses, it had to release Abdelaziz Thâalbi on April 1921, give legal status to the Destour Party, and apply some rights to recognize Tunisians. By 1922, the social basis of the party had expanded due to the emergence of several divisions within the party. The left wing of the Destour Party insisted on broad constitutional reforms while the right wing chose to cooperate with the French protectorate under the name Hizb al-Islah. By 1924, the Destour Party was no longer a legally recognized party by the French protectorate. In addition to these divisions and the exclusion of the Destour Party from the political space, massive uprisings were brutally suppressed by the protectorate, resulting in the exile of many opposition leaders; this situation culminated in labour unions emerging in 1924 and 1925. The stability could be sustained through the 1930s, but uprisings re-emerged once again with the Great Depression (Ataöv, 1977: 117).

Habib Bourguiba and Neo-Destour

The Great Depression in 1929 particularly affected the Tunisian economy. The export of phosphorus, iron, and lead as well as the price of olives and wool decreased rapidly as a result of the global economic depression; meanwhile, the rate of unemployment increased as factories and mines closed. When these developments occurred, a new group emerged with the Destour Party. Led by Habib Bourguiba, this neo-Destour group published the *Action Tunisienne* newspaper and separated from the main group in 1934. The arrest and deportation of Bourguiba, along with many prominent members of the neo-Destour, led to an increase in their popularity. In the same year, the neo-Destour demanded the release of those who had been arrested, the press, and the removal of laws limiting freedom of assembly as well as the alleviation of taxes. Considering the new principle, they called on the people to defy the French administration; support for this call reached its peak in 1938. The uprisings were suppressed in bloody ways and the neo-Destour was made illegal (Moore, 1962: 461-482).

On the other hand, Italy's claims over Tunisia emerged in the beginning of 1938, making Tunisia a battleground during World War II. In 1942, British and American troops landed in Morocco and Tunisia, eventually defeating the German troops there in 1943. Tunisia expected improved conditions in return for its support for the allied nations during

World War II and its refusal to cooperate with Germany during its occupation. However, after the end of German occupation, the newly inaugurated French National Liberation Committee discharged the Tunisian bey and sent him to exile, deployed the national government, and did not improve the protectorate conditions. All of these acts of French rule created disappointment and raised the support for the neo-Destour in 1946 (Nasr, 1987: 363-364; Ataöv, 1977:120).

The neo-Destour launched reform negotiations between the French protectorate and the government under Prime Minister Mohammed Shanniq's leadership by suggesting an "esteemed consensus program" in 1950. This program aimed to establish internal autonomy and Arab servants in state institutions. Mass protests arose in December 1951, and the political gridlock in the negotiations with the protectorate pushed the neo-Destour and labour unions to come together and create a national unity front. Meanwhile, in 1952 Shanniq's government applied to the UN Security Council for assistance with the crisis. Four days later, Bourguiba, leader of the neo-Destour, and Mohammed en-Nafaa, head of the Tunisia Communist Party, were arrested and exiled; Shanniq's government was avoided, and ministers were arrested (Nasr, 1987: 365; Ataöv, 1977: 121-122). In addition, General Garbay—known as the "butcher" because of his bloodshed in Madagascar—was appointed to command the forces in Tunisia (Ataöv, 1977: 121-122).

The Tunisian Liberation Army was established in response to General Garbay's use of extreme violence. France declared that it was ready to give Tunisian internal autonomy in 1954 when it could not get control over the country. However, due to developments in Algeria, the 1881 and 1883 agreements were outlawed by a protocol signed on 20 March 1956, thereby leading to full independence in Tunisia (Ataöv, 1977: 121).

Independent Tunisia

Bourguiba Period

a. Foreign Policy

Bourguiba's foreign policy can be considered in the context of developing relations with the Arab world, Africa, and the third world. During this period, Tunisia supported both the Non-Aligned Movement and the national liberation movements. In addition, the ties between Tunisia and the Arab Maghreb countries were strengthened and, as an extension of these policies, good relations with Arab states were built. Yet relations deteriorated in 1965 in response to the Tunisian détente in foreign policy on behalf of Israel, which was criticized

both inside and outside the country and resulted in the withdrawal of representatives in Egypt, Iraq, and Syria (Joffe, 1987: 181).

Bourguiba's foreign policy doctrines on the Palestine and Israel issue varied from other Arab countries. Bourguiba thought that political rights could be gained over time; thus, he had been accepting the UN resolution while calling the establishment of the state of Israel an injustice. He argued that Palestinians had to acknowledge this fact and discard their rigid policies to establish their own state. In addition to his radical position on the Palestine and Israel issue, Bourguiba stood apart from other Arab states by establishing diplomatic relations with West Germany. However, after the Arab-Israeli War of 1967, Tunisia tried to mend relations with the Arab states, and representatives were reopened reciprocally (Joffe, 1987: 182; Ataöv, 1977: 127-128).

Tunisia became a member of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 and held anti-colonial arguments in the UN and OAU to intervene in developments in Congo. Bourguiba invited many African leaders to Tunisia to develop close relations with them. Two goals became prominent in Tunisia's foreign policy towards Africa under Bourguiba's rule: to increase cooperation among African countries and to end colonialism in the region. According to Bourguiba, these two goals were crucial for structuring and developing the Tunisian economy (Moore, 1962: 229-230).

The relations between Tunisia and Western states could be assessed as positive in general terms. The UN became an esteemed organization because of its positive impact in the solution to the Bizerte issue. In 1961, the Tunisian delegate was elected to the UN General Commission.

The relations with France were not cut in the post-colonial period. The customs union established during the colonial period morphed into a single market tying the two countries' economies. However, France's decisions in 1962 and 1964 negatively affected the Tunisian economy. Therefore, despite good relations with Western countries, close economic ties with the Eastern Bloc were established. During this period, many cooperation agreements were signed with Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania, the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia (Ataöv, 1977: 131).

Tunisian-American relations were shaped within the scope of economic and military aid in general terms. Between 1962 and 1979, the US subsidized 130 million dollars in military assistance and 605 million dollars in economic and food aid. The annual average of American military aid was 18.8 million dollars between 1978 and 1981 (Liaison Office, 1992: 5-6).

b. Domestic Policy

The 78 years of French administration ended in 1956 when Tunisia became independent. However, independence brought about the repressive regime of Habib Bourguiba—a prominent leader of the Tunisian independence campaign in the 1930s and the neo-Destour Party established after World War II. Both became substantial and deterministic actors in the post-independence period. On 25 March 1956, the newly established constituent assembly was established and elected Bourguiba as president of the assembly on 8 April. The first government formed in independent Tunisia initiated a reform process that would change the country deeply. Through juridical reforms, single laic courts were established by removing kadi and tribal courts; reforms in family law led to women gaining equal rights with men, polygamy being forbidden, and the legal age of marriage being increased. Free and standard education was created while mosques and schools were separated and Quran courses were taken under control of the state through educational reforms (Moore, 1962: 465-466; Ataöv, 1977: 123-124; Nasr, 1987: 421). Bourguiba's goal in these reforms was to end dualistic structures in education and the jurisdiction established by the French protectorate while sustaining the control of the state over all instruments and institutions within the country.

On 22 July 1957, the Tunisian Republic was declared and Bourguiba became the first president of the country. President Bourguiba realized major changes in the country by nationalizing foundations and private property as well as many foreign industrial and transportation companies and by signing agreements with France in 1957, 1960, and 1963 and continuing the handover of lands taken by foreign settlers during the protectorate. The European population in Tunisia had to leave country during this time because of these reforms. In addition, several economic reforms were initiated in order to break France's monopoly over the Tunisian economy; negotiations focused on removing the remaining French troops. The last French troops in the country left Bizerte in 1963 (Ataöv, 1977: 124; Nasr, 1987: 348).

During the 1960s, the Tunisian economy was subjected to statist policies and development plans formulated under the name of Destour socialism. During this period, state-owned iron and steel factories, oil plants, sugar mills, glass factories, car and tractor spare parts, production facilities, peasant production cooperatives, and state farms were established; olive groves in Msaken were also nationalized. The opposition that emerged in response to these nationalization policies was suppressed by the use of force. In addition, while the policies implemented were not successful in creating enough job opportunities, a program of

compulsory labour with ill pay in such projects as the construction of dams, irrigation canals, and forestation led to the strengthening of the opposition among the population. The failure of the economic policies and other reforms, such as secular education, the outlawing of Shariah courts, the prohibition of wearing the hicab, and the closing of the Islamic University of Al-Zaytuna mainly were objected by Islamic opposition who did not recognize such reforms. This period was seen as a “period of marginalizing of Islamists”. However, during this period, not only Islamists but also all opposition groups were marginalized. The opposition groups encountered state oppression, and many members of the opposition were arrested or exiled (Moore, 1965: 50-53). After 1966, Tunisia fell into a range of economic and political crisis, and political Islam subsequently emerged as an actor in Tunisian political life. In 1978, massive protests began because of the high rate of inflation and unemployment; these protests were suppressed using force.

Political Islam in Sudan and Egypt was perceived as a global threat due to Iran’s Islamic Revolution in the 1980s. The perception of this threat expanded to include Tunisia after approximately 60 guerrillas trained in Libya entered Tunisia from Libya and attacked a police station in Gafsa in 1980. An important opportunity for transitioning the opposition into the legal political life was created by Bourguiba’s liberal initiative policies to end single party political life in 1981 and eliminate threatening elements. Since then, the Socialist Democrats, the Communist Party, the Socialist Union, and the Tunisian Human Rights League have become actors in the political scene. In addition, the leftist group the Islamic Tendency Movement under the leadership of Rashid Al-Ghannushi applied for admission as a political party, although it was not accepted.

Due to the systematic suppression policies of the Destourien Socialist Party over labour unions and secular opposition since 1956 and the disappointment of the political liberalization process in 1981, more dissidents gathered to support Ghannushi. In July 1981, the members of Islamic Tendency Movement and Rashid Al-Ghannushi were arrested. Their arrest was censured by the Socialist Democrats, the Communist Party, the Socialist Union, and the Tunisian Human Rights Union, all of which demanded their release. The bread riots in 1984 forced the government to soften politically, and political prisoners were subsequently released. In applying the 1984 amnesty, the Bourguiba government increased pressure on social life, forbidding civil servants from praying during working hours, women from wearing veils in universities and workplaces, and taxi drivers from having a beard symbolizing Islam and listening to Islamic music in their cars (Jones, 1988: 20). Bans on speech, writing, preaching, teaching, mosque attendance, and travel were imposed on Ghannushi in 1986.

However, Ghannushi refused to obey these bans and continued to offer courses in Islamic Tendency Movements' schools and write articles in newspapers. Ghannushi was arrested after a preaching that brought forth students riots. The arrest of Ghannushi was the fire for the riots in the country, where tensions already existed because of the economic recession and political suppression. This situation led to further pressure on the Islamists, and 3,000 members of the Islamic Tendency Movement were arrested for alleged connections with Iran (Jones, 1988: 21-22).

Zine El Abidine Ben Ali

a. Domestic Policy

In 1987, Tunisia entered an important and rapid change process. At that time, General Zine El Abidine Ben Ali discharged Bourguiba, who had been elected president for life, reasoning that his health status required his replacement. He replaced him through a bloodless coup. The period that began with Zine El Abidine Ben Ali also brought short-term relaxation for the opposition in Tunisia. Ben Ali promised to follow liberal policies and called back opposition members in exile. In addition, many political figures who had been arrested in 1988 were released (Encyclopedia of World Biography, 1998: 519). Al-Zaytuna, which had been closed by Bourguiba, was rehabilitated, radio and television were allowed to broadcast ezan, Hijri calendars were published, and the Islamic Supreme Council allowed publication of Al-Hedaya, a religious magazine. The name of the Destourien Socialist Party was changed to the Constitutional Democratic Rally (RCD) to refresh the image in the eyes of public. Ben Ali further declared that he accepted the Islamic cultural identity of Tunisia. Within the existing political atmosphere, the elections were held with the participation of many parties, with opposition gaining 19.6% of the votes. The Islamist Renaissance Party (en Nahda) won 30% of the votes in Tunis, while Gabes and Sousse won 14.6%; these groups formed the biggest opposition bloc. However, the party could not gain any seats in parliament because of electoral law (Esposito and Piscatori, 1991: 121). Similarly, no opposition party or candidate had the right of representation in parliament. Even so, the election results were perceived as an internal threat to their authority by Ben Ali and the Constitutional Democratic Rally; after a short time, opposition groups were suppressed, focusing on Islamists first. Al-Faj, the media organ of en Nahda, was closed and the veil ban reinstated (Esposito and Piscatori, 1991: 432); many members of en Nahda were arrested and Rashid Al-Ghannushi was exiled. Similarly, activities of the Republican Congress, one of the secular parties, were banned; its members were arrested and its leader Moncef Marzouki went abroad.

Ben Ali was successful in managing the discontent against him as a control mechanism in the domestic affairs until the end of his rule despite the fact that he brutally suppressed the opposition. Although election law reforms aimed to increase the participation rate in elections and facilitate voting, the electoral threshold for governor and opposition parties sustained the Constitutional Democratic Rally's overwhelming majority in the parliamentary and control the opposition in doing so. The reform process extended over a period of time by giving more quotas to opposition parties in parliamentary elections in 1999 and 2004 (King, 2009; 204-205), and the opposition was mostly eliminated. Tunisia's electoral system has not since been seriously criticized from abroad. Claims of gerrymandering in the elections and pressure on the media remained on the country's agenda (King, 2009; 204-205).

The former Tunisian electoral system ensured 75% of the parliament to the party who won a simple majority. The remaining 25% was shared by the opposition parties who made the grade. This system has guaranteed the government for Ben Ali and the Constitutional Democratic Rally in every election since 1989. The Constitutional Democratic Rally won the election by earning 144 seats in 1994, 148 seats in 1999, 152 seats in 2004, and 161 seats in 2009 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2011). In addition, Tunisia did not allow the participation of international electoral watchdogs. In this respect, the US criticized 2004 and 2009 elections and called for removing the pressure placed on state institutions, the media, and political activities.

Ben Ali used the rhetoric of an "Islamist threat" to secure and consolidate his authority. In 1991, state pressure increased on the *en Nahda*, with allegations of a plot against the regime. Some 265 *en Nahda* members were arrested by the army, which alleged that they were preparing a coup in 1992. They were finally released in 2008. This rhetoric and the related activities gave Ben Ali defensible arguments and continuity for authority in both domestic and foreign policies (Kelly, Walker and Dizard, 2008: 465-466).

Another internal pressure that was applied during Ben Ali's rule was state control over the internet. A filter was imposed by the state to control all internet cafes. Local internet suppliers belonged to members of the Ben Ali family. Bloggers and journalists were on the list of those arrested during the Ben Ali rule.

b. Economic Policies

Ben Ali built his 23-year rule on his foreign policy, economic policies, and domestic policies. Tunisian economy under his rule grew in a limited but stable manner. Social

responses to unemployment were limited as unemployment rates did not rise rapidly. However, unemployment continued to be a chronic issue for the Tunisian economy under Ben Ali, just like in the Bourguiba period. This issue caused periodic riots in Tunisia, where the education level is high. According to a Global Employment Trends 2010 Report, North Africa is one of the regions where unemployment rates are highest. The report stated that the impact of the global economic depression has been limited in North Africa, which has faced high unemployment rates among the young and educated population. Together with the unemployment issue, the report concluded that the problems related to the quality of employment have become chronic for the country. According to the report, existing jobs have a low profile, are insecure, provide poor payment, and are ineffective for managing basic needs. As a result, the unemployment issue leads to sectoral deficiency.

Tunisia's gross domestic product (GDP) grew 6.3% in 2007, 4.6% in 2008, and 3.1% in 2009. Investments in energy and mining sectors increased during these years as well. Tunisia became an important tourism centre under Ben Ali's rule, and tourism income constituted a crucial share of economy. Yet inflation rates reached 5.1% in 2008 and 3.5% in 2009. The Tunisian economy was described positively in the African Economic Outlook 2010 Report. By addressing economic diversity, the banking system has become a strong institution that can protect the country's economy. Doing Business 2010 Report of the World Bank ranked Tunisia in the top ten list for doing business in the world. Thus, generally speaking, Tunisia's economy can be described as stable and strong, enabling it to fight the global economic crisis.

c. Foreign Affairs

Under Ben Ali, Tunisia's foreign policy has been "moderate" and never attempted to become a regional power. Ben Ali's foreign policy consisted of maintaining a careful balance of power between close relations with Western Europe and the United States along with increasing inter-Arab cooperation. In this respect, it would not be wrong to state that Ben Ali applied similar foreign policies as Bourguiba. France, Tunisia's biggest trade partner, supported Ben Ali during his 23-year rule. The historical ties and single market have intensified Tunisian-French cooperation as well. The tension between France and Tunisia that affected the economic policies of France were moderated during Ben Ali's rule. This cooperation and the close ties did not lose their intensity until the last day of Ben Ali's presidency. The advertising conferences held in October 2010 in Paris to appeal for investments in Tunisia, which had French support until the last moment, are important in this

context (Think Tunisia, 2010). Between 1995 and 2009, the EU provided 1.7 billion Euros in aid and loaned 2.8 billion Euros to Tunisia. The EU also accounts for 72% of Tunisian exports and 68% of its imports. Meanwhile, Tunisia offers cheap labour for European investments. Given this general picture, the EU paved the 'advanced status' of Tunisia in the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2010 (European Commission, 2010).

Tunisia had been the official home to the PLO since it was forced out from Lebanon in the wake of Israel's invasion from 1982 to 1994. Ben Ali's support of the Palestinian issue earned the respect of the Arab world. Ben Ali played an important role in the Arab Maghrebi Union (AMU) and the Organization of African Unity, serving as president of these unions and encouraging economic cooperation between Europe and Africa (Jhazbhay, 2004: 162-163). However, the relations—especially economic policies aimed at enhancing economic relations among African countries—have regressed in recent years.

Authoritarian domestic policies were ignored because of Ben Ali's foreign policy and did not face any opposition. An important reason for Ben Ali's continued authoritarian rule was his foreign policies, which were previously discussed.

2010 Uprisings

Considering the developments before and after the 2009 presidency and parliamentary elections, the process of the Tunisian uprisings in 2010 can be appropriately analyzed. The leader of the Progressive Democratic Party, Ahmed Najib Chebbi, was a candidate in the presidential elections, but ultimately withdrew by claiming Ben Ali's fake legitimacy. Meanwhile, the candidate of the Democratic Forum of Labor and Liberties, Secretary General Mustapha Ben Jafar, was disqualified based on new regulations in electoral law in 2008. Ben Jafar subsequently supported the candidate from the Movement Ettajdid (Renewal): Ahmed Ibrahim. In the 2009 elections, many political actors including Ahmed Ibrahim accused Ben Ali of rigging the elections and limiting and suppressing oppositions' election campaigns (Human Rights Watch, 2009). Ben Ali became president once more by winning 89.62% of the votes (Election Guide, 2009). The Progressive Democratic Party and Democratic Forum of Labor and Liberties protested the election results as some candidates were disqualified. The protests continued in municipal elections in May 2010 (Magharebia News, 2010; European Forum, 2011). The rising suppression of the opposition and continued arrest of members of en Nahda during 2010 ultimately affected the public opinion.

Mohammed Buazizi, a street vendor, was harassed by local police officers who confiscated his wares because he did not have the appropriate vending permit. Buazizi went to

the local governor to complain, but found that nobody would listen to his grievances; finally, he set himself on fire in front of a local government building and died. Through his actions, Buazizi did not just set fire to himself, but also sparked Tunisian unrest. Riots started near Sidi Buzid and spread to Kasserine and Thala on 24 December. Ben Ali criticized the opposition by arguing that the uprisings were politicized on 28 December. Although Ben Ali defined the uprisings as terroristic activities, on 10 January 2011 he declared that 300,000 people would be employed in 2012 to stop the uprisings. Tunis became involved in the wave of uprisings on 12 January, the day Ben Ali discharged the Minister of Interior and promised the release of protesters who had been arrested. However the number of deaths and injured continued to increase. On 13 January, Ben Ali showed himself for the third times since the protests had started and stated that he have withdrawn the order to shoot protesters, repealed the internet bans, and refused candidacy for president in the 2014 elections. Meanwhile, the number of deaths increased to 80. At the same time, the army was charged with securing the country, and a curfew was announced.

The Chief of Staff of the Tunisian Armed Forces, Rachid Ammar, affirmed that the army would not shoot unarmed protesters. At this point, the protests diverged to properties of rich Tunisians and the family members of Ben Ali. On 14 January, a state of emergency was declared, and Ben Ali decided to invoke an early election by cancelling the government. At the same time, the police forces were shooting protesters, which hardened the reaction of the public. Ben Ali ultimately fled to Saudi Arabia.

The end of Ben Ali's rule did not end the protest in Tunisia. After Ben Ali fled the country, Mebazaa, the spokesman of the parliamentary, was appointed as the interim president and Mohamed Ghannouchi, former prime minister, was appointed as prime minister and tasked with forming an interim government. On 18 January, the protests continued against the interim government, which included the former ministers of Ben Ali in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Interior Ministry, Defense Ministry, and Finance Ministry. The opposition parties were only in weak posts. This situation raised suspicions about Mebazaa and Ghannouchi, who had promised a national unity government. In addition, Ghannouchi told the exiled opposition leaders and members of en Nahda and the Republic Congress not to return to the country until the legal regulations regarding their conditions had been clarified. This call for opposition without identifying any specific date for legal regulations was perceived as political tactic. Ghannouchi announced that presidential and parliamentary elections would be held within six months and defended his new unity government and the ministers who served under the ousted president Ben Ali, defining them as "needed clean hands". His decision to

retrain these old names in the interim government angered many. On 23 January, Hannibal TV was closed down after broadcasting an interview with a Communist Party leader; the owner of the channel was arrested, suggesting that Ghannouchi and the interim government were no different than Ben Ali. All these reasons created a legitimacy crisis for the interim government and caused more protests. Attempts to solve this legitimacy crisis, such as mass resignations among the Constitutional Democratic Rally, did not work. Ghannouchi promised to cut all ties with former authorities could not allay the angry crowds in Tunisia. The process that started with the resignation of some ministers ended with the collapse of the government on 27 January. On the same day, Ghannouchi announced a new government that has no name from the Constitutional Democratic Rally, existing of 12 new independent ministers. However, protests targeted Ghannouchi and Mebazaa until their resignations.

The Factors Behind the Uprisings in Tunisia

The political experience since the beginning of Tunisia's independence is crucial for explaining recent developments. Tunisia has been governed almost exclusively by an authoritarian regime—one party, one leader—since its independence on 1956, although it experienced relative political freedom between 1987 and 1990. This later era became an important physiological determinant for the Tunisian political opposition movements. Yet these political opposition movements and parties have not actively participated in protests; thus, it can be assumed that the change after unrest would open the way to opposition parties in the future.

Ben Ali's rule ended with an adverse change in the balance of power based on his foreign policy, economic policies, and domestic policies. Since the beginning of the unrest, economic factors have been highlighted; however, using only these economic determinants—although important—would not be enough to explain the events. Bouazizi's death mobilized the masses. However, some important parameters were hidden behind this dramatic event. Ben Ali's foreign and economy policies did not significantly change until recently, and France's support of Ben Ali until the very end further proves this. General Rachid Ammar, chief of staff of the Tunisian army, played a significant role in recent events when he refused to order his troops to fire on protesters; with his decision, the *de facto* support of the army behind Ben Ali was removed (The Independent, 2011). The attitude of the Tunisian Army during the uprising and their disobedience to Ben Ali's orders invigorated Tunisians to continue their protests and make them feel the support of army with them. General Ammar's active and important role should not be underestimated in this context.

In addition to the changes in balance of domestic politics, WikiLeaks' release of diplomatic cables has to be considered. Cables published by WikiLeaks have revealed that the American ambassador in Tunis, in dispatches dated June 2008 and July 2009, wrote that "corruption is growing" in Tunisia and that the family of President Ben Ali, his wife and their families are "often defined [as] a quasi-mafia". The family's economic links, especially those of Ben Ali's wife, "causes the greatest anger" and "everyone knows that this is the problem" but cannot solve it. According to the cables dated 23 June 2008 and 17 July 2009, "France and Italy avoid putting pressure on the Tunis government" and greater commitment is needed "to persuade European partners to intensify their efforts to accelerate reforms from the Tunis government". Furthermore, "while some European countries (the United Kingdom and Germany) agree with USA, key countries such as France and Italy have avoided putting pressure on Tunis. These three countries should make efforts to ensure that they do so". These cables enraged the public. The US, Germany, and United Kingdom exerted political pressure on France and Italy regarding reforms in Tunisia. Such determinants helped successfully oust Ben Ali.

The main factor that sustained the continuity for Ben Ali's rule until 2011 was the domestic power balances which have not been seriously pose a threat to Ben Ali's power. The crucial institutions in the country continued to support Ben Ali during the ongoing protests, thereby suppressing the opposition. However, the recent protests have gained the support of both the public and the main state institutions.

The Impact of Political Islam

Another important point for Tunisia and the region is the rise of political Islam, which gained power in Tunisia and spread fear in the region. Some of the Arab media praised this option while others tried to reproduce the fear and suspicion of Political Islam by referring to Iran's Islamic Revolution. The main reason for this was the return of en Nahda to Tunisian political life under the leadership of Rachid Ghannouchi. When the activities of en Nahda were abolished in Tunisia, the leader of the movement lived in Great Britain for almost 20 years. The return of Ghannouchi on 30 January 2011 created a panic in some parts. Yet Ghannouchi's en Nahda paralleled the Justice and Development Party of Turkey, stating that the party has respected multi-vocality, democracy, and human rights. Many experts mention that en Nahda has stayed a conservative political line. In particular, Egyptian experts compare en Nahda's approaches with those of the Muslim Brotherhood in the context of politics and attributed positive values to en Nahda. It is important that en Nahda defined itself as a

conservative political movement in the Western style. On the other side it should be noted that the secular tendencies are quite strong in the country. In this respect the prediction that the parties would balance each other is not a fair option in the Tunisian case.

The arguments on political Islam present different tension for the region. In the Middle East, which transformed rapidly, the regional political actors reacted to any status quo possibilities. The recent situation in Iraq and Lebanon, uprisings in many regional countries, sharpening of security perceptions in the Gulf region, and Iran's regional goals have played important roles in this situation.

The Political Actors and Possibilities

The impact and role of the political parties have been seen as limited in the protests that emerged Buzid and spread nationwide. A new era began for the opposition with the abolishment of the former Constitutional Democratic Rally. Every political actor played a role parallel to their domain in the public in shaping the future of the country. Leading political actors like the Renaissance Party (*en Nahda*), The Congress for the Republic, Tunisian Workers' Communist Party, Green Party for Progress, Leftist Socialist Party, and the Tunisian Patriotic and Democratic Labour Party were involved in the political struggle during this transition process (BBC News, 2011).

The policies of the Renaissance Party (*en Nahda*) and Rachid Ghannouchi—the most arguable political actors in the post-Ben Ali period—will have serious impacts on the country and region. In 1970, *en Nahda* Movements was founded by Ghannouchi and 'Abd al-Fatah Mourou, who joined the government-sponsored Quranic Preservation Society (QPS), which aimed to rebuild the “Arab-Muslim character” of Tunisian society. In this way, Ghannouchi had the opportunity to call and spread his ideas, thereby starting his political life. In 1978, after the Tunisian army brutally suppressed opposition and the pressure on Islamists rose, the base and scope of the Islamist movement in Tunisia was expanded. The Quranic Preservation Society subsequently became influential by focusing on economic and political issues; in addition, the Islamic emphasis was able to build student unions as strong as leftist counters. Ghannouchi called upon workers, stating “It is not enough to pray five times a day and fast in order to be worthy of Islam... Islam is activism... it is on the side of the poor and the oppressed”. He moved to create a major force in the UGTT over the next five years (Jones, 1988: 21). Ghannouchi and friends' success stemmed from the suppression policies of the Destourien Socialist Party against labour unions and leftist opposition since 1956. These policies pushed some opposition to gather around the Quranic Preservation Society while

bringing forth the Quranic Preservation Society as an important political actor in Tunisia, where the other opposition movements were weakened. In April 1981, Bourguiba announced political liberalization to open up his one-party political system. In this respect, the Quranic Preservation Society headed by Ghannouchi requested a government license to set up a political party, the Islamic Tendency Movement (*Harikat al-Ittijah al-Islami*), but was not able to prevent its members and Ghannouchi from being arrested. The developments in 1981 marked the beginning of both a transition period within *en Nahda* and a coalition with some leftist groups. Non-Islamist organizations such as the Communist Party, the Socialist Democrats, the *Rassemblement Socialiste*, and the Tunisian League of Human Rights criticized the arrests and demanded the detainees be released. An alliance similar to that of the 1980s has been built in Tunisia today. The movement led by Ghannouchi was interpreted from a different perspective by the leftist and secular groups of that period primarily due to Ghannouchi's commitment to non-violence, advocacy of dialogue, and cooperation with other opposition parties as well as the relatively moderate orientation of the Islamic Tendency Movement. Cooperation among the leftist, secular, and Islamist opposition was deepened after the Islamic Tendency Movement's journals *Al-Ma'arifa* and *Al-Mujtamaa* were banned and non-Islamists groups opened their journals to voice Islamist views (Jones, 1988: 22). It is important to highlight the historical roots of such cooperation among Islamists and non-Islamist groups to argue the future of Tunisia.

The 1984 Bread Riots forced the government to moderate its policies. In this respect, many members of the Islamic Tendency Movement were released after the 1984 amnesty for political prisoners. On the other hand, the pressure of the state over the social life increased. These pressures strengthened the base of the Islamic Tendency Movement (Jones, 1988: 22). In 1986, Ghannouchi was banned from the mosques, prohibited from teaching, public speaking, and publishing his writings, and forbidden to travel abroad. Refusing to obey these bans, Ghannouchi continued lecturing and writing; he was arrested after a mosque sermon, which fired up the student riots in the country that were already tense because of economic stagnation and political suppression. This development raised the state suppression on Islamists. Ultimately, 3,000 Islamists were arrested in alleged links to Iran's Islamic Republic (Jones, 1988: 23). The pressure on political Islam and leftist movements under Bourguiba's rule strengthened the Islamists, but the Islamists have not been marginalized or resorted to violence. This is a critical point that separated *en Nahda* from other Islamic movements in the region.

A short liberal period took place in Tunisia when Ben Ali's rule started with a bloodless coup in 1987. Hereupon, the Islamic Tendency Movement deleted the word "Islamic" from his name and renamed Hizb al-Nahda the Renaissance Party. Nevertheless, the party could not get official approval, and the members of the party participated in the election with independent candidates. En Nahda became the largest opposition bloc in this election (Esposito and Piscatori, 1991: 131). In light of the limitations in electoral law, this success was significant. Not surprisingly, the success of en Nahda was recognized by the Constitutional Democratic Rally and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, leading to suppression of the opposition once again. The journal of en Nahda *Al-Faj* was closed down, veil bans returned (Esposito and Piscatori, 1991: 432), many members of en Nahda were arrested, and Ghannouchi was exiled. Ghannouchi continued his political activities in London, returning to Tunisia on 30 January 2011.

Although the Nahda Party was founded in order to promote an Islamic lifestyle, due to the oppression it faced during the Bourguiba and Ben Ali periods, today it is regarded as a "Western-style conservative party". Rashid Gannouchi's remarks about the JDP and his alliance with leftist and secular groups strengthened this view. Looking at its history, the Nahda Party's non-violent methods should be considered in this respect.

Cumhuriyet Kongresi, which was founded in 2001 by Moncef Marzuki, an opposition leader in exile, is another prominent actor. Marzuki is a leading human rights activist in Tunisia who focused particularly on torture and human rights breaches in prisons; he was arrested many times on charges of working with illegal Islamist groups (Amnesty International, 2011). When the Cumhuriyet Kongresi was banned in 2002, Marzuki went into exile in France and carried on his political activities there. Marzuki returned to Tunisia in 21 January 2011 and became a candidate for presidency (Al Arabiya, 2011). Although Marzuki and Gannouchi represent different political factions, they stood together in the 18 October Movement. Moreover, Marzuki made positive remarks about the Nahda Party.

The Tunisian Communist Labour Party, which is a Marxist-Leninist Party, was founded in 1986. TKIP is led by Hama Hammami, who entered politics during the 1972 student movements. TKIP was banned in 1987, and Hammami and its members were arrested. Since then, TKIP members have been arrested numerous times, most recently on 12 January 2011. Hammami, Muhammed Mzem, and Amar Amroussia were detained, but released on 18 January 2011 (Al Jazeera, 2011). TKIP is one of the rare political parties that actively participated in the popular uprising. It abandoned its anti-Nahda rhetoric in the 1990s and

gained a moderate position. It joined the 18 October Movement founded in 2005, thereby becoming allied with Nahda (On Islam.Net, 2011).

TKIP's shift towards a moderate position in the 1990s caused a rift within the party. In 2006, after TKIP's alliance with Nahda, a clique led by Muhammed Kilani left TKIP and established the Leftist Socialist Party. It was banned during Ben Ali's rule. Tunisia's Democratic and Patriotic Labour Party, led by Abdurrezzak Hammami, applied for legal status on 29 April 2005; however, it was rejected. This is a Marxist party. Another political party that was banned is the Green Tunisia Party founded by Abdulkadir Zeytuni. It applied for legal status in April 2004; however, it was rejected as another environmentalist party already had a license. In addition, it is a member of the European Green Federation. The party stands for environmentalist policies, human rights and gender equality, social justice and democracy, anti-violence, and anti-discrimination policies (Epoch Times, 2011)

Legal parties currently exist in Tunisian politics that were active during Ben Ali's rule. The most prominent is the Socialist Democrats Movement (MDS). When Bourguiba introduced a liberal opening in 1981 and ended the single-party system, the MDS was founded and became the first opposition party in Tunisia to be acknowledged by the state. In fact, it separated from the neo-Destours. When Ben Ali noted discontent in the MDS, he arrested some of its leaders in order to weaken it. It won no seats in 1981 elections but won 13 seats in 1999.

The Popular Union Party was founded in 1981 and became legal in 1983. As a socialist party, the Popular Union Party won 7 seats in 1999, 11 seats in 2004, and 12 seats in 2009. Moreover, Muhammed Bushisha ran for presidency in 2009, but he ultimately forfeited and supported Ben Ali.

The Socialist Liberal Party was founded in 1988. Its leader is Monder Thabet. It won 9 seats in 2009. The Progressive Democrat Party was founded in 1988. The most prominent figure of the party is Ahmed Najib Shabbi. In the 2009 presidential elections, Ahmed Najib Shabbi became a candidate, but withdrew after he accused Ben Ali of "fake legitimacy". The Democratic Labour and Freedom Forum (FDLT) is another prominent party of Tunisia. Its leader, Mustafa Bin Cafer, is a well-known human rights activist who entered politics in 1978 with the MDS. In 1994, Bin Cafer left MDWS and established the FDLT, which became legal in 2002. During Bin Ali's rule, the Progressive Democratic Party and FDLT constituted the legal opposition.

The Movement Ettajdid, Movement for Renewal, was founded as an office of the France Communist Party in Tunisia in 1919. In 1963, many of its members were arrested. In

1993, it changed its name to The Movement Ettajdid. The Progressive Green Party was founded in 2005 and legalized in 2006. Its leader is Mongi Hamassi.

Conclusion

Despite these parties, many more have official approval or are waiting for approval. In light of the increased parties, Tunisia's elections were postponed from 24 July to 16 October. Considering that Tunisia will have its first free elections in history, the high number of parties is a direct result of the suppression of political life since 1956. On the other hand, it is not possible for all parties to gain seats in the parliamentary regardless of how the electoral law is regulated. In this respect, fragmentation of the parties would be an advantage for the biggest parties and groups. In addition, the Islamists and secularists could establish a coalition to secure their recent political gains and avoid ideological objections. This option can create a healthy political transition for the MENA region, where political discontent has been increasing. The elections and aftermath offer crucial importance as well as opportunity for both Tunisia and the region in terms of political transition.

END NOTES

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Alternatif Politika Dergisi, bir grup akademisyen tarafından; disiplinler arası çalışmalara ilişkin sürekli yayınların azlığı nedeniyle doğan ihtiyacı karşılamak üzere oluşturulmuş, dört ayda bir yayınlanan hakemli bir dergidir. Siyaset bilimini merkez alarak, kültürel çalışmalar, medya, uluslararası ilişkiler, sosyoloji, sosyal psikoloji, ekonomi politik ve antropoloji gibi disiplinleri de kapsayan yayınlar yapmayı amaçlayan dergi, adı geçen alanların her boyutuyla ilgili kuramsal ve analitik çalışmaların yanı sıra, kitap incelemelerine de yer vermektedir.

Alternatif Politika Dergisi'nin amacı, yayınladığı konularda hem bilimsel çalışmalar için akademik zemin hazırlamak, hem de söz konusu görüşlerin paylaşılmasını sağlayarak yeni açılımlar yaratmaktır. Bu bağlamda, teorik çalışmalara olduğu kadar, alan çalışmalarına da yer vermek amacındadır. Çalışmalarınızı Alternatif Politika'ya bekliyoruz.

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