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WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN TUNISIA AND MOROCCO
SINCE 2011. A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

La partecipazione politica delle donne in Tunisia e Marocco dal 2011. Un'analisi comparativa.

[Tesi in inglese]

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Politicamente, ci sono stati molti cambiamenti questi ultimi anni sulla sponda Sud del Mediterraneo. I popoli hanno rivendicato più libertà e più democrazia, e tra di loro le donne hanno fatto particolarmente sentire la propria voce. L'obiettivo di questo lavoro è di analizzare le ragioni per cui la Tunisia e il Marocco, due paesi con storie e culture relativamente simili, non hanno reagito nello stesso modo. I dati per questo studio provengono da rapporti di organizzazioni internazionali, la stampa locale e internazionale, studiosi specialisti dell'area e di interviste con donne che vivono nella regione. Anche se le due società sono abbastanza conservatrici, la Tunisia ha una lunga tradizione più favorevole alle donne, e un sistema educativo più efficace. In secondo luogo, il tipo di regime politico costituisce una delle ragioni per cui le donne marocchine hanno meno opportunità, perché la democrazia tunisina è più aperta alle novità. Però gli uomini in entrambi paesi tengono la grande maggioranza del potere politico formale. Infine, le donne trovano un terreno più accogliente per la loro partecipazione nelle organizzazioni della società civile, benché le loro azioni in Marocco siano più limitate. I due modi principali per migliorare la partecipazione politica delle donne è permettere a tutte di acquisire un'educazione, e ristabilire la fiducia tra i cittadini e le autorità politiche.

Parole chiave: partecipazione politica; diritti della donna; Tunisia; Marocco; Maghreb; Primavera araba; società civile; sessismo; empowerment; femminismo; psefologia; elezioni; riforma costituzionale; LGBT

INTRODUCTION

Political participation in authoritarian or dictatorial countries was recently put in the spotlight when the events now known as “The Arab Spring” occurred. The expression “Arab Spring” refers to a wave of protests, uprisings and armed rebellions that spread across the Arab World in early 2011 (Manfreda, 2014). It started with non-conventional forms of political participation: the event that triggered the first mobilizations in Tunisia was a protest suicide against corruption and the rising prices of commodities. Immediately after Mohamed Bouazizi's death, Tunisia witnessed massive spontaneous public rallies of people who did not know each other and did not belong to the same social circles or organizations.

The unrest spread with more or less success to a number of other countries in the region. Two countries with a similar background, Tunisia and Morocco, are interesting to compare. They have analogous colonization and decolonization experiences, an Arabic and French speaking, mostly Muslim population, and are located in the Maghreb. Economically, they rely heavily on tourism and have developing, rather weak industries. Their main difference is their demographic size: 33 million inhabitants for Morocco and 11 million for Tunisia.

Their differences are a good way to understand the two society models they embody. The inhabitants of the Maghreb, in North Africa, form a distinct sub-region where ideas, cultural events and phenomena circulate relatively fast. One country can serve as an inspiration for the other potential emulation between them. Modern communications (internet and cable TV) help the information get around. Social movements have tended to move across boundaries recently. The political participation of women in particular has to be analyzed. Since 2011, they have been at the forefront of the political upheavals, and several countries including Morocco and Tunisia have actually changed their laws and their constitution in order to better include this often-forgotten half of their population.

The proximity, besides the obvious geographical one, can be explained by reviewing briefly the countries' history.

1. Brief history

A similar colonial history until 1956

Both Morocco and Tunisia used to be French protectorates: Tunisia signed the protectorate agreement in 1881 (Bardo Treaty) and Morocco in 1912 (Fès Treaty). They also became fully independent states at the same moment, in March 1956. France took the important decisions when it came to administering its protectorates, and organized them according to French rules and habits. In order to structure the countries' administration and judicial system, many laws and regulations were passed in the decades of French domination. Some laws from that period remain nowadays (Mahfoudh & Delphy, 2014).

It is the case, for instance, of a homophobic law in Tunisia, that was created and implemented during the French rule, and still has legal consequences to this day. The criminalization of homosexuality in Tunisia actually began with the passage of the 1913 Penal Code, imposed by the authorities during the French protectorate. It still exists in article 230 of the Penal Code (Khouili, 2017). After their respective independence, the countries chose different options when it comes to political organization.

Different paths taken since their independence

Constitutionally speaking, the regimes differ in their nature: Morocco remained a monarchy, with its king being given more power since independence. It has indeed been ruled by powerful monarchs since 1956: Mohammed V, Hassan II and Mohammed VI – although it now claims to be a constitutional monarchy. Tunisia, conversely, has been a republic since its independence, with its successive leaders being in theory elected democratically. Habib Bourguiba was the president from 1959 to 1987, and Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali from 1987 to 2011: they each always got at least 90% of the votes when running for president.

Despite this constitutional difference, the two countries were similarly viewed by the rest of the world as stable regimes with strongmen in charge, until the early 2000s (Marlowe, 1999; The New Arab, 2017).

An element that Tunisian governments have been particularly proud of since the country's independence is the emphasis on women's rights. The country wanted to be seen as a trailblazer in the region when it passed the "Personal Status Code" in 1957. This code granted much more freedom to Tunisian women than to most of its regional counterparts. The focus on women's rights was often presented to Western governments and international organizations as a proof of modernity.

In Morocco, women's right to participate freely and fully in the country's political life can be traced to the Kingdom's first constitution, promulgated in 1962. (MAP, 2015)

Liberalization since the 1990s

Although a much wider kind of liberalization took place in Morocco in the late 1990s, when Mohammed VI succeeded his father, Hassan II already started relaxing the way his country was run at the beginning of the 1990s. In part due to Western pressure, he freed more than 800 political prisoners. He also allowed a constitutional referendum in 1995, which created a two-chamber parliament (Marlowe, 1999). Mohammed VI succeeded his father Hassan II as King of Morocco and Commander of the faithful in 1999. He immediately promised to liberalize the regime, notably by allowing more newspapers to be freely published, and by freeing a few political prisoners (Vermeren, 2009).

In Tunisia, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali wanted to be seen as the reformer and modernizer of his country. During the 1990s, he reformed the Personal Status Code so it would better protect women and give them a few more rights (e.g. transmitting their citizenship to their children).

Despite these stated liberalization efforts in the two countries, active social movements, protesting the way society was run, have appeared in the last ten

years. Protests have erupted with Gafsa in Morocco and voices have started emerging in peripheral Tunisia, notably to protest poverty and the lack of jobs. The Arab Spring, stemming from these demands, started in December 2010 in Tunisia. According to observers, Morocco is not considered as having gone through a revolution, even though the movement in the region did boost change in the country (Guidère, 2012).

2. Focus in the media and in the scientific literature on the role of women in the Arab Spring

Women's participation in the Arab spring was particularly highlighted by the media and by the scientific literature (see Annex 1). One of the reasons for the interest might be that women became more visible than usual through their political participation: they wrote blogs, organized and participated in protests, created NGOs. Numerous reports were made centering on women's activism, with some bloggers like Lina Ben Mhenni becoming internationally famous. Although the events are quite recent (this work being written in 2017), many academic articles and books have been written solely about women's experiences and participation in the Arab Spring. This might be due to the fact that Arab women are not always very visible, and suffer from stereotypes: people would expect them to stay at home, and be submissive. The contradiction with the facts probably intrigued a lot of westerners.

3. What political participation means

When researchers and journalists speak about political participation, what do they mean? Political participation, according to Hague and Harrop (2013), "refers to any of the many ways in which people seek to influence the composition or policies of their government". The ways people can participate in the political life of their country (or even of the world) are very varied, and can be categorized into two main forms: conventional and unconventional. The conventional participation generally includes voting through an official electoral system, campaigning and reaching out to potential voters (Verba 1978). The unconventional one however would be mostly non-electoral: a potential refusal to vote, boycotting, blogging,

or protesting for instance. The more or less organized results produced by unconventional participation consist mainly in interest groups and social movements.

Hague and Harrop note that while it is not self-evident that the more participation, the better (a relatively apathetic population can be content and choose not to participate), conversely it usually indicates a lack of trust in the institutions and in politicians. It seems to have been the case in Morocco and Tunisia, at least until recently.

One of the way to analyze political participation is to identify political resources and political interests, or motivations.

Studies around the world have shown that it is very common for women to get involved primarily to fight for their rights (UN Women, 2012). However, a distinction must be done between women's political participation and the fight for women's rights. Women's political participation can be borne through the need to obtain more rights, and can be hindered by a lack of rights, but women involved in politics do not necessarily structure their politics around women's rights.

During the course of my research, I interviewed two Tunisian women and a Moroccan woman, who helped me understand what the situation was like in their country. I will use what they told me as a primary source and examples of specific situations.

A key concept when talking about women's political participation is women's empowerment. According to the United Nations, it has five components: "women's sense of self-worth; their right to have and to determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally". (United nations population information network – POPIN, 2017)

In two similarly conservative countries, where Islam still holds an important role, it is interesting to analyze what made Tunisia be ahead of Morocco in terms of

women's political participation, and even more since 2011. What makes Tunisian women seem to have more agency than their Moroccan counterparts? Can it be solely attributed to legal and institutional differences? To what extent have regime types influenced women's political participation in Tunisia and Morocco since 2011?

Part of the explanation of the difference between women's participation could be found in cultural reasons. This participation caught the attention of observers because the role women played often contrasted with traditional expectations from their society, their **culture**. Rising levels of education (for women, but also men) and urbanization might explain it.

There have been tangible **constitutional and legal changes** in both countries when it comes to women, their rights and their participation in politics since 2011, so it is interesting to explore why these changes came to be and to what extent they have been implemented.

Women have found new ways to get involved outside the institutional realm. The influence of **civil society** is growing, but the two countries have utterly different ways of managing citizens' organizations and listening to their demands.

Since one of the main objectives of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (and before that, the Millennium Development Goals) is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, especially in developing countries, it is essential to investigate what factors are at play when and whether women participate politically. That in turn could help determine what kind of efforts countries could make in order to achieve this empowerment goal.

CHAPTER I: TWO SOCIETIES WITH CONSERVATIVE ATTITUDES TOWARDS WOMEN

In both Morocco and Tunisia, women often have a hard time existing in the public sphere and in the public space. This is due to sexist reactions when it comes to women's expressing themselves and their opinions, but also to social factors.

1. Conservative societies not very sensitive to women's rights

Globally, it was only in the 20th century that women started to have equal rights compared to men. Across the world, in the business, political and personal fields, there still are inequalities to this day. Women are still considered "non-brothers" in a system that was conceived for "brothers". Women are often depoliticized, and linked to their animal nature. Rousseau said that "The male is only a male at certain moments; the female all her life" (Emile, 1762). According to him and generations of male thinkers afterwards, women's perceived animality sends them back to their inability to work in the political sphere (Sénac, 2017). This lack of consideration for women as actors in politics can be partially explained by their status in society, and the way they are treated.

High prevalence of violence against women

In international organizations, "the data and analysis of women's political representation, women's economic opportunities, and violence against women are treated separately".(True 2012). However, the intersection of these three elements is essential to understand how and why women participate politically. In both Morocco and Tunisia, violence against women is quite widespread, which in turn has a huge impact on their political participation. Someone who feels threatened when walking on the street, or who cannot choose the way she dresses because it could threaten her safety, is not likely to feel like a full citizen in own country. (LET, 2015)

Statistics on the matter are particularly telling: in Morocco, the Haut-Commissariat au Plan says that 40,6% of women who live in an urban environment have been victim at least once of an act of violence in the last year. (Ngomo, 2017). Violence is widespread both in the public and the family spheres. Young brides can be beaten or humiliated if their new husband suspects they are not virgins. (Kadiri, 08/2017) 45,9% of Moroccan women think that a woman « should tolerate violence in order to keep the family united » (Promundo, UN Women). Recently, a young woman was sexually assaulted on a bus by four teenagers. The video of the attack went viral, but no one on the bus did anything to stop the assault. Feminist movements say it is a symbol of how women are treated in the Moroccan society. (Tel Quel, 21/08/2017) Two-thirds of sexual violence take place in the public sphere. According to sociologist Soumaya Naamane Guessous, there are historical reasons for this: until the 1960s, women were simply not allowed in the public sphere. In people's minds, a woman on the street is "a potential prey". People who lodge a complaint after having been harassed or raped are not always taken seriously, or hear guilt-inducing comments, attackers are often protected by their community. (Hadni, 2017)

The Moroccan watchdog on violence against women has denounced the lack of laws and measures to tackle the issue: marital rape still is not illegal, and the penal codes punishes adultery and out-of-wedlock intercourse (article 491 and 490). (Tabet, 2015) A new bill to fight sexual harassment is said to in the works. This means that women have very limited agency or bodily autonomy, cannot express themselves freely and are limited in where they can live, who they can date.

The situation in Tunisia is quite similar. Historically, society has been violent because of decades of state violence during the dictatorship. It was even more the case for women, because in addition to being tortured brutally, like men, they were also raped and sexually assaulted. They suffered from the social stigma attached to victims of sexual violence, as if they had become impure. The abused was directed both at women who had not been politically active, but happened to be married or related to activists, and at female activists. (Gall, 2014). According

to activist Sihem Bensedrine, there was a paradox between the regime being openly in favor of human rights, and its actions that massively violated women's rights. Furthermore, "many of the victims came from deeply religious Islamist families and so were particularly sensitive to the sexual nature of much of the abuse".

After the revolution, parliamentarians have taken the matter in their own hands, and a new, comprehensive law fighting violence against women was passed in July 2017. It removes the possibility of making minors marry their rapist, and include compensation and support for the victims (El Feki, 2017). Now, the issue is whether the law will be implemented and will deter attackers.

The LGBT community is particularly targeted by violent attackers (Lacroix, 2016) Lesbians in particular suffer from a double oppression, because of their sexual orientation and gender.

Homophobia comes from the political system, among others. The Moroccan penal code (just like the Tunisian one) criminalizes homosexuality, in its article 489. Offenders can get sent to up in three years in prison and have to pay a 1200 dirham fine.

Moroccan activist Abdellah Taia argues that since the law treats homosexual citizens as criminals, it allows the other citizens to brutalize them. When the people in power refuse to publicly condemn lynching and attacks, the general public could interpret it as an encouragement to continue (Kadiri, 2017). Following this reasoning, the social reaction is linked to the political one. This has led to a situation where victims who complain actually spend more time in prison than their attackers. In 2016 for instance, one of the victims had to spend four months in jail, while his attackers only received a two-month suspended sentence. According to Moroccan NGO Aswat, this puts LGBT people in a vulnerable position, since they cannot ask the state for protection in case of attacks.

The situation is similar in Tunisia, where article 230 of the Penal Code prohibits female and male homosexuality. According to activist Senda Benjebara (2017), the situation is even more problematic for transgender people. They cannot change their gender, have no legal access to hormones. "A lot trans women often find themselves becoming sex workers. They are constantly beaten, arrested all

the time, mainly for prostitution.” For transgender men there also are problems, but not to the same extent. In such a conservative society, gender roles have to be respected.

Given this violence against the LGBT community, when people, and women in particular, do not dare going to public places and expressing themselves, their agency is severely limited. Since their very way of living is illegal, there cannot be full political participation from them.

Public opinion that encourages women to follow tradition

Large parts of the public opinion (including women) have conservative, guilt-inducing attitudes towards women. In Morocco, while 89% of women think that women should have the right to work just like their husbands, only 55% of men agree. Both genders agree that between men and women, if there are few job opportunities, men should have the priority. Only 5% of men support equal inheritance between sons and daughter. This issue of equal inheritance also exists in Tunisia, where the law, based on the Quran, does not assure women get equal inheritance to their brother. (Tanmia, 2017)

And yet, it's not just men who support the patriarchy. Women in a regional survey of the Arab world were just as, if not more, conservative on some of these points. For example, “nearly half or more of women in Egypt, Morocco and Palestine thought that a rape victim should marry her assailant”. (El Feki, 2017)

Journalist Safa Belghith agrees that women also hold sexist views. “Some women I've spoken to are more passionate than men about those two issues and keeping the status quo. And also, these women are those who will raise men, at least in Tunisia, and actually in many places. The women will raise the men with certain ideas, and the men will reproduce what they've been told. It's a circle” (Belghith, 2017)

However, when it comes to the political world, the situation is more nuanced: 61% of men and 91% of women think that there should be more women in positions of political responsibility. (Tanmia, 2017)

An example of how women, and especially girls, are not treated as full citizens is visible in the continued existence of “maids”, or “petites bonnes”. In both countries, young girls as young as 6 or 7 are employed by wealthy families, to clean, cook and shop. Generally from a poor background, they send their wages to their families and are denied an education. According to a 2010 study, commissioned by the Collectif pour l'éradication du travail des « petites bonnes », between 60 000 and 80 000 Moroccan girls below the age of 15 were exploited in private homes across the country. These girls are paid below the minimum wage and learn no professional or educational skills. Even though the Moroccan government has vowed to act in 2016 and 2017, the situation of these minors is dire, and widely accepted by society: for poor parents it is a way of earning a little money, for wealthy families it is a way of paying little and having docile employees (Khadiri, 2017). In Tunisia, where the phenomenon also exists, a law was passed in 2016 to prevent human trafficking. Controls are hard to implement and it is not certain that the situation will change rapidly, since having young maids is a widely accepted practice in that society. (Bobin, 2017)

Public relations to gain the trust of western governments and businesses

While the governments in both countries publicly support women's rights, and parliaments have recently passed laws protecting them, it seems that at least part of the women-right supporting discourse is crafted to facilitate the relationship with Western powers. According to Tunisian activist Nadia Chaabane, “every institution uses and manipulates the “Arab Women” issue, and publicizes it in international media” (2017). In both countries, the state promoted what has been called “state feminism” or “institutional feminism”. The state preempted the topic of women's empowerment and created its own institutions (the Union nationale des femmes marocaines for instance), which was used as an excuse to prevent activists from civil society from demanding too much, and helped support the countries' institutional brand (Garcia Diaz, Belhdid).

Campaigners and activists are cautious when new bills and initiatives are launched. Governments use them for several purposes: reassure left-wingers in their own country, show foreign governments that in fact they are active on the human rights issue, and last but not least, differentiate themselves from Islamist governments, for which women’s rights are seldom a priority. (El Feki, 2017)

As a matter of fact, Morocco has an entire public relations strategy to dedicated to designing the image of an open, progressive country (Vermeren, 2017). The monarchy works in cooperation with French communication agencies, in order to attract tourists and foreign investment. Even though the country is not very progressive when it comes to women’s rights or fighting violence against women, having tourists feel safe is a priority (Brahimi, 2017).

2. The systems are not favorable to women’s empowerment

The media and men in power perpetuate gender stereotypes

International studies have shown that women in Moroccan and Tunisian media (press and TV) are much less present than their male counterparts. That was true both when accounting for women interviewed as eye witnesses, experts and journalists.

	People in the news		Overall reporters	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Morocco	20%	80%	37%	63%
Tunisia	19%	81%	61%	39%

Table 1: People in the news and reporters, by sex, Global Media Monitoring Project, 2015

This table, put together by the Global Media Monitoring Project, shows that except for the proportion of TV and radio female reporters in Tunisia, women are always vastly underrepresented in Moroccan and Tunisian media.

According to left-wing Tunisian politician Jounedi Abdeljawad, media are partly to blame for the deficit in women’s political participation. “Given the fact that

politicians usually become famous thanks to media exposure, the media play an important role in promoting (or not) women". Party leaders often decide who to put at the top of ballot lists based on popularity and name recognition. (Boukhatia, 2016)

Even though women have become more active in society, and are better represented in parliament, the media narrative around them has not kept up and still privileges traditional gender roles. Women's contributions to society are not always recognized or valued (Moghadam 2003).

This contributes to reinforcing gender stereotypes in public opinions, as female leadership is not seen as reliable or serious. Rationality, competence, and leadership, skills that are indispensable in order to run for office, are still shown as a natural masculine trait (Haweksworth 2005). Researcher Loubna Skalli investigated how the press reported on women in the 2009 local elections in Morocco. She analyzed 1,738 news items and discovered that women were present in less than one percent of all articles. This proportion, and the way women-related topics were written, "undermines the credibility of women as political agents".

Men in power are also responsible for supporting gender stereotypes not favorable to women's empowerment and thus political participation.

Whatever lifestyle women choose, powerful men often find fault with. Conservative men openly disavow progressive and liberal women. Other men who call themselves modern discriminate against women because they wear a hijab. Journalist Safa Belghith recalls how she was discriminated against by a university professor. "This professor really hated the hijab for some reason. He said, "you know, even if you succeed in the written exam, you will be failed at the oral exam. I am on the jury, and I will make sure that you don't pass. Because you don't represent Tunisian women." Which is absurd, because so many of us wear hijabs now, but he wanted to make a division between women. They play on these divisions". He said that between two equal candidates, he would favor the one who didn't wear a hijab, because he knew she shared his ideological beliefs (2017). Often, the men currently in power, running administrations were

already there under the previous regime. It had a strict policy of discriminating against hijab-wearing women, and treating them as submissive and lacking agency. The persistence of these stereotypes among people who can hire new recruits for the state and educate the new generation of elites can discourage women from religious backgrounds to participate politically to the life of their country.

The education of girls is problematic but improving

Education is indispensable to be able to participate politically: without it, people are unable to read and decipher political programs or read contrasting and critical opinions in the press. It is therefore more difficult to form their own opinion. Schools also educate young children to political citizenship through civic education, and teach them values necessary to understand their country's political system (Quintelier, 2008).

Tunisia had low literacy rates among its population until recently. In Morocco, it is still the case. In both countries, the situation is worse for women, particularly those over 65 years old.

In Tunisia, women's literacy rates have grown steadily since the 1980s, from 38% in 1985 to 72% in 2015. (See graphs below) Young women in particular are almost completely literate (95.8% for women aged between 15 and 24 in 2015), but only 24% of women over 65 are able to read, which represents 31 points less than men. At the university level, women represent 62% of all students.

This can be seen as one of the explanations for the Arab Spring and the increasing political participation of women in the Tunisian society: with time, women are now more likely to understand political platforms, create their own, plan and organize events. They are more likely to have acquired skills useful for political participation, either through higher education or through a qualified job.

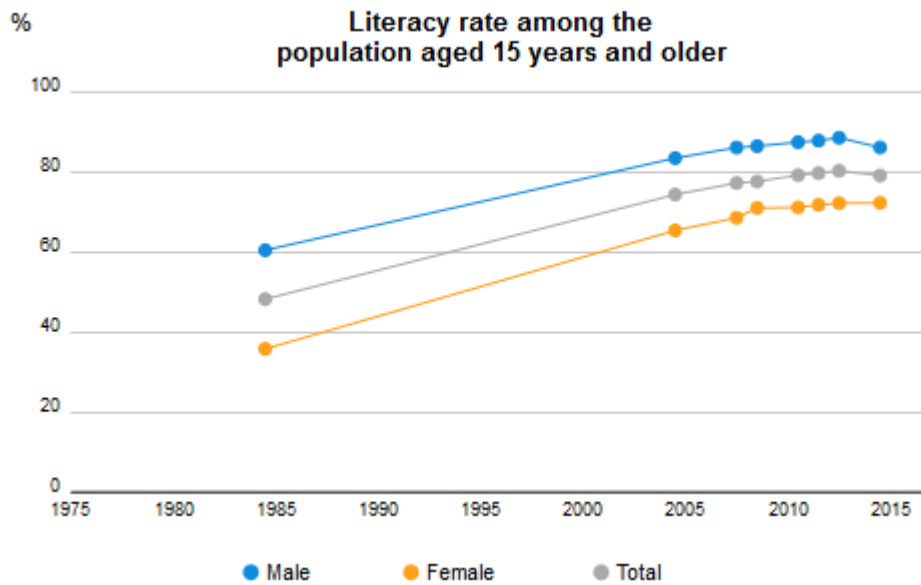


Figure 1: Tunisia, Literacy rate among the population aged 15 years and older, UNESCO, 2015

	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	
Literacy rate (%)				
15-24 years	96.21	96.61	95.8	(2014)
15 years and older	79.04	86.06	72.22	(2014)
65 years and older	39.77	55.79	24.38	(2014)

Figure 2: Tunisia, Literacy rates according to age and gender in 2014, UNESCO, 2014

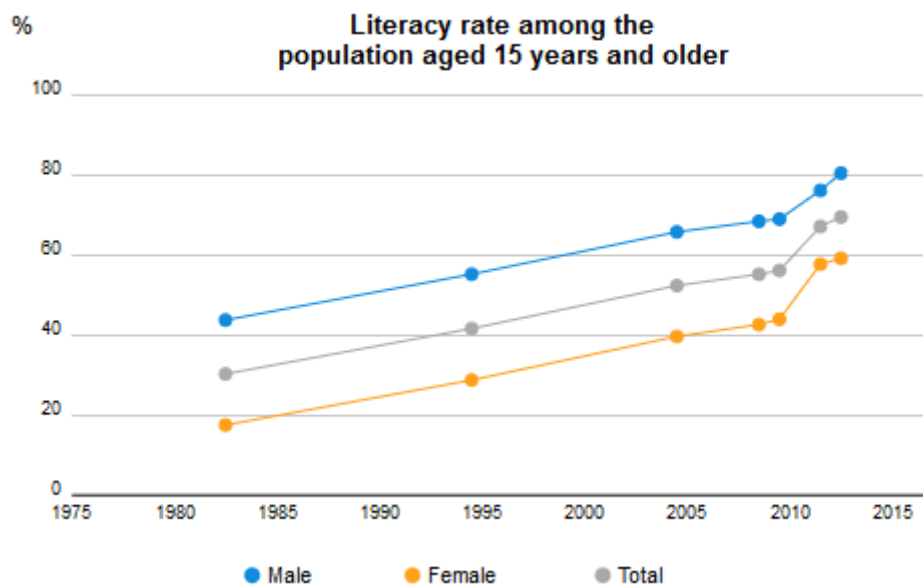


Figure 3: Morocco, Literacy rate among the population aged 15 years and older, UNESCO, 2015

	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	
Literacy rate (%)				
15-24 years	91.22	94.63	87.78	(2012)
15 years and older	69.43	80.38	59.13	(2012)
65 years and older	32.75	49.73	17.66	(2012)

Figure 4: Morocco, Literacy rates according to age and gender in 2014, UNESCO, 2014

In Morocco, numbers have also gone up, but still 40% of the female population was not able to read in 2012. Young women were the most literate, at 87.7% among those aged 15 to 24, which was 3 points below men the same age. When it comes to older women (65+), the situation is completely different: 17.6% are literate, 32 point behind men from the same generation. At the university level, although women represent 48% of all university students, they represent less than 20% of doctoral students. (Ministry of Education, 2017)

Morocco's rural female illiteracy rate is 41.9 percent (Haut-Commissariat au Plan, 2014). It has a particular impact on the Amazigh minority, since most Amazigh women live in rural, remote areas of the country.

The lower rates of literacy in the Moroccan population and particularly among women can partly explain why women are not more active politically.

The status quo favors men over women in social and economic situations

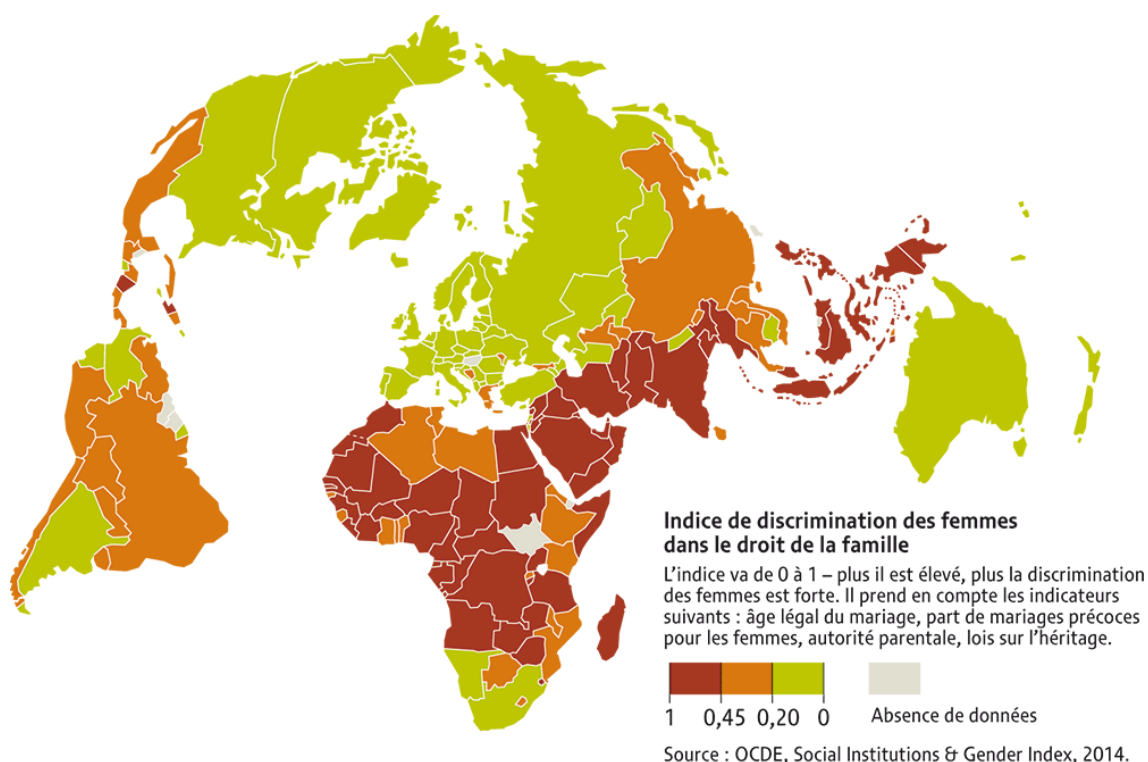


Figure 5: Women's discrimination index in family law, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, 2015

Muslim-majority countries often base at least part of their family laws on principles taken from the Quran. As a result, women are often discriminated against in terms of family matters, notably in the field of inheritance (Sergie, Johnson, 2014).

As shown in the map above, women are very disadvantaged in Morocco when it comes to family law, while Tunisian women do slightly better.

Morocco used to have a very conservative Personal Status Code, because it was based on the old tribal order. (Mahfoudh & Delphy, 2014)

In Morocco, based on Islamic principles, women inherit half the amount that their brothers get, and wives only get 1/8th of what their husband owned. Non-Muslim women cannot inherit from their Muslim husband, unless they convert to Islam. (Verdier, 2017).

According to Asma Lamrabet, a leading Muslim feminist, reforming the inheritance laws is never a priority, because it is theologically and politically incorrect. Morocco's constitution itself is ambiguous, since it poses equality as a

rule, but only to the extent that it takes into account the country's traditions, notably Islam. As a consequence, Moroccan men own 82% of all land deeds in the country. (Verdier, 2017)

In Tunisia, the recent suggestion by President Béji Caïd Essebsi to allow equal inheritance between men and women has sparked intense debate. Many citizens, especially those who identify as conservatives, have said that it should not even be a topic of discussion. Ennahdha MP Monia Ibrahim said she was shocked the president even suggested it, since it goes against very clear Islamic rules, that do not require interpretation. (Samoud, 2017) This shows that even women, who would vastly benefit from the measure, take into account other factors than their collective interest as women. In that case, religion is seen as more important. Reflecting on the current debate, Tunisian journalist Safa Belghith explains that the problem runs deep. "A lot of Tunisian women don't receive an inheritance...at all".

Islam-based family law also favors men when it comes to getting divorced or getting custody of the children for instance. (Sergie, Johnson, 2014).

An important element has to be kept in mind when reading about potential changes to the law: passing the laws and applying them are two different issues. The judges, the police and other officials in charge of enforcing them are often conservative themselves. (El Feki, 2017)

In consequence, the status quo is maintained by local and national authorities, who allow men to keep their power: Jeanne Chiche (1992) talks about "a social order that is organized to keep its patrilineal basis". Indeed, with much fewer inherited resources, and the threat of becoming a destitute if a male member of the family decides so, women have little stability in their finances. Starting a political career necessitates financial resources, that women are much less likely to have due to the laws and traditions in Morocco and Tunisia (UN Women). Even when it comes to participating politically in general, and not just running, women might be concerned about their resources: campaigning and protesting takes

time, that is not worked. Since women own very little inherited wealth, they rely on their work for survival, and getting involved politically presents a risk for their livelihood. They are also less likely to have financial resources, since a lot of their work is unpaid, for instance when they take care of their children.

3. Clear divide between urban and rural women

In both countries, rural women experience particularly tough life conditions that prevent them from participating fully in political life.

Morocco still has a large proportion of its population that lives in the countryside. There, the standards of living are usually much lower than in the cities, and not every village has running water or electricity yet. There are immense differences in the HDI between rural and urban territories. In 2014, the Moroccan government estimated that 89,5% of its population officially considered poor lived in rural areas. Besides not having financial resources, poor rural populations also have low levels of education compared to the rest of the country, and low access to health services. (Haut-Commissariat au Plan, 2016)

The female rural population lives the toughest life: besides working in the fields all day, they also have to take care of their household the rest of the time (childcare, cooking, cleaning). While this double day is quite common in many other countries, and in Morocco's cities, women in rural territories have very few things to help them, especially when a number of them do not have access to electricity (because their village is not connected or because their family cannot afford it). A lot of women can feel isolated from the modern, urban society, because if they are illiterate, they cannot read the street names for instance, which means that traveling alone is out of the question. Another major issue is controlling their fertility and learning hygiene: it is difficult to obtain information about these issues. (Dalle, 2007) Women from the Amazigh community often live in very poor conditions, because besides the issues regarding rural women, they

often only speak Tamazight, and no Arabic, which the language of government, that can distribute subsidies for instance. As education progresses in these areas, and with Tamazight being included in the national languages, this issue should progressively disappear. (Sabir, 2017)

In Tunisia, development-wise, the south has long been forgotten by the different regimes including the current one, according to journalist Safa Belghith. As an example, all the presidents have been from the coast (from urbanized areas). IDH rates are much lower in interior regions, such as Kairouan, Sidi Bouzid or Kasserine, than in coastal regions. People living there have much lower access to potable water or to a telephone network than the rest of the population (Najeh, 2015). When it comes to inheritance laws, the situation is even worse for women in rural areas. Men in fact own practically everything, and women are usually deprived of their (smaller) share. (Bessis, 2017)

Regarding access to resources, for instance to LGBT support, women in rural areas have almost no options. According to Tunisian activist Senda Ben Jebara, homosexuality is still much less accepted in rural areas, because people absolutely do not know what it is, or when they do, they refuse to acknowledge the existence of homosexuals among them. It still takes a lot of time and groundwork to access people in those areas. Another element is the migration of LGBT people to urban areas.

As previously explained, women in both countries have fewer resources than men, which limits their political participation. In the case of rural women, the lack of resources is even more marked. It makes it easier for them to participate, but also makes their issues less appealing to politicians. Voters with no resources, very little influence on how things are decided are not the demographic most targeted by politicians running for office. However, rural women are getting more and more involved politically, in order to defend their rights, thanks to civil society organizations – this will be explained in Chapter III.

4. Social exclusion mainly affects women, which in turn leads to political exclusion

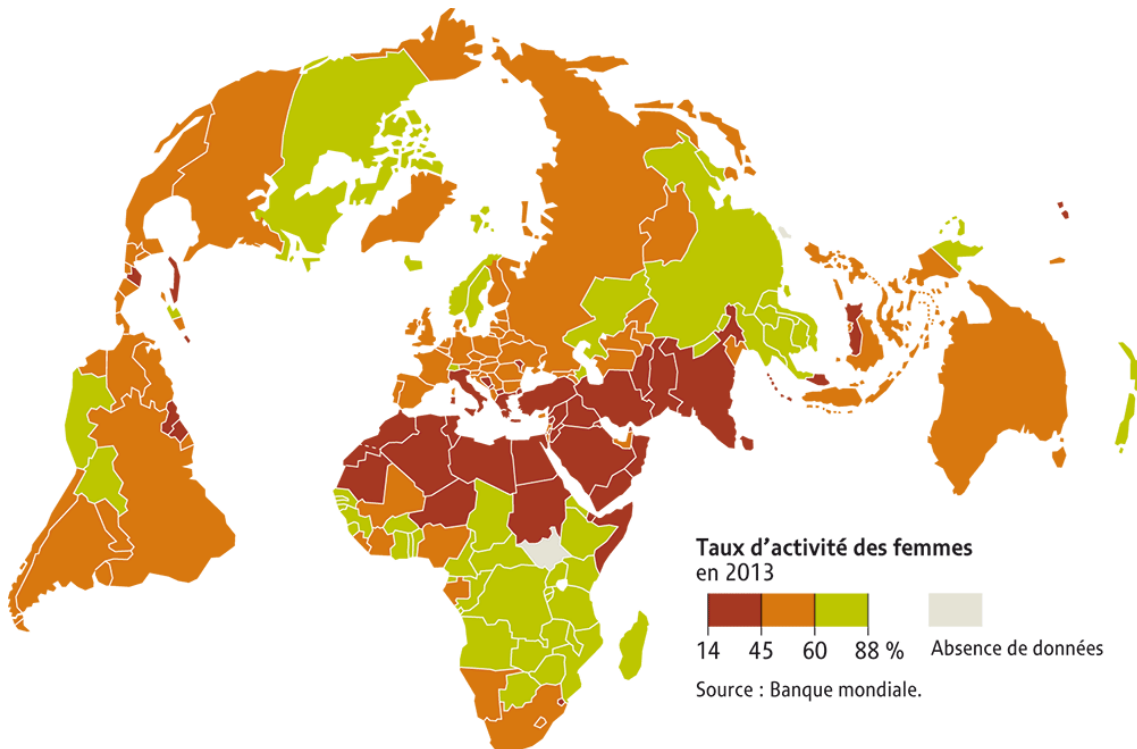


Figure 6: Women's activity rates in 2013, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, 2015

Women are more often affected by social exclusion, due to the fact that “Nowhere in the world do women share equal social and economic rights with men or have the same access as men to productive resources” (True 2012).

Women can be excluded from social and political life for various reasons.

First, they are less likely to be active in the professional world. Indeed, they are often responsible for raising the children, especially when there are no schools for children under 6 years old. They are often not remunerated for their work, especially in the rural areas – for instance if a woman works for her husband, she will not always get a wage. The last reason for not being active in the professional world is how conservative society can be: a woman's place is in the home, not interacting with stranger, on her own.

Studies find that women are more likely to participate politically if they have high educational achievement and participate in the paid labor force. (Borovsky, Ben Yahia 2012) Tunisian women have higher rates of unemployment than men, and only 28% of the active population are women. Rural women, and conservative women in general, sometimes feel that they are being left out from the feminists' fights. They do not necessarily need the same things than liberal women from wealthier backgrounds: being allowed to have an independent job can already be an important step for them. (Daoud, 2015) In Morocco, men and women's unemployment are not that different (8.5% for the general population in August 2016, and 9.9% for women). However, only a very small proportion of Moroccan women belong the official workforce: 27,3% according to official statistics. The exclusion from the workforce is correlated with the level of education. 93% of young women who only have a primary school diploma do not work, while only 37% of those who went to university are in the same case (Haut-Commissariat au Plan, 2015)

The states' social policies have an important impact on women's exclusion. It depends on how (and if) contraception is easily accessible, if young mothers can get maternity leave, or a spot at a daycare center. Since women usually perform unpaid labor, they do not get maternity leave, and since kindergartens are missing, daycare centers are not the governments' priority. Women's mobility is limited, and they are not associated to the decision mechanisms (Garcia Diaz, Belhdid, 2017)

Social and economic exclusion are important reasons for the start of the revolution in Tunisia: even when people had diplomas and were willing to work, they often could not find paid employment.

Women who are excluded from the workforce and do not have an educational background can participate in informal political actions, such as protests, hunger strikes, or specific events. However, participation to formal politics is harder, since it requires the ability to read and to create networks with people from varied social background – not the kind that poor women are likely to meet while doing unpaid

labor. Subordination in the private sphere produces conditions for marginalizing women as economic, social, and political actors (AHDR 2005).

Among other factors for feeling excluded is an ethnic and linguistic dimension. In 1961, Hassan II underlined the importance of Arabic, Islam and the Arab identity of Morocco in the constitution. The Amazigh (otherwise known as Berber) populations, who speak a different language and claim a different language, felt left out. Even in the school programs, Moroccan history is taught through ideology of Arabism, and leaves out the important role and place of Amazigh culture. (Dalle, 2007). Some activists are fighting to put an end to these women's marginalization. "Those of us who grew up speaking Tamazight knew that unless we left behind our mother tongue and learnt a language which was so-called 'better' than ours, Arabic, we would never be able to move into the higher positions in society." (Hicks, 2016)

When it comes to homosexuality, the Moroccan government pushes LGBTQ community members to lead clandestine lives. Indeed, they have limited access to the justice system (since they could end up being the ones condemned), to the health system, to education, to the job market. (Lacroix, 2016) In Tunisia, the situation is similar if slightly less harsh: homosexuals who get caught usually do not get the full jail sentence, as it is written in the penal code. (Speakman Cordall, 2015). As a community that is usually excluded from public life, participating politically is usually not at the top of their priority – surviving comes first (Ben Jebara, 2017).

CHAPTER II: LIMITED, BUT GROWING FORMAL REPRESENTATION

Tunisia and Morocco have complex relationships with democracy. Until power changed hands from Hassan II to his son Mohammed VI in 1999, the elections were fixed, with political parties created by the monarchy, without local implementation or base. Even after a series of reform, the influence of the Makhzen (a kind of clientelist governance that is specific to Morocco) is particularly strong. (Dalle) In Tunisia, presidents until 2011 always got elected with over 90% of the votes, with no other candidates being credibly able to win. The Arab Spring and the demands for more freedom in the region had a direct impact on constitutions and electoral laws in the two countries, as well as increases in the number and proportion of women elected to office.

1. A new approach to politics that inspired the population in both countries

Tunisia was a precursor in the region when its population kept meeting for bigger and bigger protests at the beginning of 2011, to speak their anger to the government: it was considered corrupt, inefficient, and incapable of answering the citizens' needs. Another element that motivated the protesters was the feeling that the whole regime was illegitimate: the president, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, had come into power thanks to a coup and had stayed there since 1987. He was then elected five times in a row with more than 90% of the votes, in non-democratic elections where opposition was almost non-existent. The protesters demanded a regime change, accompanied by more economic, social, political and religious freedom, as well as numerous reforms to improve their standards of living.

This uprising and its outcome was seen as a model by a part of the population in Morocco, whose inhabitants identified with Tunisians (Mohsen-Finan, 2013). Morocco had also had the same leader for a very long time (King Mohamed VI)

and before him his father, and the steps towards democracy had slowed down in the previous years.

This country and Morocco were actually part of a larger phenomenon: in almost every country where parties were newly free to run and the electorate could freely choose who to vote for, the Islamist parties won and arrived in power. (Valter, 2011) In Tunisia, the winning party was Ennahdha, whereas in Morocco it was the Justice and Development Party. Islamist parties had been banned for a long time and their members often persecuted by the government.

Western democracies, often worried by Islamist political movements, and the consequence their accession to power could have in the region, didn't react to these crackdowns, or even supported them. Western powers had previously tried to support relatively secular movements, even when it meant supporting people not democratically elected. When people had finally the choice to decide what party would represent them, a lot of them (27% of the voters in Morocco, 37% in Tunisia, both in 2011) took a chance on these Islamist parties, that represented themselves as nationalist and unfairly treated for years. The fears of their detractors were apparently not that founded: when new elections occurred in 2013 in Tunisia, less favorable to Ennahdha, the party left power pacifically; the Justice and Development Party in Morocco seems to be able to work with the rest of Parliament and to guarantee some stability to it. (Halimi, 2014)

Even though there was a lot of attention given to women's participation and actions when the revolution started in 2011, women had been active far long before then, but they were kept invisible, and not listened to (Mahfoudh, Delphy, 2014). Being unsatisfied by the state's actions, women started creating their own structures in Morocco in the 1990s. (Garcia Diaz, Belhdid)

The 2011 revolution was a catalyzer for young women in particular, who realized that they could get involved to defend their beliefs. With the dictatorial regime gone in Tunisia, many women realized new doors had opened for them. This was facilitated by the fact that literacy and education has risen in the last years.

Senda Ben Jebara recalls that she “personally had no idea what politics were before 2011”. She was aware that many things were going on underground, but not much more. She was enthusiastic about all the new possibilities. Political parties started appearing and multiplying. More than 100 political parties were created, with many people defending the one issue they cared about.

“Right after the revolution”, Safa Belghith went to the headquarters of Ennahdha in her city. “Because growing up in a family like mine, you will be politically aware. Because my mum also wears the hijab, so it’s the same oppression. And my dad goes to prayer, and he would be arrested sometimes”. Indeed, for many women, getting politically involved was due to the enthusiasm surrounding the new freedoms. One of the wishes of young female activists was that hijabi-wearing women would not be discriminated against, which seemed like an attainable goal with the Islamist party, Ennahdha, now authorized.

People would vote for revolutionary values such as dignity and freedom (Belghith, 2017), hoping that a range of new, different possibilities would be available.

Defending women’s rights is very politicized. Many parties use them as political tools. Safa Belghith was reinforced in her choice to be a member of Ennahdha, just after the revolution, when she saw that they promoted women’s participation. “This will sound ironic and contradictory, but from my time in Ennahdha, even though they came out against equal inheritance, and the marrying non-Muslims [for Muslim women] initiatives, when it comes to on the ground activism, Ennahdha really do care about putting women in leadership positions. I’ve never had a problem, I was there for a year and a half, and I was actually really encouraged: as a young person, and as a woman, to take responsibility, and leadership”

2. After 2011, constitutional and legal changes took place in favor of women

The role of women in a given society is often used as a way to measure its political maturity and its proximity (or not) to an ideal liberal democracy (Hague and Harrop, 2013). Women have been able to vote since 1957 in Tunisia and 1963 in Morocco, which does not mean that they share equal rights with their male counterparts. In 2013, a Tunisian project aiming at reforming the constitution referred to women as complementary to men, rather than as their equal. Feminist organizations and large parts of society had to fight politically and more generally in the public sphere to avoid that regression. Even though little has changed in the last few years for Tunisian women, they can now express themselves and participate in the political life of the country, something that was reserved for very few women, chosen by the government, until 2011 (Beaugé, 2015). The hurdles to women's political participation are not only set up or maintained by the political world, they are also due to the strong influence of religion and tradition – in both countries, but mainly so in Morocco (Radio Orient, 2016). However, Moroccan feminist organizations are becoming more vocal in their requests, and on an institutional point of view, the number of women elected in Parliament keeps growing (2 in 1993, 60 in 2011).

In Tunisia, a revolution happened, supported by a grassroots movement. In Morocco, the process was much more gradual: the country opened itself to more democratic practices and participation of the people but didn't change radically. The effect it had is strikingly different: Tunisia has had several governments of different persuasions in five years, new protests, unexpected murders and electoral results. For now, it can be considered as having not yet reached complete stability. On the contrary, Morocco is considered as one of the most stable countries in the region, with its king still in power, as well as the party that won the 2016 legislative elections.

There is a gap between a mainly non-democratic monarchy and a formerly dictatorial republic transitioning to democracy: Tunisia has been a republic since its independence, and although republic is not a synonym with democratic

practices, it meant that Tunisians were used to the idea of non-hereditary power and expected some kind of elections (that happened not to be free and fair). Morocco is a monarchy, where the king still has the upper hand in the decisions (unlike Britain for instance where the government is determined by the citizens' vote). Even after having given the impression to listen to the street, the constitutional reform of 2011 doesn't really allow much more participation from the people. The king isn't responsible before anyone and can choose the most important ministers, and civil servants. He also controls the press and a large part of the country's economy (Siri 2013).

Morocco: improving women's political rights and representation in a non-democracy

In 2011, Morocco went through its own Arab Spring-like protests, known as the February 20th movement. Under pressure from street demonstrations, King Mohammed VI agreed to support a new constitution, in July 2011. (Hicks, 2016) This new constitution did not threaten the monarch's extended powers, but it was progressive regarding human's rights. Amazigh was recognized as an official language. Article 19 recognizes and accepts the concept of « parité » (favoring equal representation between men and women). Article 30 recognizes women's and men's right to vote and to be elected, and states that laws should favor equal access to political positions. Article 25 supports freedom of thought and expression. The right to peaceful assembly and demonstration is reinforced. In the lower chamber, there is now a 60-woman national list, compared to 30 previously. There is also a new 30-member youth list, which together with the women's list guarantees more diversity in parliament.

One of the reasons that the government's plan in favor of equality might not work is that it was not allocated specific funds. (Garcia Diaz, Belhdid)

Morocco is a signatory of CEDAW, the first legally binding document that prevents discrimination against women in every field, including the political sphere. In 2011 it removed the reservations it had on the treaty.

Other laws support women's political participation : organic law n° 29-11 relative to political parties (2011) forces parties to save at least a third of the important positions in the parties for women, at the national and regional level. It also imposes the creation of commission for parity in political parties.

According to observers, this constitutional and legal reformed allowed Morocco to escape the danger of instability created by the Arab Spring, while preserving the power of the king, and not really boosting a movement towards democracy. (Brousky, 2015) The monarchy did not give up its essential prerogatives, in order to be able to control the Moroccan political scene just like before 2011. The "hegemonic control of the political process" (Maghraoui, 2011) was not threatened. These changes also served the monarchy, in the sense that it invested in women's empowerment to counter political Islam (Skalli 2011). It was a good way to present itself as the protector of women's rights and a relatively secular government (which might seem somewhat paradoxical, since the powerful king is also a powerful religious authority).

Tunisia: encouraging women's political participation in an unstable democracy

After the revolution, the first task assigned to the newly elected parliament was to write a new constitution, more in phase with people's aspirations. Given the composition of the constituent assembly, with Islamist party Ennahdha, small left-wing parties such as Al Massar, others close to the old regime, it is no wonder that reaching an agreement proved a difficult task.

The greater involvement of Tunisian women in the constitution drafting process made a difference in the final gender provisions of Tunisia's constitution, according to Silwa de Alvis (2017). The constitution particularly benefitted from the cooperation of progressive deputies favorable to women rights, having a formal role, and feminist activists, who organized protests and events.

In 2012, one of most tense moments when discussing the new constitutions concerned whether the text should refer to the “complementarity of men of women”, which feminist groups felt removed the possibility of full equality. Not including the expression in the constitution and referring to equalities was one of the main victories of feminist groups and progressive deputies. Until 2014, and since 1959 the constitution stated that the president could only be a Muslim man, born to a Tunisian father and Tunisian grandfather. (Tamzini, 2012). The new constitution is the first in the Arab world to give all Tunisians, women and men, the right to be presidential candidates.

Article 46 guarantees women that they will keep their rights stemming from the Personal Status, including the right to divorce, to marriage by mutual consent and also the banning of polygamy. This Article also guarantees parity between men and women in all elected assemblies: it is now one of the only four countries in the world that have constitutionalized parity (Daoud, 2015). Article 20 guarantees the equality of rights and responsibilities

3. Recent improvement of the statistics of formal representation

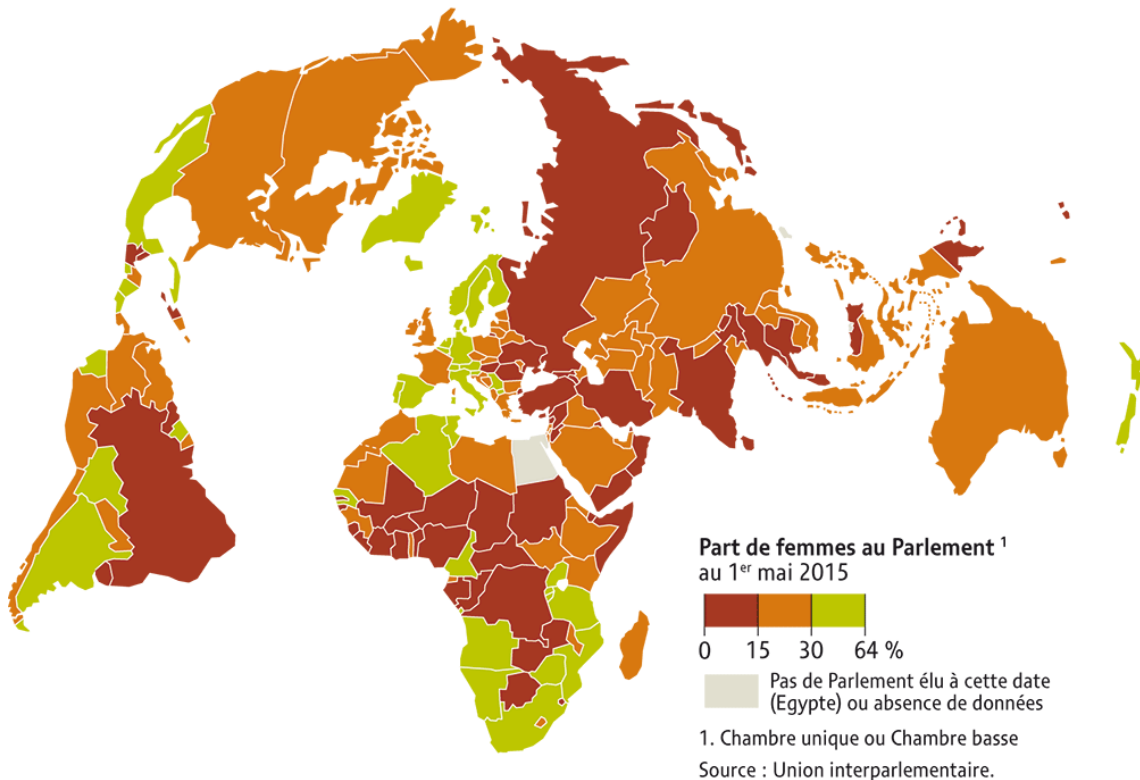


Figure 7: Proportion of women in the lower chamber in May 2015, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, 2015

Improving the numbers of women's political participation is essential, because women often have the greatest understanding of the deficiencies that women and girls face, and essential knowledge of how to advance their rights. In pushing for change, they develop leadership skills that they can then transfer to political contexts. (UN Women, 2012)

2002 marks the first time Morocco implemented its parity law, which allowed 30 women to be elected to the lower chamber of parliament on a separate list. This number rose with time. At the 2011 legislative elections, 60 women were elected on a separate, national list. Still, women only represented 17% of the members of the lower chamber. After the 2016 elections, women represented 21 % of the members of the lower chamber. According to international institutions, the rate from which women can start having a significant influence is about 30%, which Morocco does not reach. This does not respect the goal of parity stated by the

constitution in article 19. However, the progress in just over two decades is still noteworthy: from 1993 to 2016, the proportion of women in the lower was multiplied by 35, from 0.6% to 21%.

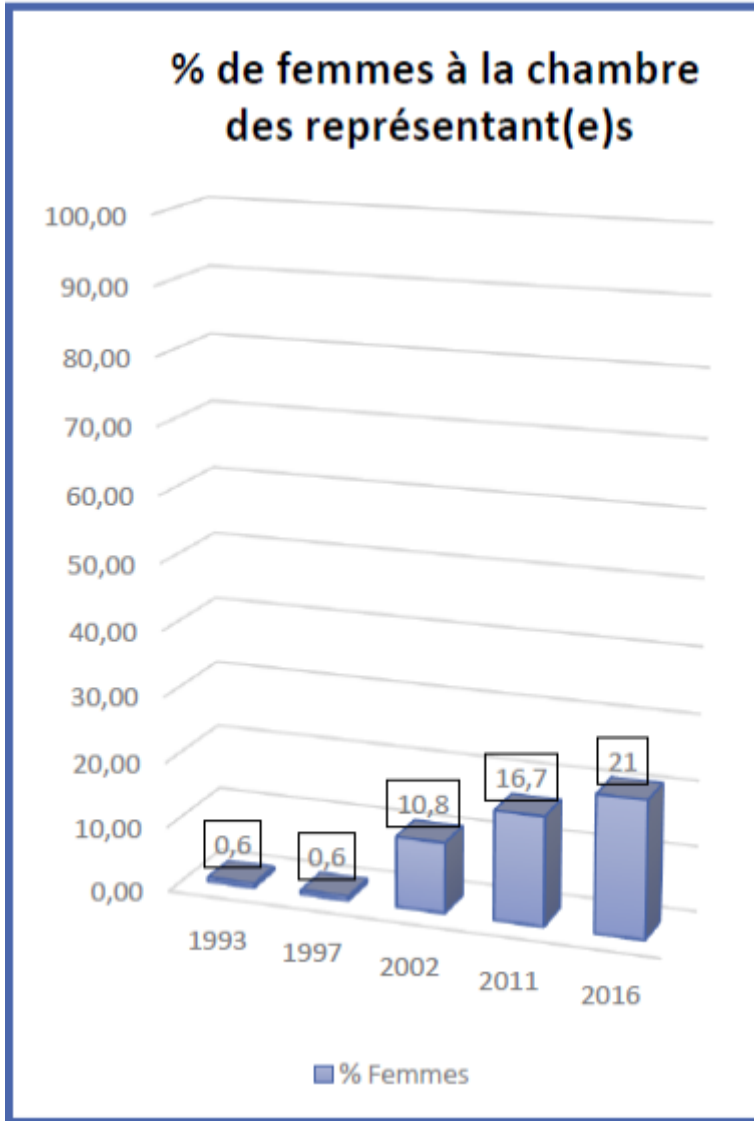


Figure 8: Proportion of women in the lower chamber in Morocco over the course of the years (Garcia Diaz, Belhdid, 2017)

When it comes to the Councilors' chamber (the upper chamber), women are even less present: in October 2015, there only were 13 women out of 120 members, or 10.8 %. This is due to the fact that although lists alternate men and women, men are almost systematically at the top of the list and guaranteed a seat. Since few seats are allocated, this voting system will always favor men at the top of lists.

According to the ministry of Interior, women got 21% of the seats in the 2015 local elections, which represents about twice what they got in the previous 2009 elections.

Regarding the composition of political parties' executive bureaus, all of those analyzed by researchers Garcia-Diaz and Beldhid were mostly trusted by men. Some of them had quotas to help guarantee women's participation, like the Part Authenticité et Modernité (PAM), which requires its executive instances to have at least 45 of women, or the parti du Progrès et du Socialisme, that requires 30% of women among its leaders. If parties themselves do not have gender equality, they might be less credible when they promote women's rights and participation.

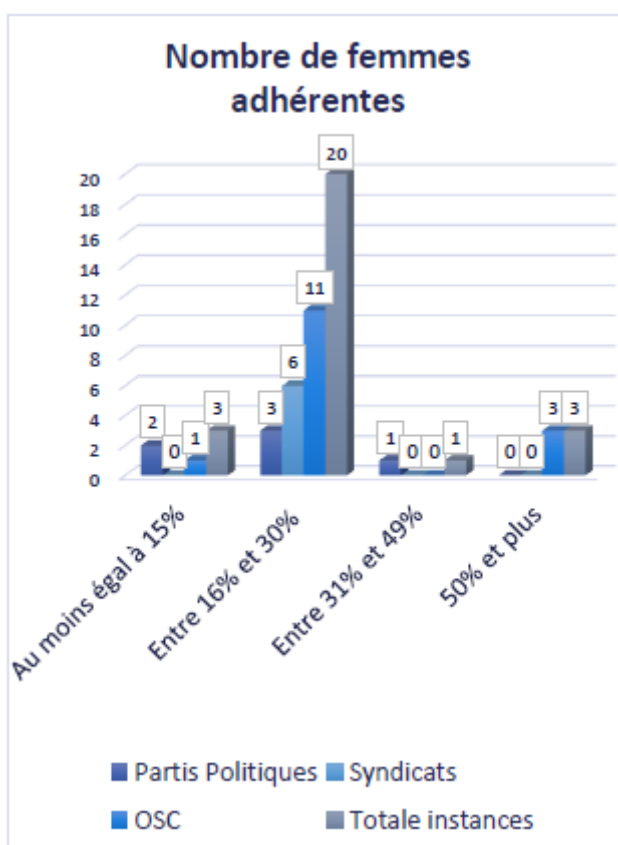


Figure 9: Proportion of female members in different Moroccan institutions, Garcia-Diaz Belhdid 2016

In Tunisia, the situation has also improved in the last few years. In 2004, women represented 22% of all deputies elected. In the new Constituent assembly, 26.7% of all deputies were women, while they were 31.3% in the assembly elected in 2014. This increase is due to the fact women have been inspired to run more,

and to the fact that more women were at the top of electoral lists. It allowed Tunisia to reach the 32nd place in terms of women's representation in parliaments globally. Women are still underrepresented in government, as shown by the table below.

	Femmes	Hommes	Total	Pourcentage des femmes
Mohamed Ghannouchi (1999-2011)	2	25	27	7.4
Mohamed Gannouchi 2 (17 janvier 2011)	3	34	37	8.1
Béji Caid Essebsi (7 mars 2011)	2	29	31	6.5
Hammadi Jebali (24 décembre 2011)	3	38	41	7.3
Ali Larrayedh (13 mars 2013)	3	35	38	7.9
Mehdi Jomaa (29 janvier 2014)	3	26	29	10.3
Habib Essid (6 février 2015)	8	33	41	19.5
Habib Essid (6 janvier 2016)	2	28	30	6.7

Source: www.tunisie.gov.tn

Figure 10: Proportion of women in the successive Tunisian governments, Tunisian Government, 2016

It is relatively complicated to find statistics when it comes to women's participation in parties, and their representation in the executive instances. (TAP 2014) Eight parties signed a charter in 2016 where they committed to improving "women's active participation in political life", in elections but also in their own structures. Among these parties were Nidaa Tounes, Ennahdha, le Parti républicain, Machrou' Tounes, and Al Massar. Ennahdha for instance made sure that women were better represented: there now are 25% of women in the party's structures. However, the party still does not demand equal representation (« parity ») in its instances. (Boukhayatia, 2016)

There is no representation of LGBT candidates. According to Senda Ben Jebara, "the few people who are part of it are still not sufficiently trained, not invested enough. Suggesting homosexual candidates could potentially harm the reputation of a party. That said, it will be necessary to have these necessary training, to be present. The community in general is not very politically involved. According to those I know, a large part of the community does not vote, is not aware of what is happening politically. It's still a problem.

4. The singularity of the female vote

As an introduction, it is important to underline that analyzing political participation is not an exact science, even when it comes to formal representation.

In Morocco for instance, millions of people are simply not registered on the electoral roll. As a consequence, participation rates are much higher than they could be if every citizen in age and legally allowed to vote were registered. There is a high proportion of invalid ballots. The lack of trust in the political system does not contribute to giving an accurate picture of the voters' preferences, since a lot of them do not vote. (Benmessaoud-Tredano, 2016) Like younger men, younger women are less likely to vote than the general population, while older women (over 65) are more likely to vote than the general population. (Afrobaromètre, 2016). In the municipal and regional elections of 2015, women were vastly less likely to vote than their male counterparts: at the municipal elections only 21,18% of them voted, compared to 78,82% of men, while at the regional, the difference was slightly less striking, with 38,64 of women voting, compared to 61,36 of men. According to political scientist Jean-Noël Ferrié, this can be explained by two reasons: women are usually less educated than men, and thus are less likely to get involved in the political process. Second, and this reasons also applies, although less so, to men: people in Morocco are very "depoliticized". Since they do not believe that their vote can have an impact and change anything, they do not even vote.

In Tunisia, women represented 47% of all people registered on the electoral roll for the 2014. (Ministry of the Interior)

	Femmes	Hommes
Président de bureau de vote	30.0	70.0
Membre de bureau de vote	49.0	51.0
Représentant de candidat	26.0	74.0
Observateur	42.5	57.5
Inscription dans le registre électoral ³⁴	47	53

Source : ISIE

Figure 11: Gender repartition for the 2014 Tunisian elections

Women were particularly involved in the election, and about 50% voted in the last presidential elections, in 2014, which is less than the national average of 63%. As with Morocco, the lower participation rate can be explained by lower literacy rates, as well as gender stereotypes according to which the place of women is in the home, and not the public sphere. Almost half of all polling station members were women. However, the power unbalance was also inferable from the fact that only 30% of women were president of their polling station.

At the 2014 presidential elections, women voted in majority for Beiji Caïd Essebsi. An explanation would be that they were looking for more stability and the preservation of their rights, in an uncertain time, which is something that men are less preoccupied about (Zargouni, 2014).

When it comes to choosing a political party, the women I interviewed explained that depending on their social and religious backgrounds, women would feel more or less comfortable in some parties. “Maybe some women with hijabs feel more comfortable in Ennahdha to begin with. So maybe it is not so much that a party would be more open to women with hijabs, but that these women would go more to certain parties. Ennahdha is definitely open to hijab – and non-hijab wearing women. They have non muhajabah [hijab-wearing woman] MPs.” (Belghith, 2017)

Nidaa Tounes probably would not be the first choice of hijab-wearing and conservative women. “In some political parties, there are members who for instance, in the past, always spoke against the hijab, or who used to say that the hijab is a symbol of oppression. Of course, if you wear a hijab, and someone who said that kind of things is in the executive board, that's impossible [for you to join the party]” (Belghith, 2017).

According to Senda Ben Jebara, some women do not vote in order to improve the collective situation of women, but in order to support the Quran. “Because religion is sacred for some of them, we do not even have the right to interpret the text. Since the only people who interpret the texts are men, it does not give too many rights to women” (Ben Jebara, 2017).

5. Many obstacles remain and women are underrepresented

In terms of political empowerment, Morocco was ranked 98 out of 144, and Tunisia 71 out of 144 in 2016. (World Economic Forum, 2016)

Men and women do not have the same roles politically: there is a horizontal division. For instance, with list-based voting systems, there has to be gender parity. However, the elected representatives still follow the traditional gender roles that exist in the private sphere. Most of the people dealing with the family and social matters are women, whereas most of the deputy mayors in charge of finances are men. Fields that are associated with men are considered more valuable than those associated with women. (Sénac, 2017)

In Morocco, new laws instituting gender quotas in political parties are not accompanied by sanction mechanisms. It also does not prevent men from systematically being chief candidates when candidates are elected from a list. Furthermore, the political parties' Gender equality committees are often inactive (NDI, 2013). In the 2017 El Othmani government, only nine ministers out of 38 are women. The only female senior minister, Bassima Hakkaoui, leads the ministry for families and women. Historically, since its independence, Morocco has always been led by men (Kings and prime ministers). The monarch can only be a king.

Despite all the new evolutions in Tunisian laws and Tunisian society, the Chahed government of August 2017 only had 6 female members (3 ministers and 3 under-secretaries), which amounts to 14% of the total number of ministers. Women often get less prestigious and strategic ministries than men. (For instance, they got the ministry for Women and Children, and the undersecretary for transportation). Historically, since its independence, Tunisia has always been led by men (Presidents and prime ministers). Only one woman has been a governor. However, in September 2017, prime minister Chahed promised to make efforts to achieve gender equality.

Male politicians are reluctant to share power and adapt their practices

Political scientist Réjane Sénac says that there are two major differences in the experiences of women and men in the political field. First, women have to deal with their personal as well as professional lives at the same time, and it is often cited as a reason why they do not get involved in politics. When you look at women in Parliament or cabinet ministers, they often do not have children or waited for them to grow up before getting into politics. Women with children often say they talked about their decision with their family, and thank their husband for helping. Men usually do not talk about this issue.

Second, women often feel they need to earn their legitimacy and report back to their voters on their accomplishments. It is a social construct, because this need for legitimacy is less felt amongst male politicians.

A way of obtaining more women representatives, besides parity laws, would be to vote and implement a law that prevents representatives to hold multiple offices at the same time, and also to keep the same office for a long period of time. The role of the political parties is essential, since they get to select the candidates. They also promote certain members, who after a certain time in managing roles, might claim their experience to run for office. Historically, most parties have promoted male candidates. There might several explanations : several parties do not have enough female members ; others did not make the effort of campaigning in order to convince women to run, or because they do not think parity is important and that women's place is not in politics. (Mahfoudh, 2011).

Women are confronted to specific problems, that were not taken into account when parties were being built. When women started investing the political fields, parties did not change their practices, which rendered women's political participation quite difficult. This is true at all levels, from municipal councils to the Parliament.

In Morocco, women elected on the national women's list can feel less legitimate, because they largely owe their success to their party. Deputy Milouda Hazeb

thinks women can have a hard time participating because of sexist attitudes. (MAP 2015)

In Tunisia, women were only at the top of the electoral ballot in 16% of the cases, which political parties admitted was their fault. Women are active on the ground, but men in power have a hard time integrating them to positions of power, because of sexist habits. Deputy Amina Rekik, from the party Machou' Tounes states that women are used for political gain when election time comes, but not respected afterwards. (Boukhatia, 2016)

Journalist Safa Belghith agrees with this analysis: the “parity” rule encourages women to participate. Even if they are intimidated. “Almost all of the women I know, their first reaction to political activism, or running on a list, would be “no, I can’t, I have kids” or other reasons. And the law is really good, because it shows them that it is their place, their right to be there. It makes them realize that it really matters for them to be there. When it comes to women running, parties are doing quite well, but it comes to women getting the positions of power, it is not the case. They’re not really promoted and don’t usually get the top positions (Belghith, 2017)

An obstacle to women’s participation is the way parties are organized. For instance, women are less likely to attend political meetings late at night, since they are often responsible for childcare, and it could threaten their safety. In conservative circles, it also would not be necessarily approved for a woman to go out alone at night. In order to attract women, political parties have to change their practices. (Boukhatia, 2016)

Role of the unions is limited

Another way of participating politically is to get involved in a labor union. Those are usually not very favorable to women getting positions of power in their own

structures.

In Tunisia, the powerful Union Générale du Travail (UGTT), the biggest union in the country has about 50% women membership. However, there are no women among the 13 members of the executive board. Female members complained that they have been indispensable to the revolution and the changes made afterwards, and that they deserve to take decisions as well. (RFI, 01/2017) The board members decided that a quota of two women would become mandatory, but not before 2022, almost ensuring that theirs will remain an exclusively male club for at least a few more years.

On social issues regarding women, the UGTT can be quite conservative and influence the decisions taken in parliament. Its general secretary has declared that the equal inheritance is a "sensitive" issue which should be dealt with "wisely" and should not distract the country from its priorities. (Bessis 2017)

In Morocco, no laws state that there should be parity in the instances of the labor unions. Most unions have quotas, around 20% of women at least. The Confédération démocratique du travail (CDT) has created a special commission for women and organizes activities that target women. The Organisation démocratique du travail (ODT) has a quota of 25 % women in all its representative structures, and has trained its member to gender budgeting. The Union Générale des travailleurs du Maroc (UGTM) has a quota of 20% women in its instances. However, labor unions in Morocco have limited influence for two reasons. First, they are far from representative, since only 7% of Moroccan workers belong to a union. The union are numerous, but represent few people and often disagree: between themselves, among themselves, with the political parties they are close to. The other reason is that given the nature of the Moroccan regime, the state never let civil organizations have too much power. (Zaireg, 2014) Their actions towards gender equality and to promote better women's representation is unlikely to have a deep impact on Moroccan political life.

A number of women feel disappointed and lack trust in the political system

As evidence by political scientist Benmessaoud Tredano, people in Morocco do not usually trust their government and political institutions much. As a regime that is not democratic, the rule of law is not always respected, which means people live in uncertainty: they cannot be sure in advance of how the police is going to react if they protest, or whether a judge will follow the law in a trial. A large part of the population feels depoliticized (as evidence by the abstention rates), thinking that their political participation will have absolutely no impact. There is a sense that the country are led by the elites, and that the input of lower-class citizens has no value. Saida Sabir explains that she is not involved politically, because in her opinion, “political commitment in Morocco is reserved to a precise social class and a well-determined category of people” to which she does not belong. Paradoxically, Saida also said that she participated in protests, but since it was not in a formal context, she does not think it constitutes political participation. “Yes, I voted in the national elections and participated in demonstrations in solidarity with the Amazigh peoples and the Amazigh cause, precisely the question of expropriation by the Makhzen (Moroccan authority) in the South of Morocco”. (Sabir, 2017)

In Tunisia, citizens who have launched a revolution are a little more confident in their capacity to change society through politics. Yet, again, people belonging to minorities, or living in the countryside are less likely to participate and to think that their vote matter. Senda Ben Jebara explains why, in some communities such as the LGBT, citizens cannot trust the political system.

“There is also a threat to participating in political life, that it is felt particularly by some parts of the population. When you are active politically, you are much more vulnerable to attacks, people who look into your life, who will find things that you do not want to be discovered about you. And so there are many more precautions that are taken.

I was asked to run for municipal elections, and I refused, mainly for the work I do and for who I am. Socially speaking, it would completely annihilate me. There are a lot of things that are put at risk in this kind of participation” (Ben Jebara, 2017).

CHAPTER III: A PARTICULARLY ACTIVE CIVIL SOCIETY IN TUNISIA, UNLIKE IN MOROCCO

One of the Tunisian revolution's characteristics is to have taken place without leaders. Mohsen-Finan (2013) notes that protesters fought for universal rights, which was enough to motivate them. As a result, no revolutionary heroes (well-liked by the Arab left) or martyrs (promoted during Islamic revolutions) emerged, and it remained an egalitarian, grassroots movement. The protests, although they were on the whole peaceful, were very violently cracked down on by the government, which sensed a threat to its survival. The final estimations state that at least 300 protesters were killed (RFI, 2012).

In the case of Morocco, the most famous movement is called “Mouvement du 20 février”, in reference to the date the first protests it organized happened. It had no recognized leader and was influential enough that after a few months of growing protests the king decided to implement a constitutional reform, that granted more power to the people. Similarly to the Tunisian movement, it was violently put down by the government, to the point that several people died, although in much smaller proportions.

1. Proliferation of new organizations in Tunisia, unlike Morocco

Since the country's newfound freedom in 2011, NGOs and associations have been multiplying in Tunisia, while Morocco has not witnessed much change.

A more accessible and effective way to achieve change

Even though Morocco is much less free than Tunisia when it comes to creating associations and NGOs, in both countries these organizations represent a kind of liberty that political parties cannot give. People prefer creating associations, to campaigning for a cause in a political party, according to Moroccan activist Saida Sabir.

Even though women are a committed minority in Morocco's associations, a study has shown that the associations' executive boards only have 12% of women.

(Garcia-Diaz) The unbalance of power present in traditional political life can be found in civil society organizations as well.

Getting involved in civil society organizations can prove dangerous. In 2014, the state started cracking down on a number of associations. The reason given for the crackdown is that they were detrimental to Morocco's image and reputation, they prevented the authorities from fighting terrorism efficiently, and they worked for « foreign agents ». The main association targeted was the AMDH (Association marocaine des Droits humains): since then, over sixty activities organized by the association and relative to human rights have been forbidden (Brousky, 2015).

Saida Sabir, who is the vice-president of an Amazigh association, knows that the state closely monitors what she and the association do. "Problems started not long after the first general assembly. The Moroccan authorities summoned me for an investigation, an investigation in which I was obliged to answer basic questions that the authorities could have answered directly by looking at my birth register or my identity card. This investigation remains a process to stress the members of the civil society." This did not deter her from getting involved, but it has impacted her private and family life: "I also got comments from my family, "Will this commitment influence your professional life?" I get many comments, but as I said I really needed this commitment.

In Tunisia, in the first years of Bourguiba's regimes, the state was seen as an agent for social change. Starting in the late 1970s, youth movements became more structured and asked for more than what the state was giving. Two organizations were instrumental in the fight against the regime: the Ligue tunisienne des droits de l'homme (LTDH) and the Association tunisienne des femmes démocrates, that defended collective and individual freedoms. Following their examples, many civil society organizations have been emerging since 2011.

Since the revolution, the situation has been safer for most activists. Civil society organizations have been so influential that they were included in the 2015 Nobel Peace prize with other Tunisian institutions.

They are free to influence political life, without having to conform to all the constraints that political parties have. Such constraints include: creating a solid party, where the power is mostly top-down, a structure that needs to have a position and a platform on every topic, and respect specific rules and regulations. Rules for civil society organizations are usually looser than the ones for political parties. This capacity to influence the political debate was illustrated by the charter signed by 8 political parties to promote women's political participation: civil society organizations such as SNJT or Asswat Nissa created and promoted it. (Boukhatia, 2016). There is a certain weight of civil society that did not exist before. Civil society is now completely in the process of imposing certain rules, which is completely new. The progress is visible, for instance when laws change (Ben Jebara, 2017). Senda adds that participating in civil society organizations is less risky and helps avoid internal party feuds.

After the revolution, the number of the associations' members increased by 60%. In feminist associations, the rise in membership was close to 100%. One of their goals was to oppose islamist parties, for which they mobilized women from many different social backgrounds. One of their victories (shared with some politicians) was to include gender equality in the new constitution, but also to remove all reservations to CEDAW, in order to be able to better protect women's rights. (Mahfoudh & Delphy, 2014)

A recent phenomenon is the development of a galaxies of international NGOs, that some activists such as Nadia Chaabane do not particularly appreciate. They professionalize the work traditionally performed by volunteers, and given their resources, get to decide which values are worth fighting for. (Yousfi, 2017)

From a social perspective, women who run organization, imagine campaigns and do advocacy are mostly from an educated background. The women I talked to had a university education. La Ligue des Electricites Tunisiennes mostly has very educated board members, with influential professions (doctors, judges, union leaders). The social prestige that comes from these positions can help legitimize their discourse in the rest of society. What is more, a university education helps women learn skills and tools that can be useful to be active politically in the civil society. University is also a place where networking takes place. Another element is that women who get involved are often from a political family and a politicized background (Nadia Chaabane, Safa Belghith...).

The example of an LGBT organization:

Homosexuality is forbidden in both countries, but LGBTQ organizations can be much more open about their actions in Tunisia than in Morocco. In Morocco, activists have to hide their activities, and can be arrested for no reason, as the example of MALI founder, Ibtissame Betty Lachgar shows: was arrested in September 2016, seen as a threat by the government.

In Tunisia, an LGBT organization cannot really register legally, because homosexuality is criminalized by law. Organizations generally register under the umbrella term of human rights. Thanks to that, they are much freer in their work, and have much fewer problems with the authorities.

Senda Ben Jebara explains what kind of action her association organizes: “We do small campaigns, in 2015 we campaigned for the abolition of article 230: we took pictures of a few personalities and artists holding a sign. It was launched on 10 December on the occasion of the International Day of Human Rights. Now, we are preparing a series of campaigns that will soon be launched, normally before the end of the year. All that is advocacy, we mainly try to work from the internal to the external, it is very important first to strengthen the capacities of the

people of the community before going further. Fortunately, too, we have the support of civil society and a number of other human rights organizations, and it gives us some security to work freely. Several advocacy actions have been organized with the collective, in relation to this, several communiqués”.

Art and culture can contribute to women’s empowerment

According to writer Sophie Bessis, in the field of art, things have fundamentally changed. Women, but also the rest of the population, now express themselves in completely different ways than before the revolution, their speech has been freed. Since 2011, writing has become of form of liberation. (TAP, 04/2016)

Some civil society organizations encourage artistic expression to communicate political ideals and ideas. In the months after the revolution, became famous for its revolutionary street art (Courrier international, 2014).



Figure 12: Revolutionary graffiti in Tunis, photo copyright France 24, 2011

In the LGBT organization Mawjoudin, the focus is on capacity building, community support, psychological support, through artistic activities where people find

themselves. There is already a desire to expand the community before moving on to greater action. (Ben Jebara, 2017)

2. Focus is now particularly on educating women to their rights and how they can participate politically

Education is the most durable and efficient way to empower women

Many organizations have put education at the center of their missions. Education is the best way to have a long-lasting impact on communities, and to autonomize the people who need skills and knowledge. Such a strategy was adopted by the organization La Ligue des Electriciennes tunisiennes, as seen in the documentary “Les Tunisiennes En Politique et Dans La Société.” (Daoud, 2015). Their main action is reaching out to women who might not know their rights, and teach them what they are allowed to do (for instance, running for political office, getting a divorce). LET adapts its strategy to the targeted audience: the training will be different if the women are from the countryside, or from dense, impoverished suburbs. It helps create networks of women who know and trust each other in local communities, through which women can learn their rights. They also monitor elections in polling stations, to make sure women can vote in optimal conditions.

Aswaat Nissa, another Tunisian NGO, follows and supports activists in 11 political parties. They prepare them for the next elections, so that they can convince their parties to let them run. (Boukhatayia, 2016)

In LGBT organization Mawjoudin, there is a focus on gender issues and sexuality. It is very important that people are able to recognize themselves, to accept themselves, to know the situation in which they live, the Tunisian context, which is very different from the international context. There are many problems with the acceptance of the society of these people, which is very different from what happens elsewhere. There have been trainings in advocacy, digital security, training on the ground. These trainings help members be better activists, but they also help them know and accept themselves, in a society where there is a lot of rejection

towards them. A series of trainings was called Lilo identity: Looking In, Looking Out. According to Senda Ben Jebara, it was a day to learn about oneself. To accept oneself more, to speak, to share with others the experience, to find oneself in a safe and secure space, where people feel at ease to share a sometimes very painful experience. This is considered a very important day to move from a state of non-acceptance to a state of acceptance. "From that point on, we can build a lot."

In Morocco, the Amazigh NGO Tamaynut also focuses on education and training. It is supported by international organizations, such as Euromed women, to do so. The association organizes sessions for Amazigh women, to let them know about their civil and political rights, and to motivate them to participate to political life. The association also organizes activities to train men as well, so that they too can promote women's rights and women's empowerment.

Saida Sabir recounts her positive experience in gaining leadership in Tamaynut. "The participation of women is strongly demanded, given its importance. As an example, the election of women to the general assembly has become almost mandatory, to encourage women to participate. In my opinion, being a female vice president of Tamaynut is desirable". Tamaynut really has a plan for gender equality, that results in women being encouraged to apply to be in the executive office and have a say when it comes to taking decisions. (Sabir, 2017)

There still are limits to the actions of civil society

First, a noted phenomenon in Tunisia has been the opportunistic creation of organizations. Many people got involved to advocate for women's participation, and other human rights issues, because it was what popular internationally and a good way to receive funds. Sociologist Feriel Lalami regrets the "NGOization" of feminism that imposes themes, practices, actions. It leads to a bureaucratization and depoliticization of the feminist movement. She wonders whether such a movement can survive if it loses its soul (Lalami, 2017). Former deputy and active

feminist Nadia Chaabane argues that human rights NGOs are perverted because they receive huge sums of money, often from abroad. According to her, people do not believe in the power of activism anymore, there is no more frame of reference. It is a transitional phase. There is a weak consensus that attenuates the issues. Priority [in terms of funding and respectability] is given to NGOs rather than political parties (Chaabane, 2017)

Senda Ben Jebara shares this analysis: “People all of a sudden begin to take an interest in LGBT rights. It had become very cool, everyone was telling us that they would start working with us, and are beginning to really take ownership of the cause.” She disliked this phenomenon, because as someone who works and belongs to a hyper-marginalized community, she does not want people from outside, who absolutely do not share that experience to say that they will take charge of things.

Second, men often control most of the power, even in organizations with feminist goals. They are more likely to get involved and they are used to speaking publicly, to expressing their ideas and opinions. For instance, Tamaynut, the Amazigh organization in Morocco, organizes many workshops to empower and educate women, work with international organizations. However, members on the executive board are mostly men: out of 13 people, there are 4 women and 9 men. (Sabir, 2017)

We have already discussed the dangers for civil society organizations in Morocco at the beginning. Since it is a rather repressive society, that might have not have been surprising. However, even in “liberalized” Tunisia, activists can also get arrested. from time to time there are arrests. Members of LGBT organization Mawjoudin know that some activists get arrested from time to time, generally not in the capital, because it is where most civil rights organizations are. “They started to stop people gradually. What is good is that we are aware of the arrests, so we are advocating, communicating, and most of the people who were arrested did

not stay in prison for very long. I think the person who stayed the longest in prison that I heard about was there for one year, while the law says it should be 3 years". (Ben Jebara, 2017)

There also is criticism about liberal feminist organizations, that did not take everyone into account when leading actions (conservative, potentially hijab-wearing women). The younger generation tends to be more interested in intersectional associations, and not ones that focus solely on feminism. (Mahfoudh, 2015). Safa Belghith explains that "progressive organizations haven't done anything for people like me. If I went to them and I said I had been discriminated against, I don't think they would do anything. They are just selective in who they help".

Taking similar country as an example

Some Moroccan activists have said that to them, Tunisia was a model to follow. (Castelliti, 2017). Women's rights there are more advanced than in any other Arab nation. Progress was made on abortion, banning polygamy, or allowing divorce much before Morocco (women were only able to ask for a divorce in 2004). Activist Fouzia Assouli, who is the president of the Ligue démocratique des droits des femmes, thinks that besides copying the Tunisian model, Morocco should go even further. However, there are obstacles to expanding women's rights. Tunisia had to overcome them, but in Morocco they are even more difficult to avoid : the population tends to resist progressive laws, because of cultural, ideological and religious reasons. (Rougani, in Castelliti, 2017).

Activists recognize that progress has been made in Morocco in the last few years, with women becoming more aware of their rights.

Tunisia could in fact act as a prototype for other countries in the region, when it comes to women's rights and women's political participation. According to Hague and Harrop, studying a pioneer (such as Tunisia) can help in comprehending a

phenomenon which is growing in significance elsewhere: women are getting empowered in Morocco, partly because they were inspired by what happened in Tunisia.

3. Technological innovation and the internet have a transformational role

The role of social media was also essential in both countries, mainly through blogs, Twitter and Facebook. According to Hague and Harrop, “Developments in communications have lowered the barriers to entry for new movements, facilitating their rapid emergence when ordinary politics had been deemed to fail”.

Protesters could set up their meeting points and communicate their ideas much more freely and discreetly than in a traditional social situation, where there is more societal control and immediate backlash from the authorities in case of a speech or an action that could threaten their power. The Facebook page of Mouvement du 20 février in Morocco for instance has around 70 000 fans, which is a lot for a country with a relatively low access to the internet. In Tunisia, freedom of speech had never been greater than after a few months into the transitional period, which allowed civil society to express itself.

In the case of women, new technologies allow them to participate more, since they do not have to show themselves physically, and can organize events remotely. Social media also allow users to reach a very high number of people who might be interested in a political action, and that the event creator would not have known personally. Safa Belghith says that she knew about the protests from Facebook, and that she also uses social media and online websites as her sources of news (Bawsala, Marsad Majles and others). Since TV channels tend to be very biased when they are used by authoritarian regimes, activist can look for more accurate news on the internet, if they can find some that are not censored in their country.

Persecuted minorities, such as members of the LGBT community, can use the internet to their advantage. As explained by member of Moroccan association Aswat, the internet is one of the only safe and secure spaces for homosexuals and transsexuals. (Lacroix, 2016) The internet also allows people to create communities. In Tunisia, Facebook was instrumental in creating solidarity networks. People could meet and launch events, especially since members of the LGBT are at risk when they are in public spaces. To counter potential governmental spies, LGBT and human rights organization focus on digital security (Ben Jebara, 2017).

4. Transitional justice gives a preeminent role to women in Tunisia

According to the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), transitional justice refers to the ways countries emerging from periods of conflict and repression address large scale or systematic human rights violations so numerous and so serious that the normal justice system will not be able to provide an adequate response. This kind of justice particularly focuses on women, and the way they will help rebuild a society that was torn apart. A network was created to promote that goal: "Transitional Justice is Also for Women". Founded in September 2015, the aim of the network is to ensure the participation of women victims in the transitional justice process. It brought together 11 women's associations who could work with victims to help them understand how transitional justice could address their experiences of authoritarianism.

(ICTJ, 2017)

Tunisia has started a transitional justice process after it emerged of decades under authoritarian leaders. Thousands of people have already contributed their complaints, which will be treated by the Truth and Dignity Commission. Its goal is to denounce human rights violations, make reparations and hold the abusers accountable, in order to potentially attain national reconciliation.

After a few months, 12,000 victims made themselves known, most of them being men. Human rights activists however were surprised at the number of women who recalled episodes of sexual violence and rape. (Gall, 2015) Through this process, they might be able to get reparation, and to find a place in society, where victims are not ashamed anymore. That could be one of the definitions of empowerment.

CONCLUSION

After studying women's political participation in Morocco and Tunisia, and especially how it has evolved in the last few years, several elements can be highlighted.

First, both societies are profoundly divided along a conservative-progressive gap, as well as a rural-urban one and an educational one. In some ways, political and economic elites are very similar to Western ones: they had comparable educations, speak the same language when it comes to women's empowerment, and women from the elite have a genuine chance of getting powerful positions, such as lawyer or doctor. However, when it comes to holding actual political power, even women from a privileged background are much less represented than men from the same background as members of parliament, government ministers, or mayors. Rural women are less likely to get an education, and even less likely to go to university. This decreases their likeliness of getting politically involved, formally or informally, because they lack the political resources, but also the financial resources to do so. The only way to get broader parts of the population in general, and women in particular, involved in politics, is to improve the rural and poor population's access to education, as well as building a better economic system and a social safety net.

That said, this process has started, and more women than ever are getting involved thanks to better education and access to the Internet. Women's literacy rates in both countries, especially Tunisia, have soared in the past few decades. Political participation remains complicated for a vast number of women in the older generations who cannot read, and therefore cannot compare written political platforms or inform themselves through newspapers and written news. In the younger generations however, a large majority of women are able to read and can more easily make their own judgement. They can also better navigate their country's bureaucracy and are more equipped to start running for office, as they are more likely to understand the rules and law pertaining to that activity. Access to the Internet is now high in urban areas, and growing in rural parts of the country. This allows women to communicate with like-minded people, other

women involved politically that they might not have met in their first circle, and it allows themselves to express their opinion on the platform of their choice.

In countries where corruption is relatively common and where trust in political representatives is low, women seem to particularly favor civil society activism. It is a freer space, where women do not necessarily need men's approval to become active and get power – unlike in political parties for instance, where men generally control who is nominated. The structures of civil society organizations are looser, and they generally focus on narrower issues. It can help women feel more at ease to get involved when they know the extent of the organizations' reach and fight.

When women get involved in civil society organizations, one of their issues of choice seem to be improving women's situations and rights. Indeed, given the discrepancy between women and men's situations, closing the gap might look like the obvious first step for women who are discriminated against in several ways.

In terms of what the future might look like for women's political participation in both countries, Tunisia seems to be on its way to greater political equality. Both societies are conservative, but thanks to previous educational history and the revolutionary boost, women are more likely to get involved and choose their destiny. Morocco could only catch up by improving significantly its educational system and the opportunities given to young women in its society. The laws would have to be changed to allow more participation. The country will only attain wide political participation when it democratizes and reduces the level of corruption: women are currently discouraged because when they get involved, they have little agency, are risking their freedom and might see their efforts not be effective because of corruption. Corruption is a problem Tunisia has to tackle as well to have a more stable and durable democracy, which has the people's trust.

When it comes to the limits of my work, the fact that I cannot speak Arabic, somewhat limits my analysis of the situation. I could not interview monolingual Arabic speakers, therefore limiting my research to bilingual, usually wealthier, and

more educated interviewees. I also could not read the local press in Arabic and the academic articles written in Arabic. Some of the Francophone media is known to have a more liberal slant: Huffington Post Maghreb often promotes a progressive agenda for instance. However, I should add the caveat that academic articles by Tunisian and Moroccan scholars are often written directly into French: they can easily reach an international audience this way. Moreover, both countries have several Francophone newspapers, so my understanding of the situation mostly came from local analyses.

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Laabidi, Hamza Meddeb

Féminisme dans le monde arabe, 11/03/2017, Créteil, France. Organized by the academic journal *Nouvelles Questions féministes*. Speakers: Ghaïss Jasser, Feriel Lalami, Nahed Badawia, Norma Marcos, Nadia Chaabane

Femmes en Politique, 28/03/2017, Antony, France. Organized by La Vie Nouvelle. Main speaker : Réjane Sénac, professor and researcher at Sciences Po, specialized in Women's political participation

APPENDIX:



Annex 1: Courrier International, October 2012, "The Autumn of Arab women"

Annex 2: Interview of Senda Ben Jebara, member of the Tunisian LGBTQ organization Mawjoudin

In this interview and the following ones, LD refers to the author. Senda has agreed for the interview to be recorded.

SB: We are not specialists in political participation, we have feminist tendencies, but we are mainly an LGBT association.

LD: I wanted to have different points of view, and yours will be very interesting.

LD: Could you introduce yourself?

SB: I am part of Mawjoudin as a social advisor at the moment, and I have also been a member of the board since 2015. I am 28 years old, I belong to a political party, the Masar youth organization, the democratic and social path. I have some knowledge of politics, given my political background. I grew up in Tunis, in an average social context, in a middle-class family. I had a state education, which is very important to say, and I did my high school education in a special high school, a "pilot" high school. There is an entrance examination, and those with the best grades are oriented towards this school. That said, I have not finished my university studies. I started several things that I did not finish.

I was very active in the political sphere, and afterwards in civil society, even more active, especially lately.

LS: Could you describe your organization, and its objectives?

SB: It is an organization that was created in 2013, as a collective of three to four people maximum. In 2015, we registered as "Mawjoudin-we exist". And from there, it took about a year and a half to really start working on capacity building, advocacy, lobbying, campaigning, social and financial support, a little bit of everything. We work primarily with LGBTQI individuals, but we are an intersectional organization, so we also work on migration issues, refugees, feminist issues, of course. It is also part of the group of individual freedoms, 34 organizations in Tunisia that fight for individual freedoms in the country.

LD: Was it simple to register with the authorities?

SB: As an LGBT organization, it's always a bit complicated, you cannot really register, because homosexuality is criminalized by law. What we generally do, what almost every other organization does, is that it is registered as an organization that works on the issue of human rights promotion. Since our work reinforces human rights, it makes sense. Thanks to that, we are much freer in our work, we have much fewer problems with the authorities.

LD: Could you describe your role in the organization, you said "social counselor" I think?

SB: That's right. As a social counselor, I'm not just in charge of social counseling. I am also listening: we have a small listening service, which provides guidance, we are three colleagues working there. I mainly work on collecting information that could be used by people later: medical information to be provided to some doctors, mainly mental health specialists, psychologists and psychiatrists. But also other aspects.

I take care of useful contacts within other organizations. I have a lot to do with other organizations, whether national or international, to create contacts and a network that could possibly help other people. I also work a lot in the coordination of certain projects, I was project coordinator before that, when I was just a simple member. I always do a bit of coordination aside. In fact, in small organizations that are being built up little by little, you find yourself doing a little bit of everything. I also work on campaigns, I have done advocacy work. But the main title is social counselor for the moment.

LD: Does the association carry out petitions, demonstrations or other actions?

SB: Petitions, no, not really, we try not to do things that do not really work in Tunisia. Frankly, petitions in Tunisia never work. We may think that it will change the world, it is never the case.

We do small campaigns, in 2015 we campaigned for the abolition of article 230: we took pictures of a few personalities and artists holding a sign. It was launched on 10 December on the occasion of the International Day of Human Rights. Now,

we are preparing a series of campaigns that will soon be launched, normally before the end of the year. All that is advocacy, we mainly try to work from the internal to the external, it is very important first to strengthen the capacities of the people of the community before going further. Fortunately, too, we have the support of civil society and a number of other human rights organizations, such as the group I mentioned before, and it gives us some security to work freely. Moreover, we discussed the subject of article 230 which criminalizes homosexuality and anal testing several times within the collective. Several advocacy actions have been organized with the collective, in relation to this, several communiqués, etc. There is also a coalition of LGBT associations in Tunisia, which is made up of three associations: Mawjoudin, Chouf, and Damj. We work together.

We also made the Universal Periodic Review this year, which was sent to the UN, I believe there were 24 recommendations from international delegations. Which is enormous. Of course, it was rejected, but it's a first step, and they promised to review the anal test, which is already a huge step.

Again, the focus is on capacity building, community support, psychological support, through artistic activities, not necessarily artistic, but where people find themselves. There is already a desire to expand the community before moving on to greater action.

LD: Can you tell me a little bit more about the actions you are taking, in particular teaching members of the community about their rights?

SB: We focus on training in gender issues and sexuality. It is very important that people are able to recognize themselves, to accept themselves, to know the situation in which they live, the Tunisian context, which is very different from the international context. There is a tendency to believe that we are part of this international context, whereas we live in another context. There are many problems with the acceptance of the society of these people, which is very different from what happens elsewhere. We have had training in advocacy, digital security, training on the ground, a little bit of everything, including what effects everyday life.

LD: You were talking about it earlier, it's about creating a space to talk about your own problems as a community?

SB: Exactly. We had a series of trainings last year called Lilo identity: Looking In, Looking Out, and it's a day to learn about yourself. To accept oneself more, to speak, to share with others the experience, to find oneself in a safe and secure space, where people feel good, where people feel at ease to share a sometimes very painful experience. This is considered a very important day to move from a state of non-acceptance to a state of acceptance. From that point on, we can build a lot.

LD: You have already begun to answer me, but would you say that you are involved politically?

SB: That's clear. In any case, any social cause is a political cause.

LD: So you vote regularly for the party you told me about (Al Masar)?

SB: It's the only party that represents all the causes I fight for. It is a left-wing, social, and socialist party.

LD: There is no other party that takes LGBT rights into account?

SB: There were a few parties that at one point issued a statement denouncing practices against LGBT people. That said, I do not believe them too much. I know people in certain parties, and I do not trust them too much. In Al Masar, I know people, I know what they think, and I do not trust anyone else. It has always been the first party to make decisions about social issues, including sensitive issues. So I will always go to them.

LD: Does this party accept, highlight, LGBT candidates?

SB: Already, there should be a representation of LGBT candidates. There is no such thing in political parties, this representation is almost non-existent. And the few people who are part of it are still not sufficiently trained, not invested enough. I think that this party specifically would want to put some people forward, even though they are LGBT, and that it could potentially harm the reputation of a party. That said, it will be necessary to have these necessary training, to be present ...

Which is not always the case. I think the community in general is not very politically involved. According to those I know, a large part of the community does not vote, is not aware of what is happening politically. It's still a problem.

LD: Is it because they think that they will not have influence by participating, or because the parties do not take into account their problems, or some other reason?

SB: It's a bit of both. But it is also for fear of being put in the spotlight. Because when you are active politically, you are much more vulnerable to attacks, people who look into your life, who will find things that you do not want to be discovered about you. And so there are many more precautions that are taken.

I was asked to run for municipal elections, and I refused, mainly for the work I do and for who I am. Socially speaking, it would completely annihilate me. There are a lot of things that are put at risk in this kind of participation.

LD: So it's really complicated for you to engage in politics openly?

SB: Exactly.

LD: What made you want to get involved in your organization and your political party?

SB: In the political party, I have always been an admirer of politics. It is for the values of this party precisely, for the people who are in it, their thinking, how they struggle for certain social causes. It impressed me enormously, and it seemed like the middle ground between politics and civil society.

At one point, I had a lot more political ambitions than today. Now, I reassess the risks that could follow a much more political appearance. That's why I'm a little bit more inclined towards civil society than politics itself. Because I also find politics in my work in a sense. That also does not involve much intra-political tactics. Which sometimes irritates me. I am a little more involved in civil society and I neglect the political life in which I had started to participate.

LD: For Mawjoudin, did you get involved because you knew people who were already members, for example?

SB: Yes, mainly. I was part of a feminist association before that, working mainly with lesbian, bi and trans people, only women. After a while, I was much more in favor of inclusiveness, to find a certain harmony between everyone. Already we are a very marginalized community, we should not be dividing ourselves. I am very aware that it is very important to have this feminist space alone where men do not have access. But I always look for some inclusiveness, and I was missing it. I joined Mawjoudin because I already knew several people in this organization and I loved the work that they did. I loved their vision, I saw a lot of potential.

LD: Would you say that men and women have the same weight in the association, when you make decisions it's relatively balanced?

SB: For decisions, I would say yes. On the other hand, for representativeness there are many more men than women. This is still the problem in LGBT associations, and I am pointing out that in hard-line feminist organizations there is a lack of representativeness, there is a lack of members, mobilization quite simply. It's true that it's not a matter of "attracting more or less", but gay men are much more present, take up much more space.

LD: In public spaces, would you say that gays or lesbians are more persecuted?

SB: Maybe gay men. But there are also other factors that come into play, such as gender expression. If a gay man is manly enough, he goes unnoticed. If a woman is much more virile than she should be, she will be persecuted. And it is catastrophe when a man is not virile, or "not enough" virile, for society, then it is catastrophic. We had accidents that were quite scary.

LD: Do you think getting involved in Mawjoubin was more of a positive experience, or it created difficulties, in your personal life, family ...?

SB: That was positive, no doubt. In my personal, family life, I think I managed to impose a certain opinion, and a certain presence where I said "I do what I want, you have absolutely no say". It was more my imposition of the thing than anything else. Maybe other people would have been much more persecuted, that's for

sure. It must be said that thanks to my gender expression which is fairly feminine, people do not pay as much attention to what I do as if I had another appearance.

LD: Since 2011 have you seen a difference in the involvement of women? Is it easier now to express yourself?

SB: It's clear that it's completely different. It has nothing to do with how things were previously. It's something completely new. Before 2011, no one dared to talk, I personally had no idea what politics were before 2011. I knew a little that was all underground, the political parties did not have the right to exist, but the parties in power I had absolutely no idea how it was going in. I would say that the political representation of women at the time was much less present today than that. We still have a percentage of women I believe of 35% is still a huge representation for the region. We have an obligation for the parliamentary elections to have a horizontality so we are working to have a verticality too. You could possibly establish a parity in the representation of women and men since we still have in the binary in Tunisia. There is a lot of progress that has been made since 2011. Civil society has really begun to do an extraordinary work on absolutely all the issues you can imagine. Political parties are very numerous, I do not even remember, but it's more than 100 political parties. Some of course do not work. I mean that people, at some point, started to say "why not me too?". So yes, there has been a great political and social representation of women since 2011. And then we must also say that there is a certain weight of civil society that did not exist before. Civil society is now completely in the process of imposing certain rules, which is completely new. We really see the progress and the change of the law, a new legibility, we think that in the end it works rather well.

LD: Would you say that being a lesbian since 2011 is easier or has not it changed?

SB: It's much easier, that's for sure. And even communication, meeting up. There are many things that have changed. Before we knew no one, nobody knew each other. And then, all of a sudden, everyone knows each other, there is a real community. This community is relatively, I will not say "united", because there is a lot of drama within the community. But there is still a real community, when there is

a problem, everyone is mobilized. There is a certain solidarity, which did not exist before, because the community did not exist.

LD: When political parties and human rights movements talk about LGBT rights, do you think they are sincere, or is it to show themselves in a good light, for example, to please the international community?

SB: I think it's mostly because now there's a lot of money going to the LGBT community. Especially in the region. People all of a sudden begin to take an interest in LGBT rights. It has become very cool, everyone is telling us that they will start working with us, and are beginning to really take ownership of the cause. And sometimes I think it's rude. Already we are hyper-marginalized, there is a person who is straight, who says I am at the forefront of the supporters of the LGBT community, who says they will take charge of things. While in fact no, we did not get mugged for nothing.

LD: Is it possible for trans women to live in Tunisian society, to live their expression of gender for example?

SB: Not at all. Precisely for trans people, it is much more problematic. They cannot change gender. There is no legal access to hormones. They are constantly beaten, arrested all the time, mainly for prostitution. Because most trans women, because of the problems that result from all this, often find themselves becoming sex workers. It is a huge problem for trans women. For trans men there also are problems, but less than what trans women have to go through.

LD: Why?

SB: Mainly because it is less visible, because one accepts more that a woman is masculine a man is feminine. It is gender roles that intervene, we are in a very conservative society. It is difficult to accept that patriarchy is deconstructed.

LD: I saw a documentary from the League of Tunisian Voters who said that in Tunisia since 2011 and even before, laws were fairly innovative and progressive in relation to women's rights, while society was more conservative, and full of gender stereotypes. What do you think?

SB: I think there's a lot of schizophrenia. There was not that problem in the 1960s, 70s, we were still a fairly progressive society where women did not wear headscarves, often wore mini-skirts, it was completely different. And then it started to change, my theory is that it is because of satellite TV stations. With access to the Gulf ranges, there was much more influence from Muslim, Islamist channels. And besides, I saw people I knew and who were progressive putting on the headscarf.

LD: Does your organization have members or contacts with women who are in rural areas, or is it completely urban?

SB: For the moment, it is still very urban. It is very difficult to have access to women in rural areas, specifically for an LGBT organization. It's still much less accepted in rural areas, not even accepted because people absolutely do not know what it is. They are completely in denial that there are LGBT people who exist with us. The debate started 2 years ago when people on TV started talking about it. A lot of people went on air and said, "We do not have that. It does not exist." So there is also this problem where people are completely in denial. It still takes a lot of time to access people in rural areas, it takes a lot of groundwork. And then we should not neglect the migration of LGBT people to urban areas. It does not really make it possible to create a satellite in a rural area.

LD: Do you think that, in the near or foreseeable future, there is a chance that section 230 will be eliminated?

SB: I do not know at all. And for me personally the abolition of the article right away because the abolition of the article will open the door to further persecution if one does not make another article that protects LGBT individuals. One cannot remove the item without putting another item that protects. Because there are a thousand and one other items that could possibly persecute that person, a thousand and one other ways and therefore it would be even more vulnerable. That said, now that there will be the Constitutional Court, there is going to be a debate, if there is an article that is written and condemns discrimination of any kind, then you possibly have your protection, and you have a way to abolish the article directly.

Afterwards, we are always a people of the South in general, and it has been difficult to return to the Constitution. There are laws which are in contradiction with the Constitution, but which are still applied, and which will be applied if they are not changed. So it will depend on the Constitutional Court and that will be in this constitutional court. If we have allies, normally it should solve a lot of problems, if we do not have allies, I would say that we are badly damn.

LD: Would you say that women who are members or elected to other, more conservative, right-wing political parties are also fighting for the rights of women and lesbians? Whether you share a common goal, or not at all?

I would say that on some points, yes, that's for sure. I will say, for example, that for the full legislation, all members including the Conservatives voted for the legislation. It is a very progressive law that protects women, domestic violence, rape, and all that. It was really perfect. That said, I do not know if we can really talk about lesbians, because they are themselves in denial that it exists. With respect to equality in inheritance, I do not think they will support that either. Perhaps some will be, but others will, others, that is, most of the right women, will not. And then, if there are other laws that are a little too progressive for them, surely they will vote against them. One tends to see women who are somewhat the enemy of the woman. Because it is religion and it is sacred for some of them, we do not even have the right to interpret the text. Since the only people who interpret the texts are men, it does not give too many rights to women.

LD: In your opinion, can Tunisia serve as an example, an inspiration in the MENA region? In Morocco for instance?

SB: I do not like to see a state or government as a model. Morocco will change if they want to change, Moroccan feminists need to fight for it. And they will get there. It is a rather more conservative country than Tunisia. But I think there really is a huge feminist movement, especially young feminists, they do a wonderful job in Morocco. With all the mobilizations. And especially with violations of women's rights, and collective rapes. I follow a little what is going on there, and there is really more mobilization than three or four years ago. People really take to the streets, they want to make a difference. And in the end it will work thanks to that.

I do not think that the example should be Tunisia, but it can give them some hope that a country in the same region has made a difference. And that might perhaps boost their work a bit, but I find that the word “example” is a bit problematic.

LD: What kind of relationship do you have with the authorities, have you or anybody else in your neighborhood been arrested?

SB: Yes, from time to time there are arrests. Because of article 230, mainly, but I do not think there are a lot of arrests in the capital. They know that all organizations are concentrated in the capital, so they try not to do arrest us here. But they do it in other regions, there have been several arrests, mostly after 2015. It was from that moment that we started to think it was getting complicated. They started to stop people gradually. What is good is that we are aware of the arrests, so we are advocating, communicating, and most of the people who were arrested did not stay in prison for very long. I think the person who stayed the longest in prison that I heard about was there for one year. While the law says it should be 3 years. But otherwise we had people who stayed a month, 3 months, maximum 3 months.

LD: Can you tell me a little bit about social networks, is it particularly convenient to communicate when you cannot show yourself in public, for example?

SB: Exactly. Just to build a community, we need a certain network. Especially in Tunisia, Facebook has contributed to the construction of this solidarity. There are groups for the other organizations, or outside of them, where everyone can discuss important or mundane things. Also when you start to launch training events for example through social networks. So yes it was enormously beneficial. And especially every time there is a campaign, it only works on social networks. Because we cannot go outside. You cannot risk it. Everything happens there and it works much better than if we went outside. This is the century of technology, and we had to do with it.

LD: And in terms of security, are not you afraid of being spied on by the state?

SB: Legally the state has no right to spy. We have the right to computer security, so legally, if the state is spying on us, we can file a complaint. And as I said earlier, we do a lot of training in digital security, we take our precautions, just in case. It can always happen, you never know. Most sensitive data is really very secure. And we collaborate with other organizations like Access Now, that takes care of our digital security, and that is a great help.

Annex 3: Interview with Safa Belghith, 5th September 2017

Safa Belghith works as a journalist and research consultant on issues related to Tunisian politics, women's rights and media reform.

Safa agreed to have the skype conversation recorded. The interview was conducted in English.

LD: Could you introduce yourself? (Your name, where you are from, your education, your job...)

Safa Belghith, 28 years old Tunisian. Originally from a city in the North, Nabeul. I studied English at Manouba university and then I studied English linguistics, and then international relations, also in English. And for now, I work as a freelancer, I do consecutive interpretation, conferences and meetings, I also do consultancy, research assistant for projects. I also co-organize the Tunis Exchange Programme: we bring academics who are interested in Tunisia or in Tunisian affairs to Tunisia, we do an intense 7-day program during which we meet politicians, civil society activists and so on.

I would say my parents are lower middle class. They are conservative. Originally in the islamic tendency movement, before it became Ennahdha, in the 1970s. But then, they left, for no specific reason. They had kids, and that's the kind of thing that happens.

LD: Would you say you are politically involved?

SaBe: Erm... So, right after the revolution, I went to the headquarters of Ennahdha in my city. Because growing up in a family like mine, you will be politically aware. Because my mum also wears the hijab, so it's the same oppression. And my dad goes to prayer, and he would be arrested sometimes. So the things I have been through a little bit, they have already been through. And you know all these things beforehand. You know Ben Ali is bad since a young age, you know that the regime is bad, but you also know that you should keep your mouth shut. So I knew what Ennahdha was. So right after the revolution, the

minute they opened an office here, since I didn't know any other party here, and I wanted to be politically active so badly, so I went straight to the Ennahdha office. And I was active there, for I think a year and a half or so. I was in the youth committee, and the women committee. At some point I was in the Comité de formation. We did study sessions and things like that. But then I left, because there were policies I didn't agree with.

LD: Could you tell me a little bit about more about that?

SaBe: So what's happening in Ennahdha right now, with the Economic reconciliation Law, and the way they handled the former regime, the path they have chosen... I left when the early signs of that policy started. When I realized, I mean, I still respect Ennahdha and everyone in it, but they are not as revolutionary as I wanted them to be. Maybe it's just me. You know, I went there with really high hopes, maybe they would never have met my hopes anyway. I realized that, no matter the political party, it's not me.

LD: So now, you don't identify with a specific party, you don't prefer one or another?

SaBe: No, absolutely not. I'm really lost, I don't know who to vote for. I mean, there are people I respect in the different parties, but that's it.

LD: Would you say you're an active voter, do you vote every time?

SaBe: Yes.

LD: Do you still vote for Ennahdha, or does it depend?

SaBe: The next elections are in two years. So if they change their policies, maybe. But I don't see it happening. For now, I'm completely at a loss.

LD: Do you participate in other ways? Have you been to protests, signed petitions or other things like that?

SaBe: Yes. Mainly the Maniche Msemah ("I won't forgive") protests, against the Economic reconciliation law. Now it's the Reconciliation law, they removed the economic stuff. And protests in the past, things that come up in certain contexts,

like the protest against Sissi coming to Tunisia for example. I'm not in an organized campaign or anything.

LD: How do you know about these protests?

SaBe: Facebook, obviously. But also, I know a lot of people, who are involved. So if there is something happening, I would definitely know about it. I follow Tunisian politics pretty closely, at all times.

LD: Would you say you identify as a feminist?

SaBe: Yes. Some people don't like that, but I do.

LD: Do you think that all parties defend human rights, or only some of them, or just for show?

SaBe: It's really problematic. We're definitely doing much better than other countries, but also defending women's rights is very politicized. So lots of parties will play on that, even Nidaa Tounes right now. I think some parties genuinely actually care about women. This will sound ironic and contradictory, but from my time in Ennahdha, even though they came out against equal inheritance, and the marrying non-Muslims [for Muslim women] initiatives, when it comes to on the ground activism, Ennahdha really do care about putting women in leadership positions. I've never had a problem, I was there for a year and a half, and I was actually really encouraged: as a young person, and as a woman, to take responsibility, and leadership. I think they really do care. I'm really disappointed about the Equal inheritance thing, but for almost every other issue, they manage well. All of their women don't have the problems you think they would have in a conservative party. Ennahdha MPs are out all the time, don't face stuff like "why aren't you home to take care of your kids?". They actually have their freedom, and are actually empowered within the party, which is really cool. My only experience is there, in this party, so I don't know how it is in other parties.

In the Democratic Current party ("Courant Démocrate"), Samia Abbou, who is an MP, is one of the most vocal voices in Tunisia. She's really tough, strong. And her party, for now, has stood for women's rights.

Nidaa Tounes... I mean, they say things, they have versions of women's rights. Maybe they do care about women's rights, but it's only some women. Not everyone.

LD: Would you say some parties are more open to women with hijabs? For instance, is Ennahdha more open to them than other parties?

SaBe: Maybe some women with hijabs feel more comfortable in Ennahdha to begin with. So maybe it is not so much that a party would be more open to women with hijabs, but that these women would go more to certain parties. Because they automatically assume that it is the party where they want to be. Ennahdha is definitely open to hijab – and non-hijab wearing women. They have non muhajibah [hijab-wearing woman] MPs.

Nidaa Tounes: I don't think they wouldn't be open, but it's just that these women wouldn't go spontaneously there. Maybe not. I don't think that the party would say no. Actually, it would be good politically. Same for Ennahdha with non-hijab wearing women.

LD: Is it all political games?

SaBe: Not necessarily. I had girls with me who didn't wear a hijab when I was in the women's committee in Ennahdha. And there were no problems at all, it was fine. I don't think they felt disenfranchised or different in any way. This is all from my humble experience, I don't know about other parties.

LD: Are there spaces where hijab-wearing women can express themselves, inside and outside political parties?

SaBe: For parties, yes. I don't think that a party would actually dare to make a woman uncomfortable because of certain things, at this point. But in some political parties, there are members who for instance, in the past, always spoke against the hijab, or who used to say that the hijab is a symbol of oppression. Of course, if you wear a hijab, and someone who said that kind of things is in the executive board, that's impossible [for you to join the party].

When it comes to other spaces than political parties, I don't really think there are many. When it comes to organizations, national and international, there usually are both muhajabah and non-muhajabah.

LD: In the political world, would you say comments about how women dress come mostly from men, or women as well?

SaBe: Honestly, women can be their own enemy. Or the enemy of other women. It's not just men. Of course, it starts with them, with people like Béji Caïd Essebsi or others. But women can work hard to keep things the way they are. I when it comes to the issue of inheritance, or the one about marrying non-Muslims, some women are so passionate against it. It beats me! It's more than just men. Some women I've spoken to are more passionate than men about those two issues and keeping the status quo. And also, these women are those who will raise men, at least in Tunisia, and actually in many places. The women will raise the men with certain ideas, and the men will reproduce what they've been told. It's a circle.

LD: When you vote, would say you vote according to certain values? What would these values be?

SaBe: In the past, I voted for revolutionary values...dignity, freedom for everyone...But now, it will have to change. We are past that phase. Now it's going to have to be the party that has the platform that is going to save the country, somehow. Economically speaking, it's not going so well. So, definitely, the economic agenda is a priority, and also freedoms as well. It means that if I go to a party, I have to make sure that this party will protect everyone, not just me. Because we've had enough.

LD: How do you keep informed about the news?

I read the news, I don't watch TV, I don't watch Tunisian channels, they are awful. The media is often a counter-revolutionary factor. I don't count on TV for any kind of news. I don't have a TV actually. Social media, sure. Friends, also. I actually know lots of politicians, because of the work I do. I do translation, mainly for academics who are doing research here. So it's always with MPs and people like that. I'm friends with MPs from almost every party. Which is nice, because I can

hear from all the points of view. I also follow the Parliament sessions sometimes. I would say social media (Twitter, facebook) are my main source of news. Bawsala, Marsad Majles and websites like that.

LD: When you were involved in Ennahdha, would you say there were advantages, drawbacks for you? For instance, did you get comments from people around you?

SaBe: Yes. Well, I don't think it would happen now, but because of the time period. This was in 2011. When Ennahdha had been called terrorist for the past twenty years or more. I heard the word "terrorist" from friends actually...to my face. It was a really tense period, everyone was on edge. Everyone, including me, was so emotional, and understandably. Everyone was so defensive, on their guard. You have some people who were scared of Ennahdha, because they believed Ennahdha was going to bring this Islamic project to Tunisia. Because of everything that had been in the media for the past two decades. So people were actually scared. And Ennahdha was trying so hard to be accepted. They accepted a lot of mean comments from other people. They would call them names, be very insulting. But Ennahdha wanted to be accepted, and change the view people have. The logo of Ennahdha at the time was "Don't hear about us, hear from us". They really took it viscerally, they worked so hard.

So, it was difficult. I wouldn't say it was a bad experience, it was actually very good.

LD: Were you able to convince your friends that you and Ennahdha were not terrorists?

SaBe: Some people can be convinced, but there were others who, for obvious reasons, really believed that their lifestyles would be threatened. They believed that Ennahdha was going to bring back polygamy, ban alcohol. These things were actually never on Ennahdha's agenda.

During the electoral campaign, Ennahdha was saying: "these are our flyers, platform. We don't want to prohibit alcohol". But it was hard for some people to

believe them. And you know, there are not many good examples of Islamic movements in the world, where they don't turn into oppressive regimes.

It was difficult for people to remove this image of Iran, Afghanistan... That's what they called us at that time, "you're going to make this country into another Afghanistan"... It took people time to actually realize that it wasn't the case. And now, six years on, people are realizing that Ennahdha isn't planning to do all that.

LD: Would you say that they are more institutionalized, accepted now?

SaBe: Yes, I would say "mainstreamed". I don't hear people say the same things they used to. With this whole Nidaa Tounes coalition. People don't see them as that much of a threat, they're not the terrorists that the former regime made them out to be. But those first two years... were not easy.

LD: Coming back to the hijab issue, would you say you are free to do whatever you want in public spaces, walk wherever you want?

SaBe: In public spaces, people don't stare. From society in general, there's no problem, the problems come from institutions. And it depends on the people in these institutions. I went to two high schools. One of them is the one I talk about in the article, it is really willing to implement the policies. The principal would remove the hijab from the girls with his own hands! But the principal at the other high school would meet us at the entrance, and he would say "please take it off here". And he pointed to a café across the street, and said "See these three men there? They are part of the secret police. At the end of the day, they will say 'you let three hijabas walk through the gates'". So he asked us to let him keep his job basically.

Otherwise, no problems in the streets. Academia is a problem because of who the people in charge are. The big professors are mostly not pro-hijab. In my specific program, in international relations, all of them were former or current diplomats. Representatives of the Tunisian state abroad. We all know who got those jobs before the end of Ben Ali's regime, before the revolution. Not people from the opposition obviously, but people from the regime. Of course their positions would be like that.

I was discriminated against in a hotel. But that hasn't happened to me in bars, or nightclubs. But some of my friends were denied entry in certain bars because they were wearing a hijab. The thing is, you can't complain about this. Because if a girl who wears a hijab goes back home and says "Oh Dad, I wasn't let into this bar because of my hijab..." It doesn't really make sense. Society wouldn't understand.

But I don't think generally that socially, wearing a hijab is problematic.

LD: In your article, you said that you were literally told that you would be discriminated against if you took a competitive exam for a civil servant position?

SaBe: Yes. To be honest, I wasn't planning to take the diplomatic exam anyway. But to have someone tell you that point blank, that was really shocking. All of these policies are not a surprise. I have been denied so many scholarships because of the hijab in the past. It is something I am used to. This professor really hated the hijab for some reason. He said, "you know, even if you succeed in the written exam, you will be failed at the oral exam. I am on the jury, and I will make sure that you don't pass. Because you don't represent Tunisian women." Which is absurd, because so many of us wear hijabs now, but he wanted to make a division between women. They play on these divisions. That same teacher said we probably thought our classmates were sinners because they were not wearing hijabs. He said that between two equal candidates, he would favor the one who didn't wear a hijab, because he knew she shared his ideological beliefs. And he also thought that in order to work in international NGOs, it was necessary to remove the hijab, because foreigners were not used to it.

LD: Do you think you could have complained to the university about what happened?

SaBe: We did complain to the head of the department at some point, and I think it partially worked. Not because she cared, but because she said he wasn't being serious, he wouldn't do it. And he actually didn't do it.

And complaining to other people, for instance at the ministry level, wouldn't have worked. Because the people working there mostly haven't changed since the revolution.

And also, a lot of people don't realize that it's a problem. A number of my friends think that now everything is OK, we all have the same rights. Wearing the hijab is legal now, so it shouldn't be a problem.

LD: Do you think feminist, progressive movements forgot women like you, or do you feel included?

SaBe: In terms of progressive movements, the one that comes to mind is l'Association tunisienne des femmes démocrates. I respect what they are doing right now, but they didn't do anything for people like me in the past. When the crackdowns on opponents happened, you had thousands of women whose husbands were in jail, who were fired from their jobs because of the hijab, just because of the hijab. They had no income. They would go to the offices of the Association, and were told that the office wasn't there, or were just not helped. If anything, Femmes Démocrates actually sent a letter to Ben Ali, denouncing his violence in fighting the women who wear hijabs. But they didn't denounce the fight against the hijab itself. They were saying something like, we agree that this phenomenon should be stopped, but this (the violence) isn't the right way.

But anyway, these progressive organizations haven't done anything for people like me. If I went to them and I said I had been discriminated against, I don't think they would do anything. But there also are women that I admire a lot in some of the organizations, that are doing amazing work when it comes to fighting for the violence against women law. It is a real achievement, and they have really pushed for it to be passed. They also stood by the women whose husbands were in trouble during the mine protests in 2008. They are just selective in who they help.

LD: Do you believe that women who live in the South of the country, in the rural areas, have been forgotten?

SaBe: The South in general has been forgotten. Development-wise, the south has always been forgotten, by all the regimes including the current one. The presidents are always from the coast. I think it's a general problem, not just women. Women from the South are forgotten. But I can't speak from experience, I come from a privileged city, because it is close to Hammamet and other tourist attractions.

LD: Would you say that since 2011, you've seen more women (including yourself) participate in political life, getting involved?

SaBe: Absolutely! More people in general, but for sure more women. And we have the "parity" rule, it pushes them. Even if they are intimidated. Which is why it is a good law, because almost all of the women I know, their first reaction to political activism, or running on a list, would be "no, I can't, I have kids" or other reasons. And the law is really good, because it shows them that it is their place, their right to be there. It makes them realize that it really matters for them to be there. When it comes to women running, parties are doing quite well, but it comes to women getting the positions of power, it is not the case. They're not really promoted and don't usually get the top positions.

LD: Would you consider running for office some day?

SaBe: I was actually asked to run for the municipal election! But I said no. Right now, I'm so angry at all the parties, and so disappointed politically speaking. Maybe one day, it's definitely not my agenda right now. I'd rather do it from the civil society, I'd rather work in NGOs, work on policies and things like that, but not as a politician, especially not as a politician in a political party. I do not like what that entails. Even if it is a party that I like, that I agree with on 98% of the issues, there will always be those 2%. I would not be myself if I had to defend those 2%.

LD: Would you say that Tunisia can be considered an example for North Africa, for Morocco, could it be an inspiration for them?

SaBe: Of course, Tunisia is an example, in the region and in the Middle-East, yes, definitely. Saudi Arabia is...a bit different from us for instance, polygamy is still accepted in a number of countries... Tunisia has always been a leader when

it comes to women's rights. But it has to be analyzed in a nuanced, critical way. To see the problems as well. And to see through the intentions of people who are trying to change things. Politicians have their agendas. If these two laws (the marrying a non-Muslim and the equal inheritance laws) pass, it would be revolutionary for the region. Marrying non-Muslims is unheard of. It happens, people do it, but people convert only nominally. People go through the bureaucratic process, sign documents, read the shahada, but don't really convert in their heart. So people are already marrying non-Muslims, it's not like the decree prohibiting it are actually preventing it from happening. It creates a context of hypocrisy and lies. Fake statistics probably. The equal inheritance, I'm not sure it will pass. Most people in parliament are against it. Ennahdha are in a tough position, because if they come out against the change, to the outside world they will seem anti-women. But if they accepted it, they would lose a large part of their base. Tunisian society as a whole is quite conservative, and particularly Ennahdha voters. The main MPs for Ennahdha were very clear that they wouldn't support the change, not the time to challenge the traditions.

LD: Doesn't it contradict the constitution, that says that men and women are equal?

SaBe: It contradicts so many things! Even the marrying non-Muslims contradicts the constitution, because you should have freedom of conscience. That decree bothers me so much, because there are atheists in Tunisia. Does this decree apply to them?

LD: I watched a documentary by La Ligue des Electriciennes tunisiennes, where they said that Tunisian society was quite conservative, but laws usually were ahead of their time. What do you think?

SaBe: True. When it comes to laws, Tunisia has always been ahead of society. Which is why these two laws in my opinion really should be implemented. It will bring society up to speed. It will give protection to people. For instance, families can put an end to a woman marrying a non-Muslim. If the law changes, the woman will still have problems because of her family and of society, but she

would have law on her side. And it would get normalized with time, people would get used to it after 10 or 20 years. Laws definitely should be ahead of society.

LD: Do you think Tunisia is headed in the right direction? Do you think you will continue to get more freedom with time?

SaBe: Women's rights, yes. We are progressing, but we really need to focus on real problems and not just issues that help people get elected. Beji is playing a political game. He's been in politics for decades and knows exactly what he is doing. I don't believe for a second that he cares whether women will have equal inheritance or not. It is really political.

But we are not progressing with how things are going on the ground, for instance the way women are treated. Equal pay in the private sector, women in agriculture, young girls who become maids... which is illegal, of course, but it still happens. They are nine or ten years old, work, and then send the money back to their parents. They are not getting an education. But all this isn't on anyone's agenda. Absolutely no one talks about it. People are going crazy over those two laws, but a lot of Tunisian women don't receive an inheritance...at all. In so many families, the brother doesn't even get double what his sister gets, but ten times! But now, suddenly, everyone is for women's rights. Politicians and civil society really need to look where the real issues are.

Annex 4: Interview of Saida Sabir, Vice-president of Tamaynut-Rabat

LD: Can you introduce yourself ? Where do you live / where do you come from, your age, your studies...

I am an Amazigh woman, I live in Rabat but I am originally from the region of Tafraout, a small city in the South of Morocco. I am 24 years old, I studied finance and management at University Mohamed V in Rabat. I am currently working in an Italian multinational company in the finance department.

LD: Can you describe your association? What are its objectives, what kind of membership does it have (majority of men or women, origins, social level) What kind of actions does the association do?

Our association is a federal organization whose main objective is to defend the human rights and the rights of the indigenous peoples, the integration of the Amazigh language and culture, to contribute to the fight against all kinds of racism, and discrimination against women (applying the gender approach).

The members of the association are mostly men. For example, on our executive board, there are 13 people including 4 women and 9 men. The absolute majority of our members are from the South of Morocco with some members of the Rif (East of Morocco), everyone can speak the Amazigh language. The members are from different social classes (professors, lawyers, employees, traders and students).

The association carries out several actions, conferences on topical subjects (the constitution of the Amazigh language, women's equality, the environment and the degradation of the argan tree ...) participation in national and international events around subjects of indigenous peoples, workshops to learn the Amazigh language

LD: Would you say you are engaged politically?

No, I am not engaged politically. In my opinion, political commitment in Morocco is reserved to a precise social class and a well-determined category of people.

LD: Do you participate in other ways? For example, do you vote? (national, local elections ...) Or have you already participated in events?

Yes, I voted in the national elections and participated in demonstrations in solidarity with the Amazigh peoples and the Amazigh cause, precisely the question of expropriation by the Makhzen (Moroccan authority) in the South of Morocco.

LD: What made you want to go into Tamaynut? Your family, your friends, things you read, your studies...

The commitment to Tamaynut at the beginning is a proposal from friends who are already engaged in other association. What is more, I felt I needed this kind of engagement, knowing the situation of the Amazighs in Morocco.

LD: What is it like for women in Tamaynut? Do you think members would treat you differently if you were a male vice-president?

In Tamaynut the participation of women is strongly demanded given its importance. As an example, the election of women to the general assembly has become almost mandatory to encourage women to participate. In my opinion I believe that being a woman vice president in Tamaynut is desirable.

LD: I saw that Tamaynut had a plan for gender equality, can you tell us a bit more about it?

Tamaynut really has a plan for gender equality, that results in women being encouraged to apply to be in the executive office and have a say when it comes to taking decisions.

LD: Do Amazigh women particularly have difficulties to participate in the political life? In your opinion, why? Do you think there is a difference between Amazigh women and other Moroccan women on this issue?

The participation of Amazigh women in political life or in social life is strongly linked to a consciousness that their participation will make a change, this awareness stems from studies and events. Amazigh women, especially in the South of Morocco, have difficulties getting access to education. The level of drop-outs is very high in the region of South Morocco. Given the number of schools available, the level of education and other causes, the participation of Amazigh women is still very weak. It is logical, because of all the obstacles that I have just explained. There are some exceptions, like the example of Fatima Tabaamrant, the parliamentarian who spoke in Amazigh in parliament: it was a first in Morocco. Regarding the issue of the difference between Amazigh women and other Moroccan women I see that there is an exclusion of Amazigh women in some cases, but it does not mean that there is a difference between Amazigh women and women other.

LD: Have you seen a difference since 2011 and the Arab Spring in people's political commitment? For example, did the women around you decide to engage more? Did the Tunisian case inspire you?

As I have already mentioned politics in Morocco is still a taboo for people. In 2011 in Morocco, the Amazigh language was included as official language in the constitution. People preferred to create associations to campaign for a cause or place to try to be involved politically, and women are a committed minority.

LD: Would you say that your engagement in Tamaynut has been a rather positive experience? Did it create any difficulties? For example, did your family or others comment? Or people with authority, as representatives of the Moroccan State?

My experience in Tamaynut is still a fresh view as I was elected vice president in April 2017. I think it is going well, and it will be a positive experience that will change my opinion on concrete things. Problems started not long after the first general assembly. The Moroccan authorities summoned me for an investigation, an investigation in which I was obliged to answer basic questions that the

authorities could have answered directly by looking at my birth register or my identity card. This investigation remains a process to stress the members of the civil society. I also got comments from my family, "Will this commitment influence your professional life?" I get many comments, but as I said I really needed this commitment.

LD: How is it seen to speak tamazight in public, for example in Rabat? Has that curbed your professional career?

I am an Amazigh woman, my two parents are Amazigh, I was born in Rabat and I spent all my life in Rabat but I am still attached to the Amazigh culture and traditions, I learned to speak Amazigh through to my parents. Speaking Tamazight in public was never accepted by Arabic speakers, but we always try to impose our language. As an example, in the 1980s and 1990s, speaking in Amazigh in public was strongly rejected, especially in the cities of Rabat and Casablanca. When it comes to my professional career, being an Amazigh woman is a skill that will favor me in the eyes of a recruiter, because the Amazigh are well known for being serious and committed to their work.

THANK YOU

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