

## [Opposition to Tunisian President Saied's Power Grab Grows as Thousands of Protesters Rally and Call on Him to Resign](#)

Over this past weekend, thousands of Tunisians rallied in the country's capital city of Tunis to protest against President Kais Saied's efforts to strengthen his grip on power. Saied recently declared that he will be ruling the nation by decree, ignoring the constitution and enabling himself to solely appoint cabinet members and set policy while also maintaining the freeze on Tunisia's elected parliament. The large-scale gathering of demonstrators voiced their defense of the country's 2014 national charter and denounced Saied's clear move to undermine Tunisian democracy. In addition to the significant and growing opposition among the population, around 20 domestic and global human rights groups condemned the power grab and highlighted it as a "first step towards authoritarianism." Some of the entities that did so include Human Rights Watch, the Tunisian Network for Transitional Justice, and Amnesty International's Tunisia division. The consolidation of power by Saied is particularly troubling because it signals that the political crisis in Tunisia could continue to spiral without measures to uphold and protect democratic ideals. In one of the latest developments this week, several Tunisian political parties announced the formation of a coalition to counter Saied's attempts to monopolize power.

A notable collection of advocacy organizations within Tunisia and around the world spoke out against Saied's behavior. The joint statement expressed that all of the groups are united in "strongly denouncing the decisions taken unilaterally by President Kais Saied, reaffirming their unwavering attachment to democratic principles, and condemning the seizure of power and the lack of any form of safeguards." They also emphasized that any legitimate reform to Tunisia's political system must be done while respecting the separation of powers and fully guaranteeing fundamental freedoms and human rights within the country – elements that were not abided by during the course of Saied's recent actions. The critical statement spearheaded by Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and others has been the strongest denouncement by prominent advocacy groups since the beginning of the political crisis.

On top of the aforementioned rights organizations, the largest political party in Tunisia – Ennahda – has also forcefully condemned President Saied's cementing of his power grab. They point out that the move is a blatant disregarding of the country's constitution, joining the thousands of pro-democracy advocates who took to the streets to express their disapproval and urge that the constitution be respected and parliament reinstated. At the same time, around 100 members of the Ennahda party have resigned as a result of the crisis since internally within the party, there has been dismay over leadership's failure to stabilize the nation.

With his latest actions, President Saied has not only prolonged the suspension of parliament, he has also frozen their salaries and eliminated their immunity from prosecution. These actions have further limited the possibility for fruitful negotiations. As western nations have urged Saied to cease his consolidation of power, the pressure from external nations has seemingly done little to deter his behavior. The peaceful protestors who were met with a strong security presence have optimistically stated that their movement to reinstate Tunisian democracy and oppose the president will continue to grow. Their hopes are that mass public pressure will force all sides in the conflict to reach a peaceful agreement, but analysts have warned that the crisis may worsen unless deliberate and strong measures are taken to eliminate the authoritarian-like modifications to the political system. Lastly, worry exists over the situation escalating into violence as so far peaceful calls to uphold democracy have been steamrolled by the president and his allies.