



Former Tunisian President Marzouki Urges the Country's Citizens to Rally in Defense of Democracy in the Face of Saied's Power Grab

During this past week, Former Tunisian President Moncef Marzouki called on the country's citizens to rally in defense of democracy and protest against current President Kais Saied's controversial recent power grab. Marzouki urged Tunisians to put aside any political affiliations and take part in the resistance efforts, highlighting the importance of upholding democratic ideals and principles which have been threatened as a result of Saied's actions in the preceding months. He also suggested that the resignation of Tunisia's president and parliament speaker could be a way out of the existing political crisis gripping the nation. Thousands of Tunisian advocates organized and engaged in large anti-Saied demonstrations last weekend in the capital city of Tunis, and the majority of parties and civil society entities in the country have condemned Saied's behavior as well. Several days ago, Saied unveiled a new government which pro-democracy advocates were quick to denounce for comprising of his allies and supporters, while criticism was also levied at the president for his glaring attempts to consolidate power and lessen the role of the cabinet and prime minister.

Tunisia's former President Marzouki was the immediate predecessor to the Ben Ali regime and has thus worked to play an integral role in championing democracy in the North African country since the Arab Spring uprisings of the early 2010s. The human rights activist was a popular figure and viewed as the first and most successful democratic leader to emerge from the Arab Spring. Marzouki was also regarded as a pivotal force in helping to stabilize the nation in the aftermath of those uprisings. Thus, his popularity and status as a key part of the pro-democracy movement carry significant weight and make his call for resistance against Saied's actions impactful among the general population in Tunisia.

Recently, the new Saied-appointed Prime Minister of Tunisia Najla Bouden Romdhane announced cabinet nominations in their efforts to establish a fresh government. Pro-democracy advocates are most concerned over the fact that Saied has given no indication as to when he would relinquish his now near total control of the political system, and in the naming of the new government there appears to be no sign of a clear end or resolution to the current constitutional crisis. Skeptics have also denounced the new government as mere allies of the president who will do little to actually help restore Tunisian democracy. While believed to still have some support for his actions, Saied has witnessed an uptick in opposition to his power grab due to the move by former President Marzouki in articulating the dangers of the behavior.

The need for a widely accepted and functioning government is particularly important in Tunisia's existing societal climate because of the role it must play in the economic recovery of the country. Without the general population's overwhelming confidence that the new government is an entity which has been legitimately and democratically elected by the people, potential for civic unrest will continue to remain a serious possibility, especially as many activists pinpoint a backslide into authoritarian-like governance by Saied and his enablers. Up until now, Saied has imposed his imprint on every aspect of the political apparatus with his string of controversial recent moves and the new government is therefore tainted by his discernable quest for solidified power in Tunisia.