

### Another Uprising May Happen Soon in Tunisia

Tunisia has been facing dissatisfaction from its people for some time now. There is a general consensus amongst the international community that the economy in Tunisia is fractured and in danger of collapsing. 12 years after the Arab Spring, an overwhelming majority of Tunisians are dissatisfied with the country's current economic status and adherence to counterproductive austerity measures dictated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). These policy failures have resulted in an overwhelming amount of discontent and unfulfilled expectations, which pose a significant challenge for Tunisia's long-term prospects for democratic progress. Since the Arab Spring took place less than a decade ago, Tunisia has had to focus on repairing its collapsed economy while still trying to consolidate its democracy. The government leaders who were in power after the revolution have failed to move the country in the right direction, and weren't been able to address the people's economic grievances. The economic stagnation has led to the Tunisian people believing that no one inside of the political establishment is capable of executing responsible policy that would alleviate their difficulties. Populism began as a distrust of the government, which gave power to President Saied as a potential savior during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Saied promised strong rule and a way to end corruption in Tunisia. This ultimately caused the Tunisian economy to collapse; poverty, unemployment, and inflation rapidly increased from there. Debt provided an opportunity for IMF loans to rapidly increase.

President Saied's socio-economic failings have also consisted of repressive and violent measures against any forms of opposition and anti-government protests. He has implemented travel bans and jailed activists. Any economic aid outside of IMF loans has been non-existent. In order to keep receiving these loans, Saied must remain in the good graces of the IMF and the rules they must adhere to. A new \$1.9 billion loan is hoped to soon be implemented to eliminate food and fuel subsidies, public health, education, and social protection spending. Protests continue in Tunisia and are reminiscent of what we have seen during the Arab Spring as Tunisians are resilient toward the lack of support from President Saied and the ones sitting in the government establishment.

Similar circumstances have been seen in Tunisia's past. When the IMF insisted that bread subsidies be eliminated in order to obtain aid, there were early indications of a political crisis in the 1980s. This prompted Zine El Abidine ben Ali to lead a coup d'état. This coup is similar to the 2008 rebellion against Ben Ali's government, which became one of the most well-known revolts in history. He also complied with the structural adjustment program of the IMF. President Saied seems to be ignoring the obvious, the fact that the IMF austerity policies will lead to an end to his authoritative undemocratic reign. It appears Tunisians may once more rise up to try to defend their democracy and ensure that they are still able to put food on their tables. They are beginning to unite around the Saied regime's failure to address the country's economic issues and its cooperation with the IMF's risky demands. It is very possible that there will soon be another revolt by the people of Tunisia to ensure their democratic and economic security.