

PRIORITIZING PATRIOTISM: TUNISIAN CITIZENS EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS

FINDINGS FROM FOCUS GROUPS IN TUNISIA
Conducted April 20 – 29, 2013

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NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, nongovernmental organization that responds to the aspirations of people around the world to live in democratic societies that recognize and promote basic human rights. Since its founding in 1983, NDI and its local partners have worked to support and strengthen political and civic organizations, safeguard elections, and promote citizen participation, openness and accountability in government. With staff members and volunteer political practitioners from more than 100 nations, NDI brings together individuals and groups to share ideas, knowledge, experiences and expertise. Partners receive broad exposure to best practices in international democratic development that can be adapted to the needs of their own countries. NDI's multinational approach reinforces the message that while there is no single democratic model, certain core principles are shared by all democracies. The Institute's work upholds the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It also promotes the development of institutionalized channels of communications among citizens, political institutions and elected officials, and strengthens their ability to improve the quality of life for all citizens. For more information about NDI, please visit www.ndi.org.

PREFACE

Six months have passed since the deadline set by the National Constituent Assembly (NCA) to complete the constitution, a milestone intended to end the current phase of Tunisia's political transition and set the stage for national elections. Anxious about the direction of the country and confused about how the political process will address their core concerns, Tunisians are increasingly worried that the country's politicians are more focused on pursuing their own interests than on the collective tasks of finishing the constitution and establishing a timeline for the elections.

This round of focus group research took place in late April 2013, coinciding with the revised deadline for completion of the draft constitution announced by NCA President Mustapha Ben Jaafar. When the new deadline was not met, citizens became more and more frustrated with the country's new political class, seen as uninterested or incapable of addressing what citizens view as an increasingly desperate economic situation. Expectations that the NCA and individual elected officials do a better job communicating progress toward the completion of the constitution are uniformly high, as are concerns that the contentious political atmosphere could threaten the credibility of the next national elections.

Purpose. In order to provide political and civic leaders in Tunisia with timely and objective information about citizens' priorities and attitudes toward the political transition, the National Democratic Institute (NDI or the Institute) has conducted regular qualitative research throughout Tunisia since [March 2011](#). For its eighth round of focus group research, NDI focused on citizen attitudes toward the constitutional process and political parties, as well as expectations for political milestones during the coming year, including completion of the constitution and national elections. Through the study, conducted from April 20 to 29, 2013, citizens took part in 12 focus group discussions in four cities throughout the country to discuss the following topics:

- Reflections on the extent to which the current political transition is fulfilling citizen expectations;
- Attitudes about the roles and contributions of political leaders, parties, and coalitions; and,
- Expectations for completion of the constitution-drafting process, agreement on a future political framework, and administration of future elections.

The Institute commissioned ELKA Consulting to organize the study in four cities across the country. ELKA is a marketing and public opinion research firm based in Tunisia. For NDI, the study represents the eighth in an ongoing series of public opinion research conducted since March 2011 to provide analysis on Tunisian citizen attitudes toward the political transition.

Focus Group Research: Focus groups are open-ended group interviews directed by a moderator and following pre-set guidelines. The purpose of focus group research is to understand the attitudes, opinions, and experiences of participants who are recruited for the exercise. Focus groups are particularly useful in gaining a deeper appreciation of the motivations, feelings, and values behind participants' reactions. In addition, the group format enables respondents to participate in an exchange of ideas—thus providing a more in-depth understanding of why opinions are held—that may not emerge in individual in-depth interviews or quantitative surveys. Focus group discussions are comprised of a small number of participants, typically eight to 12 per group. Depending on the situation, however, groups may be slightly smaller or larger. For example, a women's group in a more isolated area may benefit from a larger guest list because it is likely that one or more of the participants will refuse to speak at length, even if pressed. Focus group findings are only a snapshot of opinions at the moment the research is undertaken. Given the dynamism of the Tunisian transition, public opinion is in constant flux as citizens respond to unfolding events. The conclusions of this report therefore only represent opinions held when research was conducted in late April 2013.

Method: From April 20 to 29, 2013, NDI held 12 focus groups with a total of 117 participants in four cities across Tunisia: Grand Tunis, Nabeul, Sfax, and Gafsa. Target cities were selected based on their population size, economic weight, geographical location, and voting patterns in the 2011 elections. To capture the perspectives of a broad cross-section of Tunisian society, NDI divided participants at each location into three distinct demographic groups: 1) mixed gender youth (ages 24–35), 2) women over age 35, and 3) men over age 35. Each group comprised between nine and 12 participants. The gender breakdown was 46 percent men and 54 percent women. Participants were selected and pre-screened to ensure gender parity and a diverse representation of neighborhoods, socioeconomic backgrounds, education levels, and professions.

Staffing and Logistics: The Institute commissioned ELKA Consulting to organize the study in four cities across the country. The moderator conducting all focus groups was a Tunisian citizen trained in focus group moderation techniques by NDI and ELKA. All groups were conducted in the Tunisian dialect of Arabic, and transcripts were prepared in Arabic and English.

Group Locations: The 12 focus groups outlined in this report were conducted in four locations throughout Tunisia: Grand Tunis, Nabeul, Sfax and Gafsa (see the map in this section). Locations selected for the study were urban or semi-urban areas. Grand Tunis was selected because it encompasses the capital and largest city, Tunis, and its surrounding areas and is the national center for public administration, commerce, and tourism. Nabeul and Sfax not only represent dense population centers but were also the only two governorates (in addition to Tunis) that were divided into two electoral districts

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in 2011 due to their demographic significance. Residents of Gafsa, the site of ongoing strikes and public opposition to government dating back to 2008, have traditionally viewed their region as particularly neglected by the central government. In all locations, appropriate venues for focus group discussions were identified to ensure participant privacy and sufficient space for indirect observation by NDI staff.

Outside Influence: In all cases, every effort was made to ensure there was no undue influence exerted on the participants in the groups. The focus group guidelines were not shared with local authorities prior to the sessions. In this study, there was no case in which the findings from one or more groups differed radically from overall findings, which suggests that any local influence that may have occurred did not impact the research.

MAP OF TUNISIA



One World Nations Online. January, 2012.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report explores public opinion in Tunisia in late April 2013. Based on 12 focus group discussions with 117 Tunisian participants, the report examines Tunisian citizens' attitudes and concerns about progress toward drafting the country's constitution, the role of political institutions, and expectations for future elections. As with all NDI public opinion studies, participants were asked about their views on political party and governing institution performance, security, and issues of public concern. A summary of the main findings can be found below. The full results, along with selected quotations from participants, are detailed in the Principal Findings section of this report.

I. National Direction

Six months past the deadline set by the National Constituent Assembly (NCA) to complete the constitution—which would usher in national elections and signal an end to the current phase of Tunisia's political transition—Tunisians are concerned about politicians' commitment to performing their patriotic duty. The majority of participants feel that the country is going in the wrong direction and cite several contributing factors, most notably increasing political polarization. Participants frequently expressed desperation over the country's economic situation, which is seen as further deteriorating in the last year.

The rising cost of living and high rates of joblessness continue to fuel a sense of fatigue with what citizens view as disorder and instability. The overwhelming majority of participants noted that the cost of basic goods has risen to such an extent in the past year that families are struggling to make ends meet. Improvements in garbage collection, enforcement of traffic laws, and adherence to government-set prices for basic staples were most frequently noted as ways to address the sense of chaos in public life.

Freedom of expression—consistently referenced as the main achievement of the “revolution”—is viewed as contributing to malaise. Debate for its own sake is not sufficient; participants consistently referenced the need for decisive action. For that reason, participants voiced anxiety over the constant exchange of political views, whether through televised debate programs or in daily interactions.

II. Citizen Priorities

Job creation and economic development to alleviate the rising cost of living remain participants' main priorities, regardless of gender or geography. Participants see efforts by the government and private investors to create jobs as too limited and disproportionately biased in favor of certain segments of the population. The absence

of a definitive roadmap for future elections is seen as emblematic of the lack of political progress to address the economic situation, contributing to a sense of desperation.

Sense of personal safety within communities is improving slightly, but citizens want security forces to address broader national issues. Participants credit community solidarity with a greater feeling of security in their neighborhoods, but women continue to point to verbal harassment in addition to general rumors of physical assault against other women. Participants believe the government is not taking sufficient action to enforce public order which has resulted in, among other things, an increased fear of Salafist groups acting with impunity.

Many participants recognize the importance of individual responsibility in creating positive change, but want to see greater social harmony. Since the 2011 elections, Tunisians have referenced the need to “change mentalities” to bring about a more tolerant society that can accommodate divergent opinions in a new democracy. Participants increasingly linked this mentality to their own behavior, expressing a new sense of personal responsibility in bringing about positive change and acknowledging that the social and economic improvements they seek will only be realized through hard work.

III. Constitutional Process

Focus group participants believe that public outreach by the Assembly, including through the “National Dialogue process” to present the third draft of the constitution, is insufficient and has further diminished confidence in elected officials. When asked about the constitutional process, the majority of participants cite as concerns a lack of consultation with citizens and few genuine attempts to simplify complex legal terms for the general population. References to salary increases and other benefits for NCA members furthered mistrust.

Despite acknowledgement that significant political will is required to finalize the draft constitution, citizens strongly prefer that leaders bring an end to the current transition phase as soon as possible. In participants' views, the constitutional period should come to a close, ideally before the end of 2013, to allow for national elections that would seat a government with a longer-term mandate to address pressing economic and social concerns. They view lack of political agreement on key aspects of the constitution, however, as hampering much-needed progress.

There are disparate views on how state powers should be divided within the constitution with limited awareness of the practical implications of various models. No clear trend toward preference for a presidential or parliamentary regime emerged from participant responses. A “mixed system” was consistently mentioned as a means to balance powers though few were able to go beyond generalities when describing how

such a system would work in practice. In lieu of demonstrating understanding of various political frameworks, the majority of participants instead focused on leadership qualities such as charisma and ability to govern justly and firmly.

Strong preference persists for a public referendum on the constitution, although some question whether it would further slow political progress. Participants support a referendum for two reasons: to demonstrate a no-confidence vote against members of the NCA and to “have our say” on the content of the constitution. A minority raised concern about the potential outcomes of a referendum should the draft not pass, as well as concerns about the absence of financial and logistical arrangements in place to facilitate a transparent process.

IV. Political Landscape

Bitterness and profound disappointment with the country’s politicians fuel mistrust and concern about the country’s direction. Unfulfilled electoral promises and the absence of visionary leadership with the gravitas to force political agreement continue to fuel citizen frustration with political leaders.

Citizens want political parties to offer genuine solutions coupled with honest apologies for shortcomings. Though most participants hold a negative view of politicians, they want to see honest gestures to the public, acknowledging mistakes and failures, as a positive step to re-building trust with the electorate.

While the rise of coalition politics is viewed as a healthy democratic development, the lack of coordinated programs and communication creates confusion about political direction. Frustration with the governing “troika” persists, and coalitions including the Popular Front and Union for Tunisia do not present persuasive programs in the eyes of participants.

Participants are divided on strong contenders for Tunisia’s next presidential race. While Nidaa Tounes party leader Béji Caïd Essebsi was most frequently mentioned as a likeable candidate, a larger number of participants remain undecided or unconvinced by political leaders who have either expressed their interest in the post or have been mentioned as potential candidates.

V. Elections and Voter Confidence

Confusion about political and technical milestones to organize the next elections feeds doubts about the timing and credibility of Tunisia’s next vote. Delays in the selection process for members of the future election management body (the High Independent Authority for Elections, or ISIE) and the lack of consensus among key political parties on

an election date or electoral framework worry participants, who continue to express the importance of holding elections in 2013.

Both those who are disappointed by their choices in the past election and those who chose to abstain in 2011 indicate a strong intention to vote in future polls. Judging parties at the ballot box is a priority for 2011 voters. Participants who did not take part in 2011 due to a misunderstanding about the process or deliberate abstention view the next national election as a significant opportunity to voice their opinions.

Tunisians expect election irregularities including violence between political parties and vote-buying. Participants view Chokri Belaid's death as the beginning of a potential trend of politically-motivated violence. There is also widespread concern that parties who do not fare as well as anticipated may not accept the election results, raising further questions about the process.

VI. Women and Politics

Participants held mixed views on current women politicians but expressed a generally positive view on the impact of more women in politics. Maya Jribi and Radhia Nasraoui¹ were most frequently mentioned as women contributing to the political process in a positive manner. With the exception of these and a limited number of other individuals, women in the NCA were viewed by some as nothing more than window dressing by parties who were mandated by the 2011 electoral law to respect gender parity on their candidate lists. Despite these concerns, participants widely believed that more women in politics would result in more well-rounded policies and more efficient decision-making.

Women express reluctance about becoming more involved in politics. Those who may consider entering politics mentioned concerns about image and politics being a "man's game." Others justify their lack of interest with the argument that cultural values support women's place in the home, and that it is easier for men to balance priorities of work and personal life.

VII. Youth Activism

Participants share consensus that young Tunisians should be encouraged to take part in politics but not in leadership positions. Regardless of their gender, age, region, or social background, nearly all participants agree that young people are not ready to assume leadership positions and contribute to decision-making. Participants point to the

¹ Renowned human rights activist and wife of Popular Front leader Hamma Hammami.

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instrumental role youth played in the political transition but do not see these contributions as translating to the political arena.

PRINCIPAL FINDINGS

This study is both a continuation of previous research conducted by the Institute exploring citizens' opinions of the political transition in Tunisia since January 2011 and a retrospective on evolving attitudes in the six months since the NCA-mandated deadline for completion of the constitution passed. To determine the factors likely to influence citizens' assessments of the transition process, NDI conducted 12 focus groups with 117 participants throughout Tunisia in late April 2013. The findings, drawn from participants' comments, are detailed below.

I. National Direction

Regardless of age, gender, residence, or economic status, the majority of focus group participants believe the country is going in the wrong direction. Participants place blame on the government and politicians in general for delays in the constitutional process, which is further postponing national elections that many believe will produce a government with a long-term mandate to address citizens' daily priorities.

"I find it difficult to dream about a better future. Our situation is very complicated—those in power (or seeking power) should focus on the good of the country before their own interests." Female, Sfax, 30 years old, student

"They told us this government would last for one year. We don't know if it's legal for them to stay longer. They say they are working on the constitution, but I honestly don't understand why there are these delays. We need elections—it is time for change." Male, Gafsa, 39 years old, employed

"Despite the stress of the revolution, we were optimistic. But now in 2013, we feel disappointed about the constitution and the fighting we see in the Assembly. Our future is not clear." Male, Nabeul, 35 years old, employed

"Why doesn't the Prime Minister talk to the people? The same can be said about the NCA. Our problem now is that the country is ruled by two old politicians—[Rached] Ghannouchi and [Béji Caïd] Essebsi. I have nothing against either of them, but it's clear that they are only focusing on their own interests." Male, Nabeul, 35 years old, employed

"While I don't feel the government is being honest, at the same time, the opposition does nothing but attack the troika [ruling coalition]. You can't

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trust any of them. We have lost our faith in politicians' interest in the country." Female, Gafsa, 36 years old, employed

When asked who is responsible for the direction of the country, participants in all groups expressed their view that both the government and individual citizens need to be held accountable. **In order to improve the situation, both political leadership and citizens must combine a demonstrated commitment to patriotism with hard work.**

"Compassion and patriotism—that's what I want from politicians. I am tired of the lies." Female, Tunis, 62 years old, employed

"Tunisia could make real improvements if qualified people occupied positions of power—the right positions. If we were more patriotic, things would be better." Male, Tunis, 54 years old, employed

"We need ministers to be accountable [and] to find that beards don't stand for terrorism and a woman in a mini skirt is respectable. Tunisians should be judged for their minds, not their clothes. We need to set aside all this silliness and work hard." Male, Sfax, 28 years old, employed

"Wealth is related to the will of God. Faith and reliance on God is most important. If we work hard and rely on God's will, everything will improve. We should not only care about having a car for ourselves; we should focus on the future of the country." Male, Nabeul, 27 years old, employed

"I am a realist. Tunisia is not a rich country—we have limited resources and much ignorance about politics. I don't want to listen to the radio anymore and just listen to politicians argue. We all have the ability to change our own situation. I have a degree, and I am trying to work from home to help provide for my family. We need more people to take this kind of responsibility." Female, Sfax, 35 years old, employed

"Everyone needs to assume his responsibility and remember we are all Tunisian. We need to work more—this laziness we see now won't improve anything." Male, Nabeul, 35 years old, employed

Tunisians perceive that purchasing power has declined dramatically, with joblessness or underemployment on the rise since the same time last year. Salaries have not been adequately adjusted to account for inflation. Participants view government and private sector employment schemes as insufficient, contributing to a pervasive feeling of desperation.

“Purchasing power must be improved so we can live comfortably. I wish my husband had a better job and we could raise our children well. Security is needed—not only in the streets, but also at home. We feel insecure in all aspects of life.” Female, Nabeul, 31 years old, employed

“There are more thefts today because of the Ministry of Trade [viewed as responsible for setting prices]. The prices of goods keep going up, which is forcing people to steal. We have to eat.” Male, Gafsa, 37 years old, employed

“My priority is to have a house. My rent just increased from 220 dinars to 250 dinars a month. Last year I could survive, but 2013 has been much more difficult.” Male, Nabeul, 69 years old, retired

“I live in poverty. Even though my mother and father are alive, I feel completely alone—isolated. I’m fed up with the situation. I hope Tunisians will one day live in prosperity and peace.” Male, Tunis, 25 years old, employed

“Last year, I would buy two or three chickens per week for my family. They used to be five dinars each—now they are nine. This is a huge problem for someone like me who is only trying to support his family.” Male, Gafsa, 39 years old, employed

Economic insecurity, administrative inefficiencies, and concerns about the persistence of bribery to facilitate requests of public administration fuel a sense of fatigue with what citizens view as disorder and instability.

“I am exhausted. I run after [administrative] stamps, I try to keep my children safe, I try to find respect from strangers—all to no avail. If politicians feared God, things might change. Wherever I go, I find people who are selfish and only focused on their own interests.” Female, Nabeul, 45 years old, employed

“In the past, Tunis was such a charming city. When I was a student, I used to go downtown—we cherished the good life. Now I avoid Avenue Bourguiba because it is too chaotic.” Female, Tunis, 65 years old, homemaker

“The more unemployment we have, the more thieves we will have. Wages are too low—it’s the same from teachers to police officers. They

are forced to take bribes to survive and don't do their job properly." Male, Nabeul, 29 years old, employed

"I think the revolution brought about chaos. The big loser is, of course, the poor. I earn 400 dinars each month. This used to be enough to live comfortably, but today I am struggling to survive." Male, Sfax, 45 years old, employed

"I am a teacher, and I can tell you we are living in complete disorder. Young people have no respect for themselves or others. We need to do our utmost not to hurt one another." Female, Tunis, 50 years old, employed

"We have been waiting for two years. How was the 2011 and 2012 budget spent? Now we are in 2013, and we have seen no improvements in Gafsa." Female, Gafsa, 36 years old, employed

"There is a lack of control over prices. No one is there to protect you when grocers don't respect government orders to reduce prices." Male, Nabeul, 51 years old, employed

Freedom of expression—consistently referenced as the main achievement of the “revolution” in all rounds of NDI research since 2011—is now viewed as contributing to political gridlock and growing malaise.

"I don't want to hear news about strikes anymore, or that people have blockaded a street in protest, or that the MPs in the NCA are fighting again. I would like to wake up and find that the country has gone back to work and stopped all this arguing." Male, Gafsa, 36 years old, employed

"Now you can hear about everything on the news—even what the President had for dinner! There are disadvantages and advantages to this. People's expectations are too high, and the media is fueling this." Female, Gafsa, 37 years old, employed

"Young people are going in the right direction. There are creative young people innovating—bloggers, artists, rappers who haven't stopped their art despite the threat of prison." Male, Sfax, 28 years old, unemployed

"The media is now able to broadcast whatever it wants—there are some things which are harming traditional Tunisian family values. The media has

the right to operate in total freedom, but they should respect certain limits.” Male, Tunis, 38 years old, employed

“After a revolution based on dignity, freedom, etc., it’s natural to expect that civil society would flourish. The problem is now there are so many voices, which is confusing.” Male, Gafsa, 37 years old, employed

“Freedom of expression? Chokri Belaïd spoke out and was killed. A group of people in Gabès wrote ‘freedom of expression’ on a wall and were arrested. Is this what the revolution was for?” Male, Gafsa, 28 years old, employed

“People are behaving in a chaotic manner because of what they see on TV. Media is reducing trust between the people and the police.” Female, Nabeul, 34 years old, employed

II. Citizen Priorities

When asked to identify the most important issues for themselves and their families, nearly all focus group participants identify the economy as their top concern. The rising cost of basic staples and services over the last year contribute to participants’ concerns over deterioration of their families’ standards of living. In some cases, economic hardship is driving recourse to the black market and smuggling as a source of lower-cost goods.

“During Ben Ali’s era, we had security and peace. It’s true that I miss those days, but safety will not feed me. I want to eat, I want to work.” Male, Gafsa, 35 years old, unemployed

“If you have a job, you have hope. The most important thing in life is economic independence and dignity.” Male, Tunis, 25 years old, employed

“Water and electricity are very expensive. I can’t even afford some fruit—apples cost five dinars a kilo. We can’t make ends meet, especially when you have a large family.” Female, Tunis, 47 years old, homemaker

“I am against smuggling, but if it weren’t for the expensive products, this wouldn’t be happening. Fuel is currently 1.4 dinars each liter. It’s better for me to pay 0.9 dinar, of course, so I do what I have to.” Male, Gafsa, 30, unemployed

"I sell tobacco at a kiosk, so I see a lot of policemen each day. They are suffering—they say their pay is nothing compared to the risks they are asked to take. They can't make ends meet—they have to buy things on credit." Male, Sfax, 42 years old, employed

"Phosphate production is blocked and tourism is gone. We need a clear economic program for the country urgently—enough of all this chaos!" Male, Gafsa, 27 years old, employed

Participants cite close-knit communities as the main reason for improvements in personal security. They continue to strongly prefer, however, that the government address national security issues, highlighting the need for continued police reform and stronger measures against extremist groups.

"I have a message for the government: focus on the good of the people. Prices are too high, and security services are too reluctant to do their jobs." Male, Sfax, 60 years old, retired

"My neighborhood is safe because the people watch out for one another and keep each other safe. I wish it were like this for the entire country." Female, Gafsa, 28 years old, student

"The legacy of relations between police and citizens over the past 60 years has been repressive. Today, citizens are insisting on security. Police need to adapt to the new democratic environment, where they are supposed to protect citizens, not just the state." Male, Sfax, 55 years old, employed

"I insist on the government ensuring security. We have an army, police forces, prisons for thieves ... the first priority of the government should be to provide security by implementing laws. Police are afraid of thieves—they are avoiding night patrols." Female, Sfax, 59 years old, employed

"Order should be enforced. Red means stop! I see traffic police every day, but they are only on the side of the road. People should be taught to behave and understand there are consequences if they don't." Male, Nabeul, 30 years old, employed

"The government needs to deal with Salafists who are creating havoc. We've seen Ghannouchi is with them. The government knows how dangerous they are and how negative this instability will be for tourism. They need to enforce law and order—for everyone." Female, Sfax, 59 years old, employed

Greater tolerance and social harmony are of great interest. While participants view the government and political parties as responsible for promoting these values in society, they also acknowledge personal responsibility to bring about change, which will require hard work on the part of all.

"Everyone is now free to do what they want. If I want to cover myself, I am free. If you don't want to, it's fine. Now the government is allowing people to do what they want in their personal lives—this is an improvement for me." Female, Sfax, 58 years old, retired

"The way men look at and behave toward women on the street must change. They should consider us as they would their sisters. We all have to try to have 'clean' mentalities." Female, Tunis, 31 years old, employed

"There was a revolution against oppression. Now we have a misunderstanding about freedom. People need to understand it is their responsibility to work hard for the good of the country." Female, Nabeul, 47 years old, employed

"In El Mourouj [southern Tunis suburb], everything is now closed after 8:00 PM. Everyone is afraid of one another. This is not right—we should all only fear God and live in harmony." Female, Tunis, 28 years old, unemployed

III. Constitutional Process

Six months since the original deadline to complete the constitution, divergent views persist on the importance of the foundational document and the process by which it has been drafted. Those who believe the constitution will affect their daily lives are concerned that upholding the principles contained in the document will be a challenge. Conversely, a sizeable minority of participants are convinced that the constitution as a document is less significant than political will to enforce order.

"It's not really going to add anything, but it should suit all Tunisians, and not be the source of conflicts between the Islamists, the communists, or others." Male, Tunis, 35 years old, employed

"It is true that having a constitution is something good which will organize our lives. But we used to have one which the former president exploited, at his leisure, for his own interests. I wonder what the president of the NCA is doing. I think he is pulling the lion by holding his ear." Female, Tunis, 25 years old, unemployed

"The constitution means we will have a new government and finish with this transitional period. That is all." Male, Gafsa, 36 years old, employed

"The constitution has no importance. The problem is people's mentalities, so why do the MPs bother themselves with a constitution people will not abide by?" Male, Nabeul, 27 years old, employed

When asked who is responsible for the delay, the overwhelming majority of participants cite members of the Assembly—both the ruling coalition and opposition blocs. Acute disappointment with NCA members on delays in the process and the view that they are only working for their own interests continues to fuel mistrust.

"They've worked for two years and are now asking for a retirement fund? It's clear they are not there to serve the interests of the country." Male, Tunis, 38 years old, employed

"They are in their chairs dreaming of money, privileges, immunity. They are all deprived people and have now found resources. Their legitimacy expired on October 23 [2012]. They should have continued working from that time for free." Female, Nabeul, 41 years old, homemaker

"The opposition is hindering the process. They want to review every article but are always absent, and when they do attend, they only criticize." Female, Gafsa, 36 years old, employed

"We elected representatives to write the constitution for the Tunisian people, but I believe they are only responding to the interests of the various alliances made since October 2011." Male, Tunis, 53 years old, employed

"They don't represent the Tunisian people. One of them was sitting in plenary and took off her shoes. Another one was reading a newspaper during the session. They should at least come on time and be penalized when they are absent. They go to entertain themselves and get paid—it's a shame." Female, Sfax, 32 years old, employed

The NCA organized a series of outreach sessions throughout December 2012 and January 2013 in all 24 governorates and key overseas constituencies to present the second draft of the constitution and receive citizen input. **Public outreach is nevertheless seen as insufficient, further diminishing confidence in elected officials.**

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"I heard on TV that the NCA would organize the National Dialogue, but I haven't seen anything. We don't know what the constitution contains—I am worried people will rise up again in frustration." Female, Sfax, 27 years old, employed

"No, I haven't heard anything about this. How much did it cost?!" Male, Gafsa, 38 years old, employed

"I attended a session at the National Library in February. There were representatives from Ennahda, CPR [Congress for the Republic], and Ettakatol, but no one from the opposition came. I couldn't really understand anything they were talking about." Male, Tunis, 35 years old, employed

"[The dialogue process] is only a way to silence people." Male, Nabeul, 39 years old, employed

Though they acknowledge that significant political will is required to finalize the draft, citizens strongly prefer that the current transition phase be completed as soon as possible.

"One hopes to see a constitution before he dies. We want the constitution to be finished, whether it's good or bad. This subject has become distressing to me." Female, Gafsa, 28 years old, employed

"The way in which the constitution is completed is important. Every single word counts. For example, we don't yet know if the PSC [Personal Status Code] will be affected by the new constitution." Male, Nabeul, 43 years old, employed

"It has been a very long process—they need to finish as soon as possible. Until now, we still don't know exactly when the process will come to an end. I feel like they are making fools of us." Female, Tunis, 53 years old, homemaker

"I have read the current draft—the word 'freedom' is mentioned only three times in a post-revolutionary constitution? How can this be 'the best constitution in the world'? People are hungry. Will you give them the constitution to eat? The time has come to move on and work on important issues." Male, Sfax, 46 years old, employed

Despite heated debate among political parties on the future political system, including divergent views over the separation of powers, participants express limited awareness

of the practical implication of each potential model. No clear trend emerged—some participants favor a presidential system, others prefer parliamentary, and still others voice interest in a “mixed” system that would provide sufficient checks and balances between the two.

“Parliamentary suits us better because more opinions are included in decisions—although it can be difficult to find consensus.” Male, Nabeul, 31 years old, employed

“We need a presidential system. We can see in the NCA that parliamentary process is a mess. A president like Bourguiba would be ideal.” Female, Sfax, 41 years old, homemaker

“We should have a presidential regime. We had it for 20 years and are used to it. We don't know parliamentary or republican systems.” Male, Gafsa, 36 years old, employed

“I think we've experienced both models now. It would be ideal if both systems could work together. I mean the president controls and is controlled by the parliament at the same time.” Male, Nabeul, 29 years old, employed

Strong preference persists for a referendum on the constitution although some question whether it would further slow political progress. Of the majority who favored a referendum, only a few recognized that it would be contingent on the constitution's failure to pass after several votes in plenary at the NCA. Therefore, the term referendum was used primarily to encapsulate participants' frustration with the Assembly and interest in “having our say.”

“We need a referendum to have our say. Have you seen the blunders of the MPs? It's a shame.” Male, Gafsa, 30 years old, unemployed

“A referendum is better because many people have quit their parties since the elections, so they no longer represent the citizens who voted for them.” Female, Gafsa, 38 years old, employed

“We lack technical requirements for a referendum—it would just look like another election campaign. People don't care about the details of the constitution; we just want to vote for people who can solve our problems. The NCA needs to finish quickly, so the people can have hope for the future.” Male, Tunis, 35 years old, employed

"Things should be better explained to simple citizens, many of whom are illiterate, and don't understand the law. As far as I am concerned, I support the idea of a referendum, if it is well-explained to the people."
Male, Sfax, 55 years old, employed

IV. Political Landscape

When considering the state of politics in Tunisia today, the vast majority of focus group participants express profound disappointment over what they view as unnecessary delays and politicians who increasingly focus on their own interests rather than addressing the core concerns of the electorate.

"Politics in Tunisia today are marked by a confusion between political affiliations and power. There are people who have a long career in politics without holding positions. Our problem now is the fact that politicians always want to hold onto their positions." Male, Tunis, 54 years old, employed

"The NCA is sucking the blood out of the country. Had they appointed legal scholars to draft the constitution it would have been finished in three months. Instead we have unqualified members collecting benefits for transport and accommodations." Female, Nabeul, 62 years old, retired

"Powerful political parties like Ennahda and Nidaa Tounes are not working to support Tunisia. They are actually working to destroy it. Officials keep making promises and criticizing one another without doing anything for the people. They don't have the willingness to help the country." Male, Gafsa, 36 years old, employed

"The opposition is causing tension and anxiety. They view their role only as being aggressive—it is time to offer solutions. We need solutions from the troika and the opposition alike." Male, Sfax, 55 years old, employed

"Members of the Assembly are asking for pay increases while poor people can't afford a loaf of bread." Male, Nabeul, 40 years old, employed

"The problem I have is that there is no party that represents me. No one has a realistic economic, social, or political program. We keep waiting for clarity, but if current political leaders really feared God, they would make decisions quickly." Female, Gafsa, 39 years old, employed

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"The term 'politics' has become void now that we have people like [Ibrahim] Kassas and [Sonia] Ben Toumia in the NCA." Female, Gafsa, 34 years old, employed

Young Tunisians are particularly bitter about the state of political debate and express high levels of cynicism about whether political parties can identify tangible solutions to their concerns.

"Politics in Tunisia have become just like milk in the morning. The same thing every day—boring, and no way to avoid it." Male, Gafsa, 26 years old, student

"In one year everyone has come to hate politics. Politicians make me nervous. Parties should learn to treat citizens with respect." Male, Nabeul, 30 years old, employed

"We thought we were electing leaders to provide guidance in the next phase of the transition. What we see is that no one has a clear vision and the charisma to convince others in the NCA. Therefore, none of them are leaders...only politicians." Female, Sfax, 25 years old, employed

Most participants believe that coalitions of political parties are playing an important role in Tunisia following the country's first democratic election and hope that further consolidation of political vision will take place prior to the next elections.

"Coalitions are common during elections—this is how politics should work." Male, Sfax, 25 years old, employed

"Some of these people are just greedy. When the party isn't really very rich, it unites with another one to get financial benefits." Male, Nabeul, 30 years old, employed

"Now parties come together to face other coalitions. They don't coalesce around principles." Female, Gafsa, 38 years old, employed

"The current coalition represents the majority of votes from 2011. They have the power in their hands, just like ruling coalitions everywhere in the world." Male, Tunis, 31 years old, employed

While participants believe the ruling coalition is failing to make good on the initial program it presented shortly after the NCA elections, some are also willing to concede that the transitional phase has presented unprecedented challenges in governance for politicians who are largely untested.

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"The troika isn't doing a good job because it is comprised of three parties who have nothing in common ideologically. We need proper separation between the left and the right in Tunisia." Male, Gafsa, 39 years old, employed

"It's not easy to rule a country after a revolution with 700,000 unemployed people. Despite all the hits they have taken, inside and outside the coalition, the 'troika' is still trying to work." Male, Tunis, 59 years old, employed

"When the government does something good, even something as insignificant as one percent change, they [opposition parties] should acknowledge it." Female, Sfax, 41 years old, homemaker

"The governing coalition? This is false—it is really only Ennahda leading and the other two following orders." Female, Gafsa, 32 years old, student

Opposition coalitions, the "Popular Front" and the "Union for Tunisia," garner interest, but participants are uncertain of their platforms.

"The Popular Front represents the working class Tunisian—they should expand their coalition and develop a program beyond opposition only." Female, Tunis, 50 years old, employed

"The Popular Front is made up of revolutionary people who have sacrificed. They have different ideas but were united around Chokri Belaïd. Now they have replaced him with Hammi [Hammami]." Male, Sfax, 28 years old, unemployed

"The Popular Front's presence is important to create a balance. However, they have an identity crisis. You remember when Chokri Belaïd died? People said he didn't believe in God. What will [the Popular Front] do to prove the opposite?" Female, Sfax, 32 years old, employed

"When I think about the Union for Tunisia, I am reminded of all the old members of the RCD that are now in this coalition. We say 'under Ben Ali, those who did not dance, lifted their sleeves!' It's too soon to know what Nidaa Tounes and the others will actually do for the country." Female, Nabeul, 41 years old, homemaker

"I'm not familiar with the name of the coalition [Union for Tunisia], but some of its members are known to be technocrats. This is good." Male, Sfax, 28 years old, unemployed

"They [Union for Tunisia] are working well today for only one reason—[Béji Caïd] Essebsi. Other than his leadership, we know nothing about them." Male, Gafsa, 36 years old, employed

In order to begin re-building trust with voters, political parties need to offer genuine solutions coupled with honest apologies for shortcomings.

"I want politicians to speak the language of the nation—not standard Arabic like Zine [El Abidine Ben Ali] used to do. We need politicians who are not afraid to go out on the street and really listen to people." Male, Gafsa, 38 years old, employed

"Politicians should not care only about their own interests. I would like to see well-intentioned politicians come to me, to ask about my situation and try to develop solutions. Politics shouldn't only be about attaining power." Female, Tunis, 32 years old, employed

"I need to see myself represented. I need to see that my values are in line with the values of a party. Politicians need to be activists that have suffered life's hardships, so they can empathize with their voters." Male, Nabeul, 35 years old, employed

"During the election campaign, parties tried all sorts of tricks to attract people. Now that they hold official positions, they make mistakes, but don't step down. Why don't they resign and apologize when it's clear people don't trust them anymore? Where is the patriotism they talk about? If they were genuinely patriotic, they would have quit their post and allowed someone more qualified to take the responsibility." Female, Sfax, 32 years old, employed

V. Elections and Voter Confidence

Whether they voted in 2011 or not, focus group participants intend to vote in the next polls. Those who had voted and were disappointed in their choices view the upcoming elections as a means to judge parties and make a new choice, evaluating parties on their ability to deliver a clear program. Participants who did not vote in 2011 cited skepticism about the process or confusion over the number of parties in their choice to abstain, but the majority now appreciate the value of taking part in the process as a means of having their core concerns addressed.

"Last time I voted because I was dragged along by all the happy people. Now I will vote because it is an obligation. We mustn't let the country go in the wrong direction." Female, Sfax, 32 years old, employed

"I will put my right to vote into practice, and vote against Ennahda. I feel like I was fooled last time." Female, Tunis, 27 years old, employed

"I want to get rid of the current government and install a new government that will work for five years. Enough of these temporary situations." Male, Gafsa, 35 years old, unemployed

"Last time I wasn't convinced by any party, so I didn't vote. In the next election, I will go vote because I see new parties with clear visions for what they want to accomplish." Male, Sfax, 25 years old, employed

"The previous elections happened so quickly, there was no way I could know enough about the competing parties to choose properly. I am preparing now though, so I don't make the same mistake again. It is my obligation to vote." Male, Tunis, 54 years old, employed

"I will vote next time, not only because it is my duty as a citizen, but because the next election will bring in a government that can work for five years on the issues that matter most to me—enough of this transition period!" Male, Gafsa, 35 years old, unemployed

"The problem with the next election is that I can't see a party that represents me. There isn't any party with a real program for economic, political, and social solutions. We want a party that fears God and has a plan." Female, Gafsa, 39 years old, employed

Lack of clarity on the political and technical milestones necessary to organize the next elections raises doubts about the credibility and transparency of future polls. Gafsa residents are especially concerned about election administration and infractions committed by political parties.

"Now nothing is clear. Last time I voted even though there was much confusion, and I hoped that the winner would serve Tunisia, but I have been disappointed. So, for the next election, I will only vote when the law and management of the election are clear and respected." Female, Nabeul, 41 years old, employed

"I don't believe elections will happen this year. Ennahda keeps coming up with new reasons to delay the process and hold onto their seats." Male, Sfax, 25 years old, employed

"I trusted the last election administration and Jendoubi, but I fear the next ISIE will not have the same credibility. We are waiting for clarity and will judge then." Male, Gafsa, 36 years old, employed

"I am worried about Ennahda, because it's obvious that they don't intend to relinquish power. What this means for the ISIE and the elections law? Only God knows." Female, Gafsa, 28 years old, employed

"There is no trust. Before we used to trust institutions, but not anymore. The judiciary needs to be independent to punish any party that breaks the election law. This wasn't done last time." Male, Gafsa, 39 years old, employed

When speaking about their expectations for the next elections, participants consistently mention the likelihood for irregularities. They expect heated rhetoric and increased incidents of violence due to a polarized and competitive political environment. Due to this competition, participants also anticipate that political parties may seek to interfere in the process through buying votes and protesting election results.

"There should be an observer from each party in every polling station to avoid fraud or conflict. It doesn't make sense that observers don't intervene if something goes wrong during the election." Male, Tunis, 31 years old, employed

"I worry about election violence because some parties will not accept the results, like they did in 2011." Male, Nabeul, 39 years old, employed

"We are already seeing violence now. It started with the death of Chokri Belaïd. Each party will be fighting harder to take more power." Female, Gafsa, 26 years old, student

"The army will have a very important role to play in the next elections...protecting the voter from parties!" Male, Nabeul, 43 years old, employed

"As far as money is concerned, only Nidaa Tounes can compete with Ennahda. Winning is not about having observers, it is about having money." Male, Sfax, 28 years old, employed

"I hope the next elections aren't close to the Eid holiday. Parties were very good at using sheep as gifts last time!" Female, Tunis, 62 years old, employed

"Money will affect the campaign period, and parties will again try to bribe voters. Some parties' funding is not clear." Female, Nabeul, 41 years old, homemaker

VI. Women in Politics

Focus group participants express mixed views on current women politicians, especially those serving in the Assembly.

"As far as I am concerned, women are citizens and have the same right to take part in politics as I do. Some people are worried that women's rights are being threatened now, but this isn't in anyone's interests." Male, Tunis, 59 years old, employed

"We've seen courageous women in Tunisian history, but the ones taking part in the Assembly are just there to meet the quota." Female, Gafsa, 39 years old, employed

"The women in the NCA do not represent Tunisian women. I don't understand how they were chosen when we have educated women like those here with us today. They give a bad impression about Tunisian women. They are only there to meet the quota." Male, Sfax, 32 years old, employed

"As far as the government is concerned, one woman minister is not enough. Performance is something else, of course—she took a picture with Leila [Trabelsi]'s shoes!" Female, Gafsa, 39 years old, employed

"Men have to accept that a woman could be their boss. Some people have made us believe that women are useless, but the reality is that some women are more thoughtful than 1,000 men." Female, Nabeul, 41, employed

Participants hold a generally positive view of the potential impact of more women in politics.

"Since the elections, we've come to find that women can be great, and that Tunisia has good women politicians. Regardless of their party or post—women like Maya Jribi, Bochra Ben Hmida, Radhia Nasraoui—they

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are committed, even if they sometimes make mistakes.” Female, Sfax, 59 years old, employed

“Women are our mothers, daughters, sisters, wives, teachers. The prophet said ‘those who give birth to three daughters and raise them well, will go to paradise.’” Male, Tunis, 35 years old, employed

“If we had more women in politics, our leaders would have a deeper understanding of our everyday problems. Women are more knowledgeable about the real effect of the rising cost of living and security. They could be better placed to suggest solutions to such problems.” Female, Tunis, 62 years old, employed

“Before we only knew about the First Lady of the country. She was worthless and was supposed to represent Tunisian women, but in fact, she didn’t at all. After the revolution, the position of women in politics has improved.” Female, Gafsa, 32 years old, student

“Women can do any kind of job—they have rights and obligations. As long as they are properly dressed and behaving, they will be fine. They should limit their interventions in the Assembly, for example. Women in Libya are more respectable than women in Tunisia.” Male, Gafsa, 43 years old, employed

A minority of men and women, however, believe that politics is not an appropriate domain for women.

“Women in all domains try to progress and have the will to succeed. They are aware. However women in politics are not efficient.” Female, Sfax, 25 years old, employed

“Women at home, in school...but in politics? No. Men can’t rely on women politicians—they don’t know how to play the game.” Male, Nabeul, 30 years old, employed

“More women in politics? This is the last thing we need. After we got rid of Leila Ben Ali, we absolutely don’t need another woman to lead. Any woman in power would behave just like Leila.” Male, Gafsa, 26 years old, unemployed

When considering personal circumstances, women express reluctance about becoming more involved in politics. They justify their lack of interest with the argument

that the political atmosphere today is overly aggressive and personal commitments make it difficult to dedicate the necessary time.

“Women participating in politics is an honor for the country, but a challenge for her personally. Managing family, work, and politics could be too much.” Female, Sfax, 41 years old, homemaker

“We live in a Muslim country where men and women have different responsibilities.” Female, Tunis, 32 years old, employed

“We have too many responsibilities to our families—I am the only one who can raise my children. This must be my priority.” Female, Nabeul, 32 years old, unemployed

“I don’t think that men and women are the same. There are things that men can do and women cannot, and vice versa. Women are more patient, so we can wait for solutions.” Female, Tunis, 57 years old, homemaker

VII. Youth Activism

According to focus group participants, young Tunisians should be encouraged to take part in politics but not in leadership positions.

“We need young people in politics, but they need the support of experienced politicians.” Female, Tunis, 47 years old, homemaker

“The influence of young people is absolutely positive—they are active and happy to work. The key is to have maturity and be open to take direction from those with more experience.” Female, Gafsa, 41 years old, employed

“We bring more dynamism. We’ve been taught to do many things at the same time, so we are more apt to cope with different problems and focus on solutions. I would vote for a young person, if given the chance.” Male, Nabeul, 29 years old, employed

“Young people were the victims of the previous regime. They were living under the illusion that they are the future of the country, but they have no tools to make this possible. So, without work or a future, what can they offer?” Female, Sfax, 35 years old, employed

"No. Tunisian youth? They are only interested in Facebook! They don't care about politics." Male, Tunis, 53 years old, employed

"Young people are enthusiastic, but we have to reform the education system to ensure future generations are better prepared to lead." Male, Sfax, 25 years old, employed

"We need balance—young people don't have enough experience, but we also don't want our grandfathers to be president!" Female, Tunis, 26 years old, employed

Young participants were equally skeptical of their own abilities to contribute through politics now. **When asked if they would be more or less likely to vote for a young candidate, youth participants express uncertainty.**

"I would choose Essebsi. Not because he is old, but because he has a big intellect and long experience. If I found the same characteristics in a younger person, I would vote for them." Female, Sfax, 32 years old, employed

"I don't believe in our generation anymore. All you see is corruption and smuggling. This is not something to be proud of. How could I vote for someone like this?" Male, Nabeul, 27 years old, employed

"I prefer youth to lead, because the elderly have nothing more to give—they only take. But let's be honest—no one is going to make me the director of the phosphate company today!" Male, Gafsa, 26 years old, unemployed

"The problem is that young people are not aware enough, and at the same time, there are people in their 80s who are in politics, who aren't aware either. This is not normal. We need people who are middle-aged and can behave properly." Male, Tunis, 25 years old, employed

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

NDI designed this study to gauge citizens' opinions on key political milestones—including completing the constitution and organizing national elections—and to determine citizens' priorities in their daily lives. Beyond sharing their views on the current situation, many participants suggested actions that could contribute to a more developed and vibrant democracy and lead to credible elections. Participants' fervent desire to play an active role in their own governance is evident. They believe they have valuable contributions to make—and their answers in this study prove they do—and feel it is their right to participate in decision-making, especially on questions affecting their daily lives. Politicians' inability to take full advantage of Tunisians' desire for involvement has a negative impact on citizens' views of the government and the opposition alike. Below are recommendations for actions to respond to citizen concerns and help make their aspirations for the country a reality.

Increase Interaction and Information Flow between Citizens and Government

Participants in this study are clearly disappointed in their quality of life and what they perceive as a lack of government seriousness in addressing the concerns of citizens, particularly in the areas of employment, cost of living, and public order. This feeling is exacerbated by what participants describe as false promises made to them during elections and by a dearth of post-election contact with elected representatives. At the same time, participants want a role in decision-making on the constitution and to be consulted on government priorities, programs, and actions. The simple act of listening to citizens and expressing remorse for insufficient outreach in the past could increase citizen satisfaction with government and patience with the pace of completing the constitution. The government will miss a crucial opportunity if it does not quickly undertake a more intensive effort to communicate and consult with citizens on issues affecting their lives.

Recommendations to the NCA and transitional government:

- Demonstrate that the government has a plan to complete the current transition period as quickly and transparently as possible.
- Widely publicize accomplishments of government programs since the 2011 elections and demonstrate concrete benefits to ordinary citizens.
- Develop and support a comprehensive constituent contact and service program at the NCA that will remain in place for use by a successor parliament following elections. The program may prioritize receiving citizen feedback and suggestions for improvements in their quality of life.
- Engage in an honest dialogue with citizens that provides information on obstacles to economic development, realistic timelines for measurable

improvement, and current funding available to address key needs prior to the next elections, so as to better manage citizen expectations.

Undertake Civic Education and Consultation on Key Legislation

Although participants knew little about the current draft constitution or electoral law, they seek to better understand these issues and to contribute to the debate around them. This study demonstrates that ordinary citizens may not be well-versed in the intricacies of such political texts, but they have well-reasoned and strongly-held views on broad issues, such as separation of powers and the role of political parties in upcoming elections. They also believe it is their right in a democracy to participate in a dialogue about, and ultimately approve, the country's new constitution.

Recommendations to the NCA Coordination Committee and Citizen Outreach Office:

- Organize an extensive public awareness campaign – including traditional and social media, as well as face-to-face contact – on the final draft of the constitution and next steps for its approval, including article-by-article voting in plenary.
- Educate the population on key electoral issues under consideration including the candidate selection process for the future ISIE and process for drafting a future election law.
- Honor citizens' desire to participate in their own governance through broad consultation with the public on significant constitutional and electoral changes, which may result in a referendum or further election delays beyond 2013.
- Make a commitment to, and devise a plan for, consulting the public in a serious and broadly inclusive manner on significant governance reforms in the future, with particular focus on economic development, such as the budget development process for 2014, job creation schemes, and the implications of the recently-negotiated International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan.

Build Confidence in the Electoral Process

One of the positive findings of this study is that participants continue to have faith in voting as an integral part of Tunisia's young democracy. They not only believe that elections in the country are important, but also that they were generally well-administered in 2011. This creates a solid foundation for the ISIE and the government to address significant and lingering questions expressed about the fairness of the electoral process. Building confidence in the electoral process can also calm political tensions in the country, thereby reducing the possibility of electoral violence or other conflict in the future.

Recommendations to the NCA and a future ISIE:

- Develop a system to address perceptions of, and concerns about, biased recruitment of ISIE commissioners.
- Take tangible, public steps to reinforce the impartiality of the ISIE through the development of a demonstrably transparent, neutral, and independent process to select ISIE members; ensure significant or exclusive civil society involvement in the selection of ISIE members.
- Educate government officials and political party members (of all parties) at the local level on the right of voters to make their choices free of coercion; publicly punish and make an example of those who violate this right.
- Launch a voter registration drive, with particular attention to demographics who disproportionately abstained from voting in 2011, as well as vulnerable populations including illiterate and rural voters.
- Consider the adoption of a system to investigate and/or resolve electoral complaints at the local level.
- Enact and enforce more stringent rules on the use of state funding for political parties and election campaigning.
- Increase transparency in vote-counting and tabulation to address the concern that results can be changed after voting has been completed.
- Widen monitoring efforts of the election process by international and domestic observers as well as political party representatives to increase the legitimacy of the process.
- Incorporate citizens' opinions, expressed in this study and through other mechanisms, in the electoral reform process and in broader efforts to ensure elections in Tunisia fulfill citizens' expectations and desires.

Commit to Improving Voter Morale

Disillusionment among voters is a problem with which many democratic countries have to grapple, and there are no quick fixes. In this study, however, participants suggest that Tunisians could become more enthusiastic for voting if decision-makers build confidence in the fairness of the electoral process and educate citizens on why voting matters, and if parties make public commitments to codes of conduct to respect the electoral law.

Recommendations to a future ISIE:

- Engage the eligible voting population, with particular attention to women and youth who were underrepresented in the 2011 polls, in a discussion about the importance of voting and the value of civic participation through a widespread civic education campaign.

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- Raise confidence in the ability of the electoral process to provide real choices to voters and to produce an election where voters can believe there is a reasonable chance for any party or candidate to win.
- Consider options for revising the campaign financing system to level the playing field for political parties that are legitimately contesting the elections without rewarding political parties that only want to benefit financially from government assistance.

Increase the Role and Abilities of Political Parties in Tunisia

Participants believe that political parties have an important role to play in Tunisia. They see peaceful competition among parties as critical to the country's democracy, allowing parties to devise solutions to issues and present real choices to citizens in elections. Participants note, however, that political parties' ability to play a positive role is limited by an uneven playing field and an increasingly polarized political debate. In addition, participants have mixed views on the political parties currently operating in Tunisia, primarily because of the parties' failure to convince the public they are operating in the people's interest or provide a vision for the country that can be understood and articulated by the population.

Recommendations to political parties:

- Initiate a multi-partisan discussion on how to reach effective agreement, including new legislation on the next phases of the political and electoral process.
- Identify opportunities and adopt new codes of conduct for political parties during election periods; consider public commitment ceremonies with leadership from the main political actors.
- Develop clear, realistic platforms which offer solutions to citizens' economic, social and security priorities and help voters differentiate between party and coalition proposals.

APPENDIX A: Focus Group Locations and Participant Demographics

- **117 participants** from Greater Tunis, Nabeul, Sfax, Gafsa

- **Fieldwork** conducted from April 20 - 29

- **Diversity** of ages, professions and neighborhoods within each group

- **Nine to twelve participants** per group

Gender	Count
Female	63
Male	54
Age	Count
25-34	43
+35	74
Profession	Count
Employed	77
Unemployed	16
Homemaker	18
Student	6
Education	Count
University	60
Secondary	37
Primary	18
None	2