

Parliamentary elections in Tunisia

Sunday 16 November 2014, by [LEROUGE Dominique](#), [MATHIEU Freddy](#) (Date first published: 3 November 2014).

Despite the disillusionment of a part of the population, particularly among young people and the most disadvantaged layers, participation in the Tunisian parliamentary elections on October 26, 2014 was nearly 70% of registered voters. In the elections of October 2011, Ennahdha had won 41.5% of the seats. It only got 31.8% this time. A portion of the population has expressed its rejection of the two years of Ennahdha government and the accompanying Islamist violence. The CPR and Ettakatol, who had participated in the government, have seen their number of elected representatives crumble. Nida Tounès, whose leaders for the most part originate from the regime which existed from independence to 2011, came first with 39.2% of the seats. The Front Populaire, which brings together most of the left and a part of the Arab nationalists, won 6.9% of the seats, against 2.8% previously.

The future government

The government will not take power until early 2015. But before the end of November, the Prime Minister proposed by Nida will be in charge of putting it together in the following month, or even two months. Endless haggling is therefore to be expected because Nida does not have a majority in the Assembly. The President of Nida had said before the election that he would go in the first place to the three small parties with which it had originally decided to stand for election. But the latter did not win any seats. Declaring at the time that he wanted to broaden this alliance to “the parties sharing the same vision and the same plans as ours”, he had simultaneously answered by an enigmatic pirouette the question whether the latter could include Ennahda.

An electoral advance for the left

Unlike October 2011, the bulk of left forces were united for the elections. The number of elected members of the Front Populaire increased from 6 to 15, including 6 from the Workers' Party, 4 from the United Democratic Patriots, 2 from the LGO, and 3 Arab nationalists. Strong pressure will be exerted on the Front to vote confidence in the future government, and even participate in the latter, or vote for the budget. For relaying its demands, the population can also count on some elected independents, like for example Adnan Hajji, an emblematic figure from the mining basin of Gafsa.

A strong commitment to “turn the page on 2011”

Nida has the project of Tunisia fully resuming its place in the policies desired by foreign and Tunisian investors, the IMF and the World Bank. In continuity with previous governments, this involves:

- Continuing to pay the foreign debt,
- Developing free trade in the agricultural sector, services and public contracts,
- Lowering taxes on the profits of corporations,
- Privatizing companies confiscated from the Ben Ali clan,

- Continuing the squeeze on social spending in particular by reducing subsidies to basic needs products.

The place of mobilization

After having been relegated for almost four years by bipolarization between “modernist” neo-liberals and neo-liberal Islamists, the social question will therefore return to the first level. In this area, the attitude of the UGTT will play a decisive role. In 2012 and 2013, its leadership was mainly absorbed by its willingness to peacefully remove the Ennahda government. Hence its motor role in the establishment of the consensual framework which led in January 2014 to the adoption of the Constitution and the establishment of the provisional “technocratic” government responsible for preparing the elections.

This policy was accompanied by amicable relations with the employers’ organization, UTICA. Now that the political objectives the UGTT fixed have been for the most part achieved, it remains to be seen how the relationship of forces inside it will develop, between those who do not want to “obstruct” the future government in the name of the “national interest”, and those who consider that the resolute defence of the interests of workers remains the basis of trade union action. It also remains to be seen how the associative and trade union political left will meet the expectations of those who have been the engines of the revolution: the youth, the unemployed, the workers, women and the poor of the interior of the country.

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P.S.

* Translation IVP. <http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/>

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