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Tunisia Upheaval Sparks Anxiety Across Arab World — in Some Leaders More Than Others

By Judith Miller

RABAT, Morocco -- After four days of deafening silence, Morocco has joined several other Arab states in expressing “great concern” about the political upheaval in Tunisia and called upon all Tunisian political factions to restore order by engaging in “fruitful national dialogue.”

In a statement issued not by Morocco’s king, Mohammed VI, but by its foreign ministry, the Moroccan government expressed concern about the impact of the overthrow last Friday of Tunisian President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali on Morocco’s stability and that of the region. The statement warned that re-establishing order in Tunisia was “essential and fundamental to regional security and stability, particularly in the Maghreb.”

The foreign ministry in Morocco, a few hundred miles to the west of Tunisia, issued its long-awaited statement as yet another temporary government was being unveiled in Tunis and hours after police opened water hoses on protesters and fired tear gas canisters to break up the demonstrations that have continued in defiance of military curfews.

In Rabat and other Moroccan cities, by contrast, there have been few if any protests. While several merchants at the souk in Rabat expressed support Monday for the Tunisians’ overthrow of their dictatorial government, they were virtually unanimous in saying they doubted that Morocco would experience a similar upheaval.

Ahmed Herzenni, president of Morocco’s government-appointed Advisory Committee on Human Rights, said in an interview Tuesday that after coming to power in 1999, King Mohammed VI had dramatically accelerated the political liberalization that his father, the late King Hassan II, had begun. Herzenni said that what the Tunisian people had done was “very important” in that it had shown that “totalitarianism has no future” in the region and that dictators like Ben Ali were “doomed to be overthrown.” But he said that Moroccans enjoyed far more freedom and “political space” than Tunisians. “Ben Ali successfully destroyed civil society in Tunisia.” When the protests began weeks ago, he said, Ben Ali “had to leave the country because he had no political buffer.”

Morocco’s statement of concern about the upheaval in Tunis, however, reflects anxiety that is widespread in a region dominated by long-lived autocrats. The most enduring of the region’s repressive leaders, Muammar al-Qaddafi, who has ruled oil-rich Libya for decades, condemned the Tunisian protests which led to the overthrow of his long-time ally, Ben Ali. Qaddafi expressed “pain” about neighbor’s ouster. “Tunisia now lives in fear,” he asserted in a televised statement on Monday night. “Families could be raided and slaughtered in their bedrooms and the citizens in the street killed as if it was the Bolshevik or American revolution,” said the ruler long known for his erratic behavior and provocative belligerent speeches.

Qaddafi blamed [WikiLeaks](#) for leading Tunisians astray by publishing cables by foreign ambassadors that detailed the corruption of Ben Ali’s family and his dictatorial regime’s repressive excesses.

Qaddafi argued that since Ben Ali had vowed to leave office in 2014, Tunisians should have “patient for three more years.” Ben Ali fled over the weekend to [Saudi Arabia](#) after diplomats said that France, once his champion and sponsor, refused to grant him asylum. Qaddafi’s statements reflect the nervousness about their own political viability shared by so many in the region. [President Hosni Mubarak](#), for instance, who is 82 and said to be ill, has ruled Egypt for over 30 years. But he is contemplating yet another run for office this autumn. Compared to Tunisians, the 84 million Egyptians are on average less well educated, less Internet-savvy and far poorer.

In Egypt’s Sharm el-Sheikh on Tuesday, senior Arab leaders, including Morocco’s foreign minister, gathered for an economic summit to discuss trade, business and investment. But the events in Tunisia dominated the conference. Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa urged the rich Arab countries to help their poorer neighbors. “The less developed countries need help to build their economies and promote development,” he said.

While he did not refer specifically to the Tunisian upheaval in his speech today, Moussa predicted earlier that the unrest in the North African nation would affect other Arab states. “Democracy and development should go hand in hand,” he said. “Otherwise there will be no progress in the region.”

Hours before the summit opened, an Egyptian man set himself on fire outside the Parliament in central Cairo in a copy cat protest similar to that which ignited the uprising in Tunisia that led to Ben Ali’s ouster. Dozens of Egyptian activists have been protesting spiraling prices in protests each day in front of the Tunisian embassy in Cairo. But Egyptian police have limited the size and duration of the gatherings.

Morocco, though it lacks oil and ranks among the poorest states in North Africa, has made remarkable progress reducing poverty in the last decade. According to a new study by Lahcen Achy, a resident scholar at the Carnegie [Middle East](#) Center in Beirut, less than 9 percent of Morocco’s population is now considered poor, compared with 16.2 percent a decade ago – a drop in the poverty rate of more than 40 percent. Despite this impressive poverty reduction, he concludes, “Morocco faces the persistent problems of high illiteracy, inequality, volatile economic growth, informal and vulnerable jobs, and uncertain levels of future remittances.” Plus, the study concludes, “the state’s increasing centralization threatens the role civil society can play in helping improve the country’s situation.”

In the wake of the stunning events in Tunisia, several autocratic Arab states took steps to relieve economic pressure on their citizens. On Sunday, Syria sharply raised subsidies for energy by raising heating oil allowances for public workers by 72 percent.

In Jordan, which has also seen protests over skyrocketing food and living costs and high unemployment, the Hashemite kingdom announced a new \$125 million package of subsidies for fuel and products like sugar after Jordanians protest this week.

Meanwhile, younger Arabs continue to watch political events unfold in Tunisia and write enthusiastic entries in FaceBook, Twitter, and other social networking sites. “Every Arab leader hoping that Tunisia fails and every young Arab is hoping that it succeeds,” said Mona El Tahaway, an Arab analyst told the BBC.

Réparation communautaire à Khénifra: Session de formation au profit des acteurs locaux sur "les micro-entreprises"

Cette formation s'inscrit dans le contexte du projet de renforcement des capacités des acteurs locaux (acteurs associatifs, élus et agents administratifs) dans la province, en cours de réalisation dans le cadre du programme de réparation communautaire, apprend-on auprès de l'Association "Al Amal", porteur du projet.

Ce projet, dont le coût s'élève à environ 370 mille dh, financés dans le cadre d'un partenariat avec le Conseil consultatif des droits de l'Homme et la Caisse de dépôts et de gestion (CDG) avec le soutien de l'Union européenne, vise à faciliter l'accès des groupes cibles (acteurs associatifs, agents de l'administration publique et des collectivités locales et élus locaux), aux approches et outils de la gouvernance locale.

Le projet a également pour objectifs de répondre aux besoins des institutions dans le cadre d'une vision guidée par le développement local et de favoriser l'échange de l'information et des expériences, à travers la mobilisation des synergies locales autour du programme de réparation communautaire.

Il consiste en l'organisation de plusieurs tables-rondes, ateliers et sessions de formation sur "l'action sociale et le développement", "les activités génératrices de revenus (AGR), un levier du développement" et "la charte communale".

Les thèmes retenus portent également sur "les projets territoriaux", "l'approche genre", "les micro-entreprises", "l'habilitation", "la gouvernance locale", "la justice transitionnelle" et "l'équité et réconciliation

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