



TUNISIA PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

NOVEMBER 23 & DECEMBER 21, 2014

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INTERNATIONAL REPUBLICAN INSTITUTE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The parliamentary and presidential elections of late 2014 marked key milestones in Tunisia's democratic transition that began in December 2010 when a Tunisian fruit-seller's self-immolation sparked a popular revolution that culminated in the ousting of autocratic ruler Zine Abdine Ben Ali in January 2011.

Since then, the Tunisian people have surmounted hurdle after hurdle to draw closer to full democracy. Though the process has not been without challenges, Tunisia's nascent democracy has proven resilient in the face of political crises and regional insecurity. In October 2011, Tunisians elected members of the National Constituent Assembly (NCA) to draft a new constitution. Regrettably, growing political polarization, exacerbated by the assassination of two prominent secular opposition figures in 2013, delayed the passage of the constitution until January 2014. In the meantime, Tunisians, who had high expectations for the pace of the democratic transition, grew frustrated with the apparent lack of progress they had hoped for with respect to both the political transition and addressing Tunisia's economic malaise. In May 2014, the NCA approved the electoral law; and in June 2014, the parliamentary and presidential election dates were set.

For the Tunisian 2014 election process, the International Republican Institute (IRI) fielded three international election observation missions. This report focuses on IRI's observation of the two presidential elections,¹ for which IRI deployed a total of eight long-term observers (LTO) and 98 short-term observers (STO). IRI's delegation of LTOs began monitoring the electoral environment in Tunisia in September 2014, meeting with a wide range of stakeholders throughout the country, including political parties, electoral bodies and civil society representatives. The STOs were briefed by these groups and monitored polling procedures on each Election Day at more than 520 polling stations across the country.² In addition to observing the elections in Tunisia, IRI also deployed observers to overseas voting locations in the United States, Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Belgium, due to Tunisia's unique system that provides direct representation to Tunisians living outside the country.

Based on IRI's observations, the Tunisian presidential election on November 23, 2014 and the presidential run-off election on December 21, 2014 met international standards for freedom, credibility and transparency. Candidates contested the elections and voters cast their ballots in an electoral environment free from systemic fraud and major acts of violence and intimidation. Election officials conducted the voting process with a high degree of professionalism and transparency, and made improvement to electoral administration between the parliamentary and presidential elections. Civil society groups actively engaged

¹ For information on IRI's international observation mission for Tunisia's 2014 parliamentary elections, please see IRI's [Tunisia 2014 Parliamentary Elections Report](#).

² IRI observed 234 polling stations during the first round of the presidential elections on November 23, 2014. IRI observed 286 polling stations in the presidential run-off election on December 21, 2014.

in Tunisia's electoral process, especially in the capacity of citizen observers, and are to be commended for their role in ensuring election administrators maintained a high level of accountability and transparency. IRI also applauds Tunisian women for their active participation in the election process, both as poll workers, voters and, in one case, as a presidential candidate.

IRI made several key recommendations for the continued improvement of future Tunisian elections. IRI found that the system of assigning voters to polling stations based on national identification number had the unintended consequence of segregating voters by age. This resulted in administrative challenges since young voters participated at a lower rate than older voters. Future elections would likewise be improved with more specific guidelines on vote counting to create more uniformity and greater efficiency in the ballot counting process. Additionally, IRI observers noted that ambiguous and unnecessarily complex campaign finance laws made it difficult for candidates to comply with the regulations and for election administrators to monitor and enforce the law. Further, the overreaching campaign regulatory system, combined with an overly-limited campaign period, placed an undue burden on candidates and hindered voters' ability to make informed choices based on candidate platforms. Finally, the presidential run-off election suffered from negative campaigning and the electoral administration's late amendment to rules governing citizen observers' movement inside polling centers, which created confusion on Election Day.

For future elections, IRI recommends that the Tunisian election administration, the [Independent High Authority for Elections](#) or ISIE, simplify campaign finance laws, loosen campaign activity restrictions, clarify counting procedures, use a different method to assign voters to polling stations and avoid making late adjustments to electoral rules. IRI also suggests that the ISIE, and other relevant electoral stakeholders in Tunisia's political parties and civil society, redouble efforts to engage youth voters further to increase their political participation. Finally, while IRI recognizes this is an unfortunate feature of many democracies, the Institute urges candidates for political office to focus campaigns on solutions to the problems facing Tunisians and avoid divisive, inflammatory rhetoric.

BACKGROUND: THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

Tunisia's parliamentary elections on October 26, 2014, greatly influenced the behavior and narrative of the presidential campaigns, which officially began on November 1. The Nidaa Tounes party, led by presidential candidate Beji Caid Essebsi, won 86 seats in the parliament. Its primary rival party, the Islamist Ennahda Movement, won 69 seats. This was followed by Slim Riahi's Union Patriotique Libre (UPL or Free Patriotic Union) with 16 seats. The leftist Popular Front coalition won 15 seats under the leadership of longtime opposition figure Hamma Hammami. The small, classic liberal party Afek Tounes won eight seats. The remaining 26 seats went to 10 other parties and three independent lists.

On October 1, the ISIE released the official list of approved presidential candidates. Of the 70 applications received, 27 met the requirements for candidacy. Only one candidate was a woman, a judge named Kalthoum Kannou. Only one candidate was under the age of 50: UPL's Slim Riahi, a football club owner with a background in the Libyan oil industry. Other candidates included figures with ties to the previous regime, international economists, businessmen living abroad and longtime opposition figures and human rights activists.

During the parliamentary elections campaign, Ennahda party, which led the country since the 2011 elections in coalition with Ettakatol and Congress for the Republic, publically announced that it would not field a presidential candidate. Ennahda's decision suggested the possibility of endorsement or even direct support of a presidential candidate from a different party in order to strengthen Ennahda's position in the next government while stepping away from direct responsibility for the management of the state. An endorsement from Ennahda's leadership, Tunisia's best-organized party with a galvanized support base, would give any candidate a strong chance to beat Nidaa Tounes' leader, Beji Caid Essebsi.³

In the parliamentary elections, Nidaa Tounes had campaigned on the message of *le vote utile*, "the useful vote." Nidaa Tounes' campaign contended that everyone who desired to see the Ennahda party defeated needed to vote for Nidaa Tounes as the strongest secular party. The party argued that by rallying under a single banner, Tunisians could avoid diluting the secular vote, which would result in a repeat Islamist win by Ennahda.

After Nidaa Tounes succeeded in winning a plurality of seats in the parliamentary elections, many anti-Ennahda but pro-revolution voters feared that an Essebsi victory, which would give his party control of both the executive and legislative branches of government, could

³ While Beji Caid Essebsi is the leader of Nidaa Tounes, election regulations required that presidential candidates run campaigns separate from their political party. Party resources could not be used in presidential campaigns. Instead, each individual candidate was responsible for their campaign. The intent was to allow voters to vote for the candidate with the best qualifications instead of their preferred political party. This regulation was difficult to monitor or enforce as there were few mechanisms for inspecting or punishing candidates who used their party in their campaign.

produce a rollback of democratic progress achieved during the transition. Ultimately, however, this fear was not strong enough to defeat Essebsi at the polls.

Civil Society Engagement

Tunisian civil society organizations (CSO) deployed a sizable contingent of observers for the parliamentary elections, and they emerged with mixed reviews of the Tunisian election commission's performance. Groups like Citizenship and Liberty, Doustourna, the [Tunisian Association for Democratic Elections](#), the [League of Human Rights](#), [I-Watch](#) and Sawty conveyed a common concern that some polling staff were affiliated with political parties and that the ISIE was not sufficiently equipped, organized or funded to monitor and enforce the electoral law, especially with regard to campaign behavior and campaign spending limits. Many, however, acknowledged that the ISIE performed well, given its limited resources and time to prepare. Civil society criticisms of the ISIE were largely constructive, helping the election commission identify areas that need improvement for future elections.

Marginalized Groups

Low youth turnout was one of the major deficiencies of the parliamentary elections. Party representatives interviewed by IRI frequently noted that, while the majority of young people were not engaged in the elections, youth did form the backbone of parties' campaign teams and grassroots outreach efforts. However, when IRI queried CSOs many felt that across the country youth involvement in political parties was motivated by money rather than by political passion. This made it difficult for parties to recruit volunteers and build long-term relations with young people.

Women played a critical role in all three elections, both as voters and election administration staff. IRI and The Carter Center, another international election observation group observing the elections, both noted that approximately 50 percent of voters were women in the elections and that a majority of polling staff in some rural polling stations were often women.

The lack of competitive female parliamentary candidates is an area for improvement in future elections. Although Tunisia's electoral law requires gender balance on candidate lists, women only comprised seven percent of the head of lists in the parliamentary elections. This meant that far fewer women were successful in attaining parliamentary seats than the large number of women candidates might suggest. Although from a regional perspective, Tunisia's female representation in parliament is among the highest, there is still a need to raise the profile and competitiveness of women candidates in future elections.

Changes in Election Administration

The ISIE used a systematic approach to learning and knowledge management from its experience in the parliamentary elections. All independent regional election authorities (IRIE) submitted reports to the ISIE detailing the challenges they encountered in the course of the parliamentary elections, which informed adjustments for the presidential election and presidential run-off. Based on these reports, the ISIE made the changes that could be implemented in the short period between elections, retrained all IRIEs to address commonly reported problems and reassigned or removed staff that showed bias based on their performance in the parliamentary elections.

One important immediate change made was the issuance of identification badges to all staff in the polling centers and stations. Additionally, a braille ballot reader was created for the presidential election. The ISIE also retrained IRIE staff, providing additional instruction on provisions of the electoral code pertaining to the presidential elections, voting and counting procedures, the role and responsibilities of the president of the polling center, the protocol for interactions with observers and party or candidate representatives, press and media procedures, security and approaches to logistical problems. The IRIEs were responsible for disseminating this information down to the polling center and station presidents and did so effectively.

IRIEs also took measures to improve procedures for the two presidential elections. They reviewed the staff of every polling station in their respective jurisdictions and made staffing changes as needed. In some cases, staff, who were frequently accused of partisanship or poor performance, voluntarily resigned.

The IRIEs also rectified minor issues with the voter registry, such as voters who could not be found on their local registry, by adding voter names onto the appropriate lists. This appears to have been an especially pronounced problem at certain overseas voting locations in the October 26 parliamentary elections. Regrettably, the ISIE determined that it did not have the time or capacity to register voters who turned 18 after August 26, 2014. Additionally, further official voter education efforts were limited to the release of a video on the ISIE website to explain to voters the process for casting their ballots.

THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN PERIOD



In the first two weeks of November, most public campaigns were limited to posters on billboards, walls or trucks, such as this one of Mohamed Frikha in Kairouan.

similar activities were planned in addition to political cafés, where the candidates sat with young people in cafes and discussed their programs. Youth formed the backbone of his campaign activities in the north.

Interim-president Moncef Marzouki held large rallies in the east, attracting both supporters and detractors. IRI observers witnessed Marzouki's rallies in Kairouan and Bouhajla, reporting that he was well received in Kairouan city, but met with hostility in Bouhajla, a smaller town 21 miles south. There, citizens blamed him for the decline of living standards and general welfare under his tenure. This feeling was characteristic of the sentiment felt in much of the interior and southern regions, not just toward Marzouki but towards politicians in Tunis in general.

Other top presidential candidates ran more geographically limited campaigns, reserving their campaign resources until the last two weeks of the campaign period. Mustapha Ben Jaafar, president of the NCA, campaigned in the south with posters, door-to-door activities, visits to the markets and cafés; he also held a rally in Sfax, a southeastern city. Ahmed Nejib Chebbi, leader of Al Joumhourî party, met with citizens in the south and distributed leaflets. Hama Hammami, leader of the Popular Front, held rallies in the south and east, but largely utilized door-to-door campaigns to mobilize his supporters.

Five presidential candidates announced their withdrawal from the race during the campaign period, despite a Tunisian election law which prohibits this after the official announcement of the candidate list. IRI is not aware of any penalties levied against these candidates for this violation.

On November 1, the presidential campaign began with major candidates holding kick-off rallies in their home cities or the Tunisian capital, Tunis. Nationwide, the presidential campaign remained quiet, with observers reporting very low visibility of campaigns in most areas. Some candidates held small, low-cost gatherings in cafés or went door-to-door.

According to IRI observers, front-runner Beji Caïd Essebsi's campaign was the most active, utilizing the national reach and support of his party, Nidaa Tounes. In the east of Tunisia, his campaign coordinators organized rallies, door-to-door activities, leafleting and

tours for the candidate. In the north,

Ennahda's Endorsement

With the parliamentary elections recently concluded, the top parties and candidates had privately begun to explore potential presidential coalitions. Candidates with limited resources decided to limit their campaign activities during the negotiation period in preparation for a targeted last minute blitz closer to the election date, November 23, 2014.



Rally in Gafsa for Hamma Hammami, a vocal advocate for workers' equality.

During this period, the looming question in the minds of voters, and the obsession of Tunisia's political radio shows, was which candidate Ennahda's leadership would endorse for president. With Beji Caid Essebsi as a clear front runner in the race campaigning on a staunch anti-Islamist platform, other candidates understood that Ennahda's endorsement would give them the support of the party's considerable voter base, potentially boosting the candidate between 20 to 30 points. For the majority of candidates, who were viewed as either tainted by their affiliation with the old regime or were unpalatable due to their anti-Islamist rhetoric, Ennahda's endorsement was unlikely. More realistically, Ennahda's potential choice lay in the former coalition government and human rights activists, such as former president of Tunisia Moncef Marzouki, NCA president Mustapha Ben Jaafar or Al Jomhuri party leader Nejib Chebbi.

On Saturday, November 8, after holding a party council meeting late into Friday night, Ennahda officially announced that it would not endorse any of the candidates, but instead encouraged Tunisians to vote for the candidate who would guarantee democracy and realize the goals of the revolution. This was understood to be Moncef Marzouki, whom many in Ennahda's executive shura council publicly supported.

Over the next 13 days, campaigns intensified, with all major candidates holding rallies throughout the country.

Marginalized Groups

While candidates recognized the importance of Tunisia's youth demographic, their attempts to engage with youth were nowhere near the scope and size needed to make a significant impact on their level of participation. Essebsi's campaign created task forces to engage with youth. Other campaigns used direct engagement methods, such as door-to-door campaigning and political cafés. Despite these modest attempts to engage youth, IRI found that young people were disaffected and uninspired by the political options available. As unemployment figures were highest among youth, most notably educated youth, IRI observers heard from many young people that while they believed in democracy, they did

not believe in the ability of the current political class to improve the socio-economic situation.

IRI observed lower levels of female participation in campaigns in rural areas. The lack of female candidates in the presidential election was a disappointment. Only one of the 27 presidential candidates was a woman.

Some campaign representatives in the north of the country, as well as in Gabes and Sfax, told IRI observers about their efforts to target women voters. Essebsi's campaign strategy appeared to use women to conduct outreach to other women in rural areas. Ennahda in Gabes claimed that women played a central role in door-to-door campaigns.



Presidential candidate Abderazak Kilani, far right, holds a political café in Djerba Houmt-Souk.

Media Coverage

The presidential campaigns were well covered on television, radio and online media. Many radio stations reported hourly on political or electoral updates and aired campaign ads especially as the election days neared. Call-in programs engaging citizens were also frequent in both the northern and southern regions of Tunisia. The national television stations held debate programs and other politically focused content in the evenings throughout the campaign period. Under Tunisia's election law, each candidate was given three minutes on national television to present their platform. While three minutes were accorded to each candidate, IRI heard complaints from campaigns and other observation missions that the media focused too much on the most popular candidates and did not give equal access to the candidates with less recognition and funding.

IRI long-term observers heard frequent reports of media bias in campaign coverage throughout the elections. While political squabbling certainly played a role in these accusations, the variety of sources making the claim suggests some validity. IRI's long-term observers in the northwest spoke with Ennahda's Siliana branch, which reported that they were approached by journalists asking for bribes in return for favorable media coverage. Siliana-based members of the citizen observation mission [Mourakiboun](#) told IRI's long-term observers that the media generally favored Essebsi. LTOs in the southwest heard similar complaints from campaign teams and civil society organizations. While IRI has no proof that this practice was pervasive, observers heard accusations of this nature throughout the campaign period.

IRI observers commended Oxygen FM in Bizerte, which allotted one hour slots for each candidate to talk about their platforms on a program entitled, "Who is in Carthage?"; Ulysses FM in Medenine similarly provided air time for the candidates to present their platforms.

Overall, observers noted a broad perception that the major media outlets were heavily influenced by either Essebsi's campaign or Ennahda and that coverage for smaller campaigns often required payment. However, these accusations, while frequent, were never proven or verified. The Nabeul Al Joumhouri party (campaigning for Ahmed Nejib Chebbi) and Ettakatol party (campaigning for Mustapha Ben Jaafar) campaign representatives particularly complained that the mass media gave Essebsi more coverage than their candidates.

In the weeks immediately preceding the election, the media narrative focused heavily on Beji Caid Essebsi and Moncef Marzouki, who reportedly had the support of Ennahda voters. The media rapidly exacerbated the narrative of a presidential race between an old regime anti-Islamist and an eccentric incumbent who had allied himself to Ennahda.

It should be noted that while campaigns used some radio ads and TV appearances, social media and grassroots campaigning (door-to-door, person-to-person, rallies and poster and flier distribution) were the primary messaging vehicles for the larger parties.

Civil Society

IRI regularly met with CSOs around the country for election observation related purposes and also in the course its routine Tunisia program activities. IRI's LTOs found that the organizations most actively involved in the electoral process were the Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT), Mourakiboun, I-Watch and the Tunisian Association for Integrity and Democracy in Elections (ATIDE).

Relations soured between the ISIE and ATIDE during the presidential election campaign period. The IRIE in Sidi Bouzid filed a complaint in court against ATIDE seeking to prevent the organization's observation of the presidential election due to several alleged electoral law violations by ATIDE observers. An official of the ATIDE office in Sidi Bouzid claimed that the ISIE singled out ATIDE because the CSO observed and documented more than 9,000 violations of the electoral law nationally, and particularly in Sidi Bouzid, including the closure of a polling station two hours early, verbal and physical assaults of party members and vote buying. ATIDE was the only organization to cast accusations of this magnitude toward the ISIE and the electoral process. Other citizen observers openly disagreed with ATIDE's assessment.

With the exception of ATIDE, there is broad consensus among the international and citizen observation missions that the ISIE conducted the election in a transparent, fair and credible manner and that overall the electoral process enabled legitimate elections. Citizen observation group Mourakiboun's parallel vote tabulation was particularly helpful in verifying the results and integrity of the election. According to the organization, Mourakiboun's 4,000 citizen observers visited all 27 electoral districts, and the [results](#) of their observations were published on Election Night. Mourakiboun observed major procedure violations in only one percent of polling stations, while 93 percent of all polling stations held to all procedures. Mourakiboun's parallel vote tabulation provided an independent alternative to the national electoral commission's report of the election results essential to perception of the election's legitimacy. This, and the concurrence of the many

citizen observation groups that scrutinized the election, supports the international community's conclusion regarding the overall integrity of the Tunisian presidential election.

IRI observed CSOs engaged in limited voter awareness campaigns but most said financial constraints prevented them from reaching as many voters as they had wanted. In Medenine, Civic Pole, in partnership with the United Nations Development Program and Zahraa, set up a voter outreach tent and coordinated a bus tour of Medenine's rural areas to raise voter awareness of the presidential elections. Sfax-based We Youth launched an initiative called "We Vote" to encourage youth and women's voter participation. The same group's "Trans Vote" project supported voter education by training persons with disabilities in democratic principles and trained civil society activists on voter education. "Trans Vote" also produced voter education brochures for distribution.

Security

The security situation remained calm throughout most of the country during the presidential campaign period for both elections. However, security forces continued ongoing operations against terrorist threats. The Tunisian army conducted a raid in the governorate of Siliana in northern Tunisia on October 28, two days after the parliamentary elections, leading to the arrest of eight suspected terrorists. On October 29, the National Guard arrested 30 more people in the governorate of Ariana alleged to be planning attacks to derail the election process. On the same day, the National Guard also arrested seven individuals on allegations of organizing terrorist cells in Tataouine and Sfax. Additionally, five soldiers were killed in a terrorist attack on a military bus in Kef on November 5. Finally, in November, Tunisian authorities arrested two Syrian Islamic State adherents on the Algerian-Tunisian border.

ELECTION PERIOD: ROUND ONE



Presidential candidate Moncef Marzouki displays his inked finger.

On November 23, 2014, IRI's 58 international observers visited 234 polling stations throughout 15 of Tunisia's 24 governorates, as well as polling stations in England, France, Germany and the United States where Tunisian citizens living abroad had the right to vote. Each team observed the opening of voting at one polling station, voting procedures at multiple polling stations and the closing and vote counting procedures at a final polling station. At each station they visited, observers conducted interviews with polling officials, party representatives and other observers present at the time.

Observers completed a detailed written checklist at each polling station to systematically collect key information about the preparedness of IRIE polling staff, adherence to voting procedures as specified in Tunisia's electoral law, the presence and behavior of political party and nonpartisan Tunisian election

observers, voter participation and various other issues related to potential violations and knowledge of and adherence to electoral rules. IRI's observers sent real-time feedback on the polling station to IRI's command center in Tunis via IRI's interactive voice response (IVR) system.

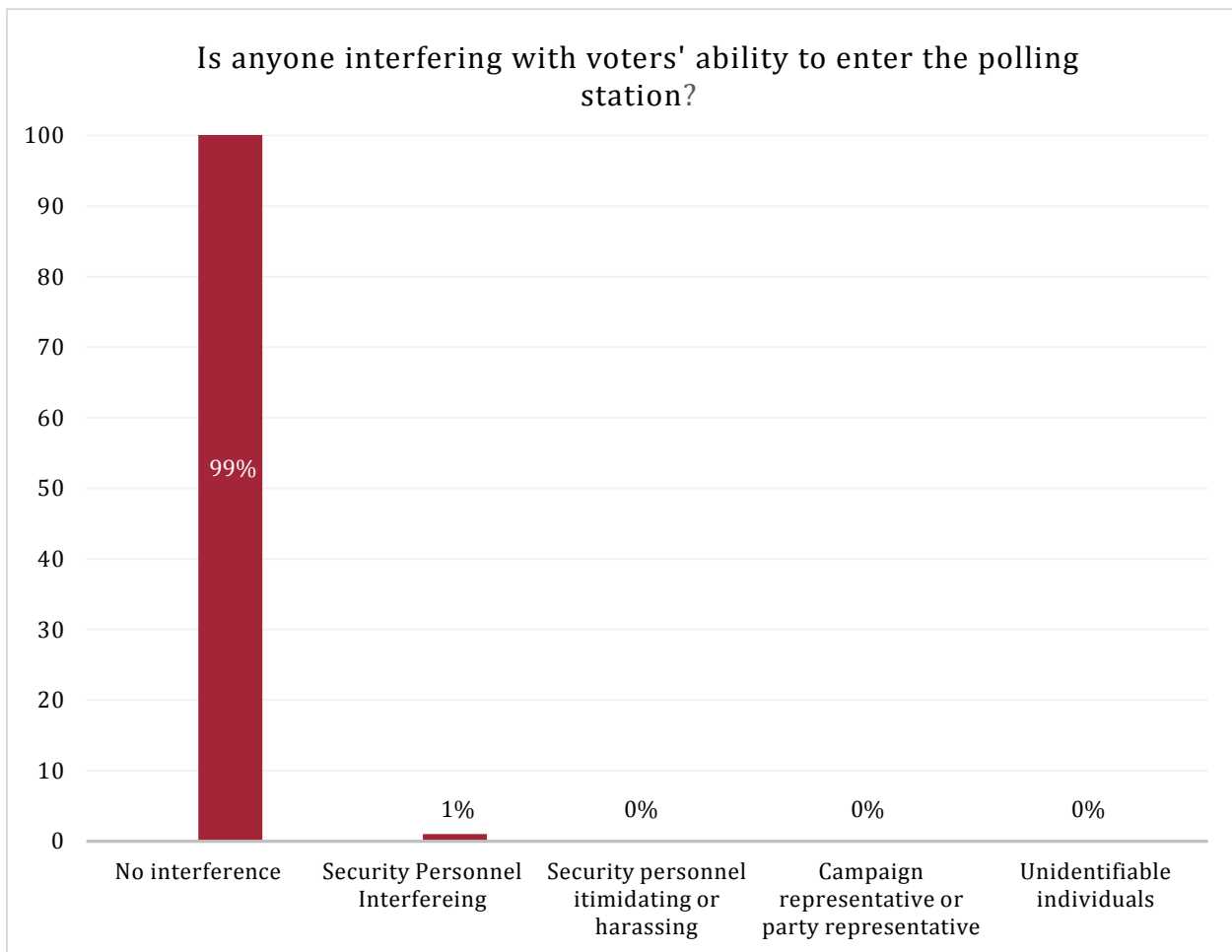
Based on observer reports, IRI's delegation found the election to be conducted in a positive atmosphere with enthusiastic voters waiting patiently to express their democratic will. IRI's delegation noted voting proceeded according to the election law and in keeping with international standards. Polling station officials were professional, knowledgeable about their duties and committed to conducting the election according to established procedures. Although IRI's delegation observed a few irregularities, these did not constitute a systemic pattern of violations, nor did they have any significant effect on the integrity of the election or the results.

Voter turnout on Election Day reached 64.56 percent of registered voters according to the ISIE. Turnout was generally higher in urban centers than in rural areas, reaching as much as 71.56 percent in urban Tunis 2, and 52.81 percent in Jendouba, the governorate with the

lowest turnout.⁴ The governorate with the highest turnout was Tataouine where 73.21 percent of the 59,752 registered voters cast a ballot. IRI witnessed high turnout in the early hours that remained steady throughout the late morning and early afternoon. IRI's observers believe that ISIE official figures are reflective of turnout across the country and consistent with the reports of citizen election monitoring organizations, as well as survey research conducted in the pre-election period. Total youth turnout figures have not been released, but observers agree that youth were not seen in high numbers at the polls.

For the presidential election, the polling station opening time was changed from 7:00 am to 8:00 am. In the Northwest, where there was a greater risk of potential terrorist activity, the ISIE announced that 124 polling stations would open at 10:00 am and close at 3:00 pm.

Opening Procedures



Source: IRI's IVR system.

⁴ Turnout in Tunis 2 for the presidential election was approximately seven points lower than the parliamentary election at 78 percent of registered voters.

Overall, IRI observers concluded that election procedures were largely followed and polling staff acted in a professional manner. Polls opened at 8:00 am, or within minutes thereof, and closed at 6:00 pm, according to schedule. IRI observers arrived at polling stations as early as 7:00 am to observe Election Day opening procedures by IRIE staff. The majority of polling stations where opening procedures were observed were characterized as orderly, prepared and calm. The environment outside polling centers and inside polling stations was also calm, even during the morning hours when voter turnout was at its highest.

Observers found no patterns of irregularities or violations that would have affected election results in their assigned areas. Procedures were observed closely by polling station staff, the police and national army. Observers did occasionally see National Guard inside polling centers in the school yard, technically a violation of electoral law, but they were not interfering with the vote or interacting with citizens. In every location where IRI observers were present, IRI delegates and staff were welcomed into the polling station and all procedures were conducted in their full view. IRI also noted the presence of citizen observers and candidate representatives in many polling stations; police and security permitted entry to any visitor with official credentials to observe the voting.

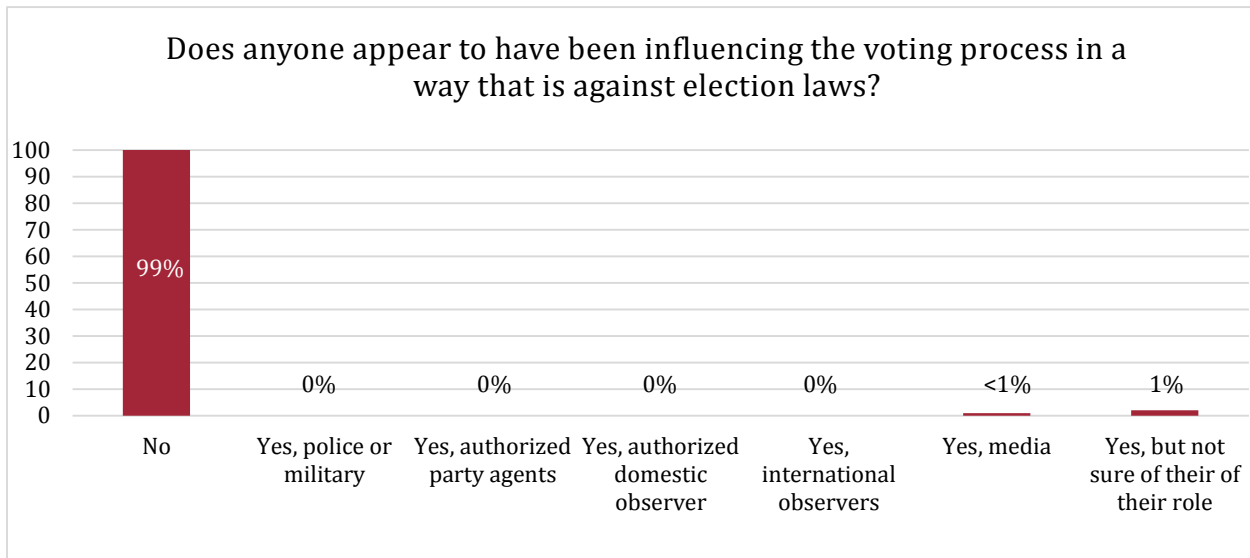
Overall, IRI's observers were impressed by the level of preparedness exhibited by ISIE regional and local staff. IRIE representatives were familiar with election procedures and maintained a sense of general order throughout Election Day. All staff encountered by IRI observers in polling centers and stations had been well trained by the ISIE. All workers with whom IRI spoke reported receiving ISIE training. Independent and political party observers were granted full access to the process, including vote counting and tabulation, lending to the overall impression of transparency of the election.

Voting

At the vast majority of polling centers visited, IRI observers rated the level of organization and security favorably. Observers were impressed with the consistency with which polling stations were set up and voting procedures were followed. Polling stations were uniformly organized according to specifications from ISIE's procedural manual. Staff were familiar with the voting procedures and performed their duties competently and in strict adherence to the law. IRI observers did not witness campaign activity inside or around the vicinity of the polling centers. Security arrangements were consistent at polling stations throughout the country. With no notable violations, security personnel were located either at the entrance of the polling center, or occasionally inside the polling center, but not inside the polling station itself.



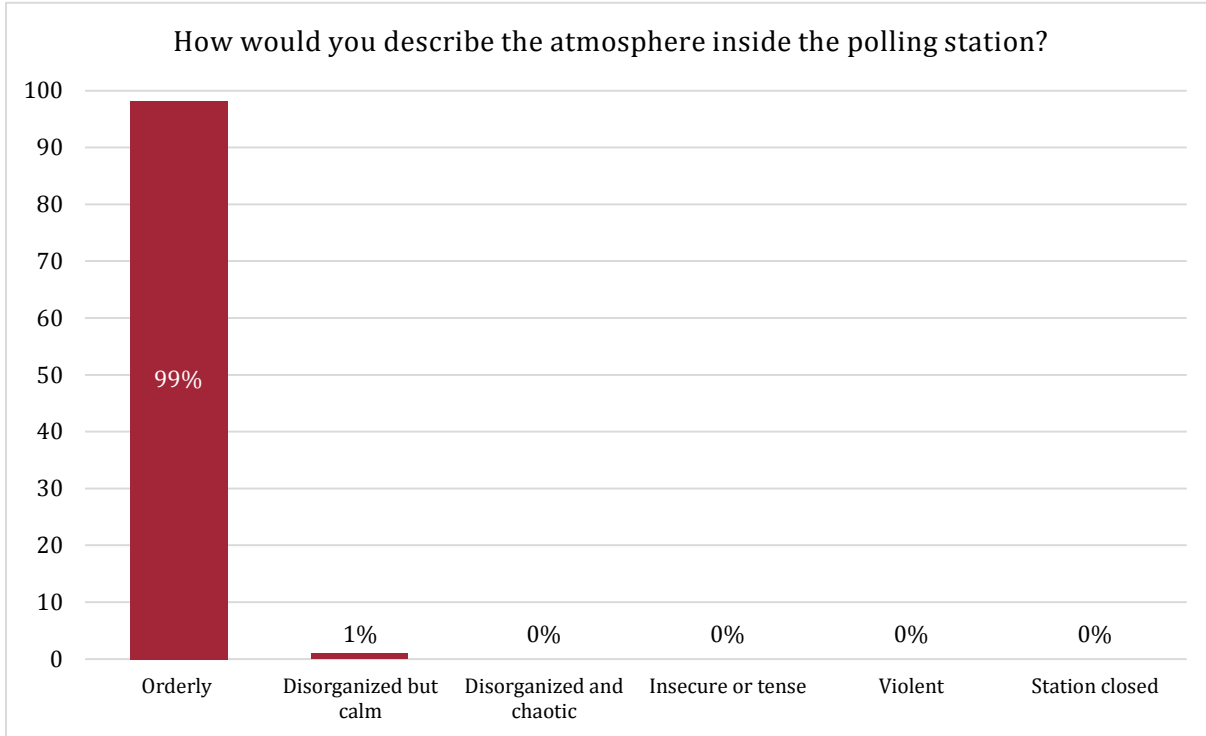
For the most part, oversight of voting was conducted in an orderly manner by informed staff. Access to the polling places was well regulated. Candidate observers had visible credentials that appeared to be checked by the polling station staff before they were allowed in the room. Typically voters' identification were not checked by police prior to entering the polling centers, in keeping with the election law. IRI observers did not witness any undue denial of entry into polling centers, and a designated ISIE official verified the identity of voters in all polling stations visited by IRI observers.



Source: IRI's IVR system.

Improvements made for the presidential election included the use of a straight edge to improve the orderliness of voter signatures in the registry. The ISIE increased the speed of the voting process by allowing polling station staff to return voter identification cards to voters after verifying their names on the list, instead of holding onto the card until they finished voting. IRI's overseas observers noted that fewer Tunisian voters casting ballots abroad appeared to be turned away for the November 23 presidential election when compared to the October 26 parliamentary elections and credited ISIE and overseas regional independent election commissions with improvements in the accuracy of the voter registry at overseas voting locations during the short time between the parliamentary and presidential vote.

IRI observers were impressed with the widespread deployment of political party agent observers and nonpartisan citizen observers from Tunisia. IRI's observer teams noted the presence of citizen observers in nearly every polling station they visited. Citizen observers were well-trained and knowledgeable of the election procedures and generally performed their roles proficiently. IRI heard reports from candidate observers that some regions did not receive candidate observer badges until the eve of the election, which created last minute logistical challenges for the presidential campaign teams. IRI Election Day observation reports suggested that the Essebsi campaign and Ennahda deployed the largest number of observers.



Source: IRI's IVR system.

IRI noted a near ubiquitous element of the election procedures that made the voting process needlessly cumbersome. The assignment of voters to polling stations within a center according to a sequential listing of national identification numbers on the voter registry, whether intended or not, had the effect of separating older voters who have lower identification numbers from younger voters. This created significantly longer lines for older voters and shorter lines for youth, as they were largely absent on Election Day. While this problem did not threaten the integrity of the election results, it did limit efficiency at the polls and may have further impacted voter participation.

Underrepresented Groups

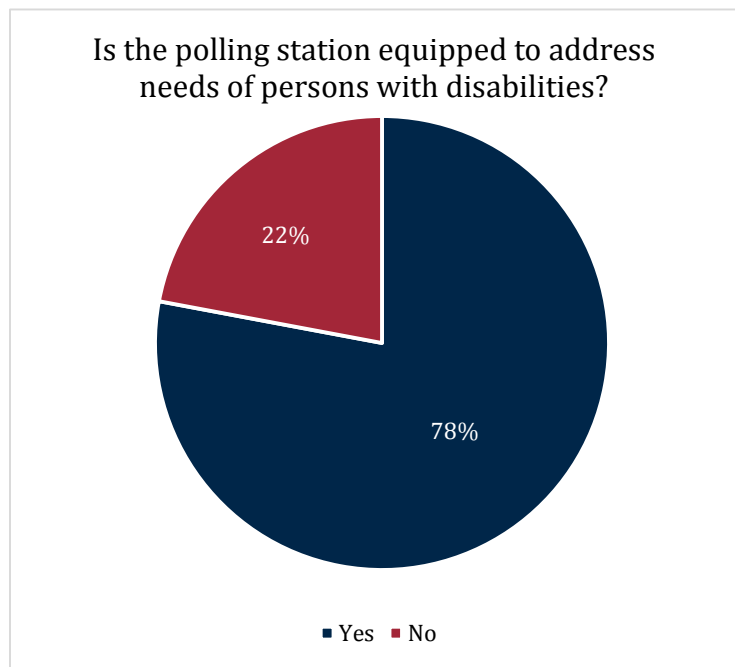
Women turned out in strong numbers to vote, and their participation in all facets of the electoral process was substantial. Most polling station staff were composed of at least two women, including many cases where women presided over the polling stations or centers. In 25 percent of the stations observed by IRI, the polling center president was a woman. There were cases, as well, where the polling station staff were made up entirely of women.



A disabled voter waits in line outside a polling station in Gabes, Tunisia with IRI observer Paul DeGregorio from the Association of World Election Bodies.

Regrettably, Tunisian youth were largely absent from the electoral process, a trend that started with the October 26 parliamentary elections and continued through both of the presidential elections. Polling stations assigned to youth were empty for large periods of the day. Given the prominent role played by young Tunisians in the 2011 revolution that unseated Ben Ali, it is critical that political parties, civil society, electoral bodies and the education system make a redoubled effort to engage youth in the electoral process, as broad voter apathy was apparent.

Most of the schools used as polling centers were accessible to persons with disabilities. However, in some instances, the rooms chosen as polling stations were on the second floor, proving cumbersome for people with physical disabilities. IRI's observer teams observed that the centers were equipped with at least one tool to enable voting for the blind. The polling staff, however, in strict adherence to the electoral law, most times refused to help illiterate voters or people with vision impairment and did not provide guidance on how to mark the ballot for fear of providing undue influence. Although the law prevented staff from influencing the vote, many illiterate voters were left without assistance in understanding their choices on the ballot.



Source: IRI's IVR system.

Closing and Counting Procedures

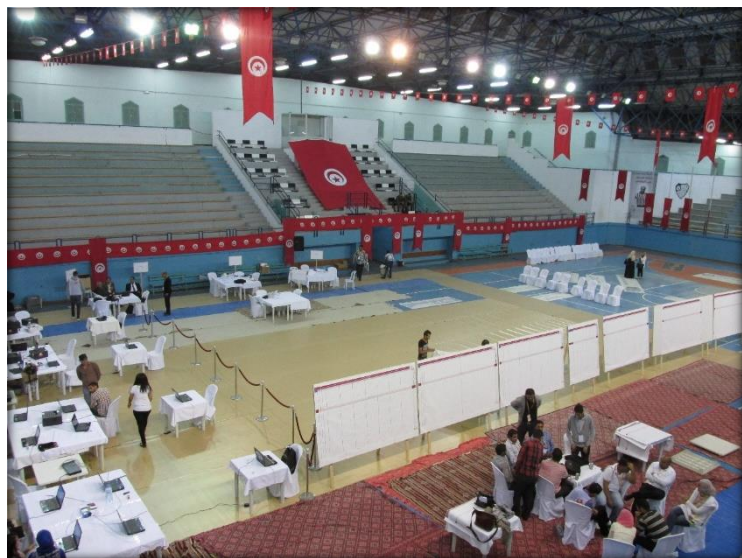
Closing procedures for the presidential election were improved upon when compared with the parliamentary elections based on several procedural adjustments made by the ISIE and increased knowledge through prior experience by polling officials in conducting counts. Additionally, the utilization of two envelopes with each containing voting results eliminated the need to reopen ballot boxes at collation centers following polling station counts. Most polling stations were closed on schedule at 6:00 pm; voters who arrived before 6:00 pm were

allowed to continue waiting in line and were eventually able to cast their ballot. The counting process was transparent, although the vote count was often drawn out and time consuming. Generally, observers, candidates and their agents were able to access all proceedings in the polling stations without obstruction.

While the closing of the polls and sorting and counting of ballots passed with no critical errors, counting in some locations proceeded slowly as officials undertook their roles with great care and occasionally had to stop to ensure they were adhering to procedure. In the stations IRI observed, sorting and counting of ballots was performed in full view of observers and election commission staff. In some cases, adherence to procedures was not as strict as it had been throughout the day, due in part to fatigue among the election commission staff.

The lack of clear procedure on how to correct errors caused some delays in counting. IRI observers found that polling station officials usually went to painstaking lengths to ensure that counting was conducted accurately. The counting protocols were also extremely time-consuming. Some station staff stayed until the early hours of the morning to finalize vote counting.

Upon completion of counts, each polling station turned over its ballot box to the polling center president, who would then deliver them to members of Tunisia’s military stationed outside the polling center for transport to the regional tabulation center. The tabulation centers were generally spacious facilities, such as stadiums. They were sufficiently equipped and ready to receive election results.



A tabulation center prepares to receive ballot boxes from each polling center in its district.

Many human and logistical resources were mobilized for the tabulation process. Tallying started late on Election Day as soon as the election results were received. Election results were displayed on a board at the regional tabulation center. A group of tally personnel was in charge of verification and correction of tally sheets; another group was responsible for entering the data online; a third group was in charge of controlling the data online. Upon completing tabulation of the first round presidential election results, all election related materials from the first round were sent to military barracks, while inventory lists of the materials were sent to the ISIE in Tunis.

Ultimately, the few irregularities observed were minor in nature; the counting process overall was characterized by attention to detail and meticulous observance of election rules.

First Round Results

Beji Caid Essebsi narrowly defeated Moncef Marzouki with 39.46 percent and 33.43 percent of the vote respectively. In distant third place was Hama Hammami with 7.82 percent, followed by Hechmi Hamdi and Slim Riahi with 5.75 and 5.55 percent respectively. Since no candidate won 50 percent of the vote plus one, a run-off between Essebsi and Marzouki was scheduled for December.

The presidential election results highlighted regional divides, with Essebsi winning the majority of the north interior and north coast and Marzouki winning the majority of the southern interior and southeastern coast. With the race narrowed down to two candidates, divisions over national identity, resource sharing and the future direction of the country were further exacerbated.

BETWEEN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

Speculation abounded over whether the presidential run-off election would be held in early, mid or late December following the issuance of the November 23 election results on November 25. The Marzouki campaign filed eight Election Day related court challenges. The Essebsi campaign filed none. Marzouki's surprisingly strong showing in the first round led many to suggest that an early December election would allow him to quickly capitalize on his upward momentum. However, the decision to file multiple appeals was an indication that the campaign desired a later December election. IRI heard speculation from citizen observers and non-competing political parties that the Marzouki campaign potentially saw an advantage in holding the election during winter vacation, though this cannot be substantiated.

The ISIE did not announce an election date until December 7, leaving Tunisians and international observers in a state of uncertainty from November 24 - December 6. On December 7, the ISIE officially rejected Marzouki's appeals, confirming the preliminary results of the first round. Subsequently, the ISIE announced December 21 as the date of the second round, setting in motion an intense two-week scramble in preparation for the run-off round.

Essebsi's and Marzouki's campaigns waited for the ISIE to announce the run-off date to resume campaigning. Essebsi's party, Nidaa Tounes, focused on door-to-door activities, and Marzouki's campaign focused on rural areas and on door-to-door campaigning in the areas they did not win in the first round. Both campaigns expressed an interest in youth outreach, believing that youth turnout would play a significant role in any run-off victory.

IRI observers indicated that most other parties and supporters of failed presidential campaigns were not united behind one of the two candidates. Slim Riahi, president of UPL, however, announced his support for Beji Caid Essebsi.

Changes in Election Administration

As was the case with the interim period between the parliamentary and first round presidential election, the ISIE made a conscientious effort to make improvements to electoral administration between the two presidential elections, something IRI noted and commended the ISIE on in its preliminary statements. New badges were issued for polling center staff with identification photos. Polling center presidents received additional training over the December 6-7 and 13-14 weekends that focused on identifying lessons learned and how to shorten the results tabulation time. Some IRIEs rotated polling station presidents in order to demonstrate transparency and to mitigate any accusations of corruption from other polling center staff.

While the majority of polling centers were accessible to those with physical disabilities, IRIEs took steps to make the voting process easier for this group by installing ramps, moving polling stations to the ground floor and training polling station staff on assisting voters with physical difficulties.

On December 19, the ISIE issued a new decree specifying that on Election Day, citizen observers must remain in the polling station to which they were assigned and could not move between polling stations or enter the polling center courtyard. While the official reason remains unclear, citizen observers felt that this demonstrated a lack of trust between the ISIE and its citizens and that it hampered the organizations' ability to provide effective oversight on Election Day.

Marginalized Groups

The small percentage of Tunisia's youth who were engaged in the elections again played a key role in the respective campaigns. Reports from IRI's STOs in Ben Arous, Sousse, Kairouan and Gafsa described active youth participation in campaigns. In Sfax, both campaigns reported reaching out to youth in universities and through political cafés. Additionally, both campaigns in the north targeted youth through door-to-door campaigns and weekly "market outreach."

Women's participation in and targeting by the presidential run-off campaigns were limited. A Nidaa Tounes representative in Kairouan claimed that her party trained women cells in each delegation, which then organized their own campaign activities. A Nabeul STO also commented on the large presence of women in campaign offices. However, these were exceptions; in general, the two candidates did not have high levels of female participation in their campaigns. Neither did their respective parties largely target women in their campaigns. However, observers did note outreach to women in the north to some extent.

Civil Society Engagement

Civil society voter awareness campaigns sporadically continued on a regional level. IRI's LTOs spoke with a myriad of civil society organizations working to educate rural women and youth on the importance of voting though these efforts do not appear to have been coordinated at the national level or in any sort of organized manner.

CSOs across Tunisia continued to be engaged in the election process, and organizations such as the UGTT, Mourakiboun and the Tunisian League of Human Rights actively pressured the ISIE and IRIEs to sustain a high level of accountability and transparency.

Media Coverage

Tunisian media largely contributed to the creation of a sensationalized narrative that associated Marzouki supporters with Islamist and working-class voters and Essebsi supporters with the middle- and upper-class secularists content with the status quo. Marzouki and Essebsi took up this narrative in their public addresses: Essebsi characterized himself as experienced in government and strong on security and Marzouki supporters as terrorists; Marzouki depicted himself as a protector of the ideals of the revolution and Essebsi supporters as part of the corrupt old regime. This messaging left Tunisians in the middle ground without a candidate running based on policy solutions or appealing to a sense of positive vision about the future.

In the first free, transparent and credible election for president in Tunisian history, the two campaigns and the media largely colored the run-off as a choice between the lesser of two evils: the experienced but potentially undemocratic leadership of an old regime stalwart versus the revolutionary populist aligned with a widely unpopular Islamist-led government. This paradigm may have contributed to the lower voter turnout, especially among youth, seen in the presidential run-off compared to the previous two elections.

Candidate representatives also complained of media bias. IRI's Kairouan STOs reported that the national television companies Ettounisia and Nessma were biased in favor of Essebsi. The Tozeur LTOs also noticed a bias in favor of Essebsi in the media. A Marzouki representative in Kairouan said that the local radio station also gave the Essebsi campaign more coverage, even though Marzouki campaigned more heavily in Kairouan. Marzouki campaign representatives also claimed the media in Gabes was biased in favor of their opponent. IRI's LTOs reported that the Essebsi campaign viewed the media more favorably than the Marzouki campaign.

Security

Security concerns emanating from both internal and external threats grew in the period between the presidential elections. Due to worsening instability in neighboring Libya, Tunisian authorities raised the security level, particularly in the southern governorates and along the Tunisian-Libyan frontier. IRI's observers in this region noticed an uptick in the presence of police and soldiers. The IRIEs along the Algerian border reported holding weekly meetings with security forces and local authorities in order to address local security concerns. Additionally, heightened tension between the two presidential candidates' campaign teams raised concerns over the possibility of violence between campaign supporters.

Minor, isolated bouts of violence did occur during the second presidential campaign period. On December 6 in Alaâ, a village in the governorate of Kairouan, a Nidaa Tounes office was attacked and set on fire. No one claimed responsibility for the incident. In Kef, a National Guard officer was beheaded by terrorists. Finally, on the eve of the second presidential election, an armed group attacked members of the Tunisian armed forces stationed outside a polling center in rural Kairouan. The skirmish ended with one attacker killed and three arrested. While tragic, these incidents did not significantly affect voter turnout on Election Day or political competition during the campaign period.

In some cases, campaign tension escalated to attacks on opposing campaigns. Both sides participated in these violations, which were reported to IRI in Ben Arous, Kairouan, Mahdia, Jendouba and Tozeur. The incidents ranged from physical and verbal harassment and vandalism to fights, stone-throwing and illicit entry into campaign headquarters. However, these events were not characteristic of the campaign atmosphere as a whole, which remained largely peaceful.

ELECTION PERIOD: ROUND TWO

Election Day

On December 21, 2014, IRI's international delegation of 40 observers witnessed voting and ballot counting at 286 polling stations. In addition to observing in 16 voting districts in Tunisia, IRI delegates also witnessed voting in Belgium, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Overall, Election Day was orderly and calm, and voting was well-administered. Polling stations opened and closed on time. As in the first presidential election, 124 polling centers near the Algerian border (governorates of Kef, Jendouba and Kasserine) were open from only 10:00 am to 3:00 pm for security reasons.



According to the [International Foundation for Electoral Systems](#), out of Tunisia's 5.2 million registered voters, 3,189,672, or 59 percent, cast their ballots for president, representing a slight decrease in turnout when compared with the first round. Of those, 50,585 were deemed invalid and 28,755 were left blank, perhaps by Tunisians dissatisfied with their candidate options.

While there were no reports of polling officials prohibiting civil society observers from witnessing the voting process, ISIE's late announcement on December 19 limiting citizen observers' freedom of movement to the polling station to which they were assigned became a source of contention on Election Day.

I-Watch's citizen observation mission publically accused the ISIE of preventing citizen observers from observing the election. The ISIE responded that regulations allowed only a limited number of observers in each polling station and that observers who were not actively observing inside a polling station, whether citizen or international, should leave, in accordance with ISIE regulations. I-Watch raised this issue as a cause for concern in its December 22 statement on the election, while tempering its criticism with the fact that 95 percent of stations visited by its observers were compliant with electoral guidelines and procedures.

Results, Speculation and Exit Polling

Polls closed on time, and counting and transmission of polling center results was conducted in a professional manner in most cases. However, as it did in previous statements, IRI recommended that ISIE issue specific guidelines on counting procedures to create more uniformity in Tunisia's more than 10,000 polling stations.

Shortly after the closing of polls and well before results had been tabulated, Tunisian polling firms began releasing exit polling data indicating that Essebsi had won, in direct violation of ISIE regulations prohibiting exit polling.⁵ Just 30 minutes after the polls closed, the Essebsi campaign publically declared victory, also in violation of the electoral law, setting off celebrations in Tunis. Shortly thereafter, Sigma Conseil, 3C Etudes and Emhrod Consulting all forecasted Essebsi to win with between 52 and 56 percent of the vote. Marzouki responded, refusing to concede defeat until the official results were announced by the ISIE. Both candidates publically encouraged unity and peace in their statements. Early Monday morning Marzouki publically accepted defeat and called on all Tunisians to accept the election results and reject any acts of violence. According to the [ISIE](#), Essebsi garnered 55.68 percent of the vote, while Marzouki won 44.32 percent of the vote.

Security

Limited, isolated violent incidents occurred after the election concluded. Protests broke out in Gabes, Tataouine and Tunis when Essebsi was declared the winner in advance of the ISIE results. In Tataouine and Gabes, protests turned violent when protestors set the Nidaa Tounes office on fire in Tataouine and clashed with security forces in Gabes. However, calm was restored a day later.

⁵ These firms conducted exit polls in the parliamentary elections and first round of the presidential election, accurately forecasting the winners well before the ISIE made their official announcement of preliminary results.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

IRI commends the ISIE for quickly responding to lessons learned from the October 26 parliamentary elections to make improvements to the presidential elections process. Likewise, in the presidential run-off, IRI observed improvements from the first round. In all three elections, observers agree that officials conducted the voting process with a high degree of professionalism and transparency.

In the November and December elections, IRI again utilized its Election Snapshot (Appendices B and D) as an easy-to-use reference on how Tunisia performed across a number of categories, including:

- Electoral laws, guidelines and processes
- Electoral environment
- Electoral integrity
- Voter empowerment
- Freedom to campaign
- Women and youth participation
- Freedom to participate
- Election Day logistics
- Counting and tabulation process

Based on the observations of IRI during the pre-election period and the first and second rounds of presidential elections, IRI provides the following findings and recommendations for future elections.

Improvements to Electoral Administration

Election workers appeared to be better trained, more organized and have a better understanding of electoral procedures in the presidential elections. However, as in the October parliamentary elections, IRI observers also noted security personnel inside polling centers at some locations, but their presence did not interfere in the voting process or appear intimidating. IRI recommends that security personnel act in accordance with the election law by remaining outside of the polling centers unless there is a security emergency. This will further improve the confidence of the public in the transparency of the election and could help reduce accusations of electoral irregularities.

Several technical improvements were made for the presidential rounds including the introduction of a ruler device used by poll workers to improve the orderliness of voter signatures on the registry. Not retaining voter identification cards until after a vote was cast, another change from the October parliamentary elections, allowed poll workers to administer the voting process more efficiently. IRI commends these efforts and recommends that the ISIE investigate further mechanisms and procedural improvements for improving efficiency of the ballot casting process.

IRI's overseas observers noted that fewer Tunisian voters casting ballots abroad appeared to be turned away for the November 23 and December 21 presidential election than in the

October 26 parliamentary elections. IRI credits the ISIE and overseas regional independent election commissions with improvements to the accuracy of the voter registry at overseas voting locations. However, observers in foreign voting locations in the United States did witness a lower level of coordination and organization in the polling centers than what was observed in Tunisia. While it is understandable that a new electoral body with limited resources and time to prepare will inevitably be challenged to organize elections on other continents, the ISIE should take the reported lack of organization in some foreign voting locations seriously and consider allowing foreign-based voters to mail in absentee ballots or vote electronically. Preparations for future elections, including expected municipal elections, should begin now.

Improved Transparency

IRI also notes the ISIE appeared to make a concerted effort in the lead-up to presidential elections to communicate with the voters and media about important election information more frequently. IRI encourages the ISIE to continue a proactive communications effort with the public in advance of future elections.

In particular, the ISIE should begin conducting a voter education campaign in conjunction with political parties, relevant government ministries and civil society on the need to update voter registration information in preparation for the municipal elections expected in 2016. This should be combined with a heavy focus on engaging youth and rural populations in civic education.

Public Communication

Despite a concerted effort to improve transparency and communication, IRI did hear reports from civil society observers of miscommunication between ISIE and polling center staff in several governorates about who could be present in polling centers and stations and where they were allowed to be. This was the result of a hastily announced regulation restricting the movement of civil society observers days before the run-off election.

While there were no reports of polling officials prohibiting civil society observers from witnessing the voting process, ISIE's late announcement on December 19 specifying observers' presence and movement inside polling centers was confusing and appeared unnecessary. It also caused confusion regarding the treatment of international observers and, on a number of occasions, IRI's observers were given contradictory guidance by polling officials. In future elections, straightforward guidance should be given earlier in the process, and it should be based on genuine need.

Electoral Efficiency

A key recommendation made by IRI in its statement on the parliamentary elections focused on the assignment of voters to polling stations within a polling center. IRI noted that the assignment of voters according to a sequential listing of national identification numbers had the effect of segregating older voters from younger voters at different voting stations at the same polling center. This lengthened wait time for voters and created greater workloads for some election workers. IRI recommended that the burden on poll workers would be reduced if voters were assigned to polling stations using a different method, such as by surname,

home address or a randomization of identification number. The change was not made by ISIE for the presidential election, and although it did not result in the disenfranchisement of voters, IRI again recommends a serious examination of the methodology used for voter assignment at polling centers before future elections occur.

Vote Counting

Although vote counting appeared to improve in each consecutive round, IRI recommends that ISIE issue specific guidelines on counting procedures to create more uniformity in Tunisia's more than 10,000 polling stations. In addition, ISIE should provide clearer guidelines on civil society and candidate observers' roles during the counting process.

Campaign Financing

Throughout the electoral process, IRI heard a number of accusations of unlawful campaign financing during the pre-electoral period but had no substantiation of these charges. Because Tunisia's campaign finance law is ambiguous and complex, candidates found it difficult to adhere to all regulations. Stringent campaign finance rules created challenges for presidential campaigns seeking to share their political messages with voters while adhering to overly rigid fundraising regulations.

IRI recommends that Tunisia's parliament examine current rules regulating public financing limits, individual donations and financial expenditure reporting to determine whether a simplified system that more realistically reflects campaign spending be instituted. Simplified rules would also make enforcement by the relevant institutions more effective.

Vote Buying

One of the primary complaints leveled against candidates was focused on their offering financial compensation for votes. While these allegations are difficult to prove, the consistency of the complaint speaks to an underlying problem in the electoral campaign process. The ambiguity and lack of enforcement measures in the campaign finance law allows for vote buying with little chance of penalty. Clearer campaign finance regulations supported with viable enforcement tools are critical to curtailing vote buying and similar infractions and to maintain the integrity of the election process.

In Tunisia's transitional democratic context, it is essential for political leaders and candidates to lead the way in following the law. While there are aspects of the campaign finance law that should be amended to allow for better compliance and better enforcement, political leaders have the responsibility to promote the rule of law by example.

Freedom to Campaign

The campaign regulatory system placed an undue burden on candidates and their campaigns in the presidential election much as it did on political parties and candidate groups in the legislative elections. Complex and overreaching regulations on campaign events and campaign advertising stifle the ability of voters to make informed choices about candidates in Tunisia's nascent democratic electoral process. Limits on the time allotted for candidates to present their political programs on television and prohibiting candidates from running

under the banner of a political party in the presidential election seem unnecessary and hamper candidates in their effort to provide voters with issue oriented political programs. Combined with an overly limited campaign period, the current regulations encourage personality-based campaigning instead of a deeper, policy-rooted exchange of ideas. IRI recommends that campaigning rules be re-examined prior to future elections to allow political parties and candidates to interact more freely with voters.

Negative Campaigning

In the run-off election campaign period, the two remaining candidates ran campaigns built on rhetorical hostility. Both the Beji Caid Essebsi and Moncef Marzouki teams spent the bulk of the campaign period attacking each other rather than speaking about their solutions for Tunisia's major challenges. The heavy emphasis on rancor rather than policy may have disillusioned voters, a number of whom were already uninspired with either political option.

It is crucial that in the early stages of Tunisia's new democracy, campaigns be defined by rigorous, policy-oriented debate focused on the country's mounting economic and security problems rather than on acrimonious attacks. Tunisia's voters are desperately waiting for answers to the problems that plague their daily lives. IRI recommends that political parties increase their interaction with citizens between elections to offer new policy ideas and shape political choices around solutions to pressing challenges instead of identity politics.

Marginalized Groups' Participation

IRI noted in its October 26 parliamentary elections statement that young voters did not turn out to vote in as large numbers as older voters. This trend appears to have continued in the presidential election. However, youth did constitute the majority of party observers and citizen observers. Although youth voter participation is a challenge in many democracies, the prominent role played by young people in Tunisia's revolution makes it even more important that young Tunisians be brought into the political process.

IRI observers witnessed the active participation of women as poll workers and as voters. IRI commends ISIE for its efforts to ensure the robust participation of women in administering the election. IRI also commends the sole female candidate Kalthoum Kennou for her pioneering performance in the country's first presidential election.

Furthermore, IRI highlights the need for the Tunisian election commission to give greater attention to underserved voters, especially those in hospitals on election day and the home-bound, as under current procedures and rules it is very difficult for these citizens to vote.

Role of Civil Society

Tunisia's burgeoning civil society has taken up the mantle of responsibility in holding campaign activists and election commission officials accountable. From observation to reporting, civil society groups have actively engaged in Tunisia's electoral process and are to be commended for having played a major role in its success. The Mourakiboun parallel vote tabulation merits specific mention for presenting a meticulous, well-organized effort that contributed to confidence in the elections and tabulation processes. The positive role these

young civil society activists have played in Tunisia's electoral process will hopefully encourage more youth participation in the country's new political environment.

Youth Participation

The continued absence of young voters is an especially troubling factor that Tunisians need to address starting immediately following these elections. Youth comprise more than 50 percent of the population and will determine the future of Tunisia's democratic transition. As such, it is vital that they are engaged in their democracy.

Voter Turnout

Although Tunisia should be commended for its successful election process, voter participation decreased with each successive election. While much remains unknown about the voting behavior of the electorate, given the lack of democratic elections prior to 2011, the potential for growing disillusionment with the country's politics is a concern that Tunisia's new leaders must address.

APPENDIX A: PRELIMINARY PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OBSERVATION STATEMENT

For Immediate Release
November 24, 2014

Tunisia's First Presidential Election: A Positive Step Forward

Tunis, Tunisia – Tunisia's November 23 presidential election marks another positive step in the country's transition to democracy. A delegation from IRI said, "Tunisia's first ever democratic presidential election was orderly and well administered allowing citizens to express their democratic will at the ballot box."

IRI commends the High Independent Authority for Elections (ISIE) for quickly responding to lessons learned from the October 26 legislative elections to make improvements to the presidential election process. The ISIE's prompt actions to improve electoral administration are all the more impressive given the short time frame between the two elections.

Former Congressman Jim Kolbe, a co-leader of IRI's delegation, said he was impressed with the quick changes that were made in the one-month time period between elections. He went on to state, "The stage is now set for Tunisia to advance its democratic transition with a probable presidential run-off election on December 28. It is hoped the country's next coalition government, working with a new president, will move quickly and incisively to instill public confidence in newly established democratic institutions."

IRI's delegation co-leader Marta Gonzalez Vazquez, a Member of Parliament from Spain, commented that she was, "Encouraged to see the active participation of women as poll workers and noted the sense of national pride and responsibility that was evident among both election officials and voters."

IRI's international delegation of 58 observers witnessed voting and ballot counting at more than 230 polling stations. In addition to observers in Tunisia, IRI delegates in England, France, Germany and the United States witnessed voting by Tunisian citizens living overseas.

IRI's [Election Snapshot \(Arabic and French\)](#), that accompanies the preliminary statement gives citizens and media an easy to use reference on how Tunisia performed across a number of categories including:

- Electoral laws, guidelines and processes
- Electoral environment
- Electoral integrity
- Voter empowerment
- Freedom to campaign
- Women and youth participation
- Freedom to participate
- Election Day logistics
- Counting and tabulation process

The Snapshot utilizes key indicators based on international standards for the conduct of open and transparent democratic elections and assigns basic value to the indicators based on the observations of IRI observers.

IRI's Election Snapshot Analysis

Electoral Processes and Election Day Logistics

Improvements to Electoral Administration

Election workers appeared to be better trained, more organized and have a better understanding of electoral procedures. As in the October elections, IRI observers also noted security personnel inside polling centers at some locations, but their presence did not interfere in the voting process or appear intimidating.

Several technical improvements were made including the introduction of a ruler device used by poll workers to improve the orderliness of voter signatures on the registry. Not retaining voter identification cards until after a vote was cast, another change from the October parliamentary elections, also allowed poll workers to administer the voting process more efficiently.

IRI's overseas observers noted that fewer Tunisian voters casting ballots abroad appeared to be turned away for the November 23 presidential election and credits ISIE and overseas regional independent election commissions with improvements to the accuracy of the voter registry at overseas voting locations.

Improved Transparency

IRI also notes the ISIE appeared to make a concerted effort in the lead-up to November 23 to communicate with the public and media to provide voters with important election information more frequently. IRI encourages the ISIE to continue a proactive communications effort with the public in advance of future elections, including the December 28 presidential run-off election.

Electoral Efficiency

A key recommendation made by IRI in its statement on the legislative elections focused on the assignment of voters to polling stations within a polling center. IRI noted that the assignment of voters according to a sequential listing of national identification numbers had the effect of segregating older voters from younger voters at different voting stations at the same polling center. This lengthened wait time for voters and created greater workloads for some election workers. IRI recommended that the burden on poll workers would be reduced if voters were assigned to polling stations using different a method, such as by surname, home address or a randomization of identification number. The change was not made by ISIE for the November 23 presidential election and although it did not result in the disenfranchisement of voters, IRI again recommends a serious examination of the methodology used for voter assignment at polling centers before future elections occur.

Vote Counting

Having observed vote counting processes for both the October 26 parliamentary elections and November 23 presidential election, IRI recommends that ISIE issue more specific guidelines on counting procedures for future elections to shorten the counting time and create more uniformity among counting procedures in Tunisia's more than 10,000 polling stations. In addition, ISIE should provide clear guidelines for domestic observers and party and candidate agents in the polling center.

Electoral Integrity

Campaign Financing

IRI heard a number of accusations of unlawful campaign financing during the pre-electoral period but had no substantiation of these charges. Because Tunisia's campaign finance law is ambiguous and complex, candidates found it difficult to adhere to all regulations. By simplifying and clearly communicating the campaign finance law, candidates and their campaigns would be less likely to circumvent campaign finance regulations in the future. IRI recommends that Tunisia's incoming parliament examines current rules regulating public financing limits, individual donations and financial expenditure reporting to determine whether a simplified system that more realistically reflects campaign spending be instituted. Simplified rules would also make enforcement by the relevant institutions more effective.

Vote Buying

One of the primary complaints leveled against candidates was focused on their offering financial compensation for votes. While these allegations are difficult to prove, the consistency of the complaint speaks to an underlying problem in the electoral campaign process. The ambiguity and lack of enforcement measures in the campaign finance law allows for vote buying with little chance of penalty. Clearer campaign finance regulations supported with viable enforcement tools are critical to curtailing vote buying and similar infractions and to maintain the integrity of the election process.

In Tunisia's transitional democratic context, it is essential for political leaders and candidates to lead the way in following the law. While there are aspects of the campaign finance law that should be amended to allow for better compliance and better enforcement, political leaders have the responsibility to promote the rule of law by example.

Freedom to Campaign

The campaign regulatory system placed an undue burden on candidates and their campaigns in the presidential election much as it did on political parties and candidate groups in the legislative elections. Complex and overreaching regulations on campaign events and campaign advertising stifle the ability of voters to make informed choices about candidates in Tunisia's nascent democratic electoral process. Limits on the time allotted for candidates to present their political programs on television and prohibiting candidates from running under the banner of a political party in the presidential election seem unnecessary and

hamper candidates in their effort to provide voters with issue oriented political programs. Combined with an overly limited campaign period, the current regulations encourage personality-based campaigning instead of a deeper, policy-rooted exchange of ideas. IRI recommends that campaigning rules be re-examined prior to future elections to allow political parties and candidates to interact more freely with voters.

Women and Youth Participation

IRI noted in its October 26 [parliamentary elections statement](#) that young voters did not turn out to vote in as large numbers as older voters. This trend appears to have continued in the November 23 presidential election. Although youth voter participation is a challenge in many democracies, the prominent role played by young people in Tunisia's revolution makes it even more important that young Tunisians be brought into the political process. As IRI acknowledged in its previous statement, "It is clear that there must be a greater emphasis placed on the civic engagement of young Tunisians if the country is to realize its full democratic potential."

IRI observers witnessed the active participation of women as poll workers and as voters. IRI commends ISIE for its efforts to ensure the robust participation of women in administering the election. IRI also commends the sole female candidate Kalthoum Kennou for her pioneering performance in the country's first presidential election.

Background

Leading IRI's international delegation in Tunisia was Jim Kolbe former U.S. Congressman (AZ-8) who serves as vice chair of IRI's Board of Directors and is a senior transatlantic fellow for the [German Marshall Fund of the United States](#); Marta González Vázquez, a member of Parliament for La Coruna, Spain; and [Judy Van Rest](#), executive vice president of IRI.

Other delegates were:

- Martin Bayr, a partner at Kyle House Group and former foreign policy advisor to former Senator John E. Sununu;
- Paul DeGregorio, senior advisor to the [Association of World Election Bodies](#);
- Alison B. Fortier, a member of IRI's Board of Directors and a member of the Board of Trustees of [Freedom House](#);
- Mary Katharine Ham, editor-at-large of Hot Air and a Fox News Channel contributor;
- Stephen Lecce of Canada, deputy director of communications for the [Office of the Prime Minister](#);
- Vincent Talvas, former chief of staff to then French minister of budget, public accounts, public service and state reform; and
- Chase Untermeyer, former United States ambassador to Qatar and former director of the Voice of America.

In addition to observers in Tunisia, IRI delegates in England, France, Germany and the United States witnessed voting by Tunisian citizens living overseas.

Those delegates include:

- Cole Bockenfeld, advocacy director of the [Project on Middle East Democracy](#);
- Simon Hutzler, a political activist with the Christian Social Union in Germany;
- Duncan MacFarlane, a consultant for the United Kingdom's [Westminster Foundation for Democracy](#);
- Evan O'Connell, communications officer for the French [National Institute for Agricultural Research](#);
- Alex Russell, a program associate at the Project on Middle East Democracy;
- Christian Sandmeier, an assistant to the director of the international office of the Christian Democratic Union in Germany; and
- Arwa Shobaki, director of development and communications at the Project on Middle East Democracy.

[Scott Mastic](#), director of IRI's Middle East and North Africa programs, assisted in the mission. IRI's [long-term observers](#), who have been in Tunisia since August 2014 and have been monitoring the pre-electoral environment and election preparations, served as observers on Election Day.

Delegates were briefed by political party representatives and Tunisian election officials. They were also briefed on the rights and responsibilities of international observers and Tunisian election law.

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APPENDIX B: PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION SNAPSHOT

**Election Snapshot:
Tunisia's 2014 Presidential Election**

International Republican Institute

Indicators	Falls Short	Needs Improvement	Adequate	Optimal
Electoral Laws, Guidelines & Processes				
Electoral Environment				
Electoral Integrity				
Voter Empowerment				
Freedom to Campaign				
Women & Youth Participation				
Freedom to Participate				
Election Day Logistics				
Counting & Tabulation Process				

Falls Short: Incidents of irregularities of such magnitude that the integrity of the process is in doubt.

Needs Improvement: Compliance with criterion ranges from non-existent to exhibited, but with significant deficiencies that negatively impact the quality of the elections.

Adequate: Compliance with criterion meets or nearly meets international standards.

Optimal: Compliance with criterion fully meets and/or exceeds international standards.

For the criteria that support each indicator, visit iri.org.

APPENDIX C: PRELIMINARY PRESIDENTIAL RUN-OFF ELECTION OBSERVATION STATEMENT

For Immediate Release
December 22, 2014

Tunisians Hold Credible, Democratic Election, Lack of Youth Participation Cause for Concern as Country Moves Forward

On December 21, Tunisia completed the final election of a cycle that saw it elect its first permanent parliament and its first democratically elected president. After witnessing the [October parliamentary elections](#) and the [first round of the presidential elections](#), IRI's delegation said of this round, "While the election was a success, the lack of youth participation continues to be a cause for concern as Tunisia moves forward."

Luís Vales, the leader of IRI's delegation and a member of the Portuguese Parliament, who himself, at 35, represents the impact of young political leaders, noted the lack of youth participation. "The continued absence of young voters is an especially troubling factor that Tunisians need to address in future elections," Vales said. "However, the country should be proud that they decided their future course without fear and through the ballot box, a victory that remains elusive in most of the Middle East and North Africa region."

"Civil society and candidate observers played an important role in the election process," said Thomas E. Garrett, co-leader of IRI's delegation and vice president for programs at the Institute. "The strong participation of these groups has helped ensure an open and credible process."

Along with the lack of youth participation, another area of concern was voter turnout. Scott Mastic, IRI's director of Middle East and North Africa programs noted, "Although this third and final election of 2014 ended without major incident and Tunisians should be commended on the process, voter participation decreased with each successive election. While much remains unknown about the voting behavior of the electorate, given the lack of democratic elections prior to 2011, the potential for growing disillusionment with the country's politics is a concern and something Tunisia's new leaders must be prepared to address."

IRI's international delegation of 40 observers representing Great Britain, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Serbia and the United States witnessed voting and ballot counting at more than 280 polling stations. In addition to observing in 16 voting districts in Tunisia, IRI delegates also witnessed voting in Belgium, England and the United States.

As with the October 26 parliamentary elections and the first round of the presidential elections on November 23, IRI issued its [Election Snapshot](#) ([Arabic](#) and [French](#)), that gives

citizens and media an easy-to-use reference on how Tunisia performed across a number of categories including:

- Electoral laws, guidelines and processes
- Electoral environment
- Electoral integrity
- Voter empowerment
- Freedom to campaign
- Women and youth participation
- Freedom to participate
- Election Day logistics
- Counting and tabulation process

The Snapshot utilizes key indicators based on international standards for the conduct of open and transparent democratic elections and assigns basic value to the indicators based on the observations of IRI observers.

IRI's Election Snapshot Analysis

Electoral Laws, Guidelines and Processes

Electoral Administration

The [Independent High Authority for Elections](#) (ISIE) is to be credited with administering another successful, nationwide election. Election officials conducted the voting process with a high degree of professionalism and transparency, which itself contributes to the new democratic culture that is emerging in Tunisia. Addressing concerns and recommendations from Tunisian and international groups in the first two elections, ISIE enabled a smooth voting process with few major complaints. However, IRI did hear reports from civil society observers of miscommunication between ISIE and polling center staff in several governorates about who could be present in polling centers and stations and where they were allowed to be.

While there were no reports of polling officials prohibiting civil society observers from witnessing the voting process, ISIE's late announcement on December 19 specifying observers' presence and movement inside polling centers was confusing and appeared unnecessary. It also caused confusion regarding the treatment of international observers and, on a number of occasions, IRI's observers were given contradictory guidance by polling officials. In future elections, straightforward guidance should be given earlier in the process, and it should be based on genuine need.

IRI notes that in all three 2014 elections, ISIE did not provide demographic information on voter participation. The release of demographic-specific information would provide an invaluable resource to help political parties and civil society better engage voters in future elections. Such transparency would also help election observers, the media and ISIE better appreciate gaps in voter turnout for future voter education related efforts.

Vote Counting

Although vote counting appears to have improved, IRI, as it did in previous statements, recommends that ISIE issue specific guidelines on counting procedures to create more uniformity in Tunisia's more than 10,000 polling stations. In addition, ISIE should provide clearer guidelines on civil society and candidate observers' role during the counting process.

Electoral Integrity

Campaign Financing

As in the first two elections in 2014, IRI observers heard complaints of unlawful campaign financing in the lead up to the presidential run-off election. Stringent campaign finance rules created challenges for presidential campaigns seeking to share their political messages with voters while adhering to overly rigid fundraising regulations.

Tunisia's campaign finance law should be improved to allow campaigns to more freely raise money and conduct campaigns in a manner that encourages transparency. IRI recommends that Tunisia's incoming parliament examine current rules regulating public financing limits, individual donations and financial expenditure reporting to determine whether a simplified system that more realistically reflects campaign spending could be instituted. Clarifying and simplifying campaign finance rules would encourage legal behavior and allow for fair, thorough regulation.

Vote Buying

IRI observers heard far fewer accusations of vote buying for the December 21 presidential run-off election. Nonetheless, the extent to which this complaint colored the October 26 parliamentary elections and the first round of the presidential elections on November 23 suggests future efforts to remove ambiguity in the campaign finance law and to strengthen enforcement measures related to vote buying are warranted.

Electoral Environment

Negative Campaigning

More than in the previous two elections, the candidates ran campaigns built on rhetorical hostility. Both the Beji Caid Essebsi and Moncef Marzouki teams spent the bulk of the campaign period attacking each other rather than speaking about their solutions for Tunisia's major challenges. The heavy emphasis on rancor rather than policy may have disillusioned voters, a number of whom were already uninspired with either political option. It is crucial that in the early stages of Tunisia's new democracy, campaigns be defined by rigorous, policy-oriented debate focused on the country's mounting economic and security problems rather than on acrimonious attacks. Tunisia's voters are desperately waiting for answers to the problems that plague their daily lives.

Role of Civil Society

Tunisia's burgeoning civil society has taken up the mantle of responsibility in holding campaign activists and election commission officials accountable. From observation to reporting, civil society groups have actively engaged in Tunisia's electoral process and are to be commended for having played a major role in its success. The Mourakiboun parallel vote tabulation merits specific mention for presenting a meticulous, well-organized effort that contributed to confidence in the election. The positive role these young civil society activists have played in Tunisia's electoral process will hopefully, encourage more youth participation in the country's new political environment.

The Road Ahead

As Tunisia's well-administered election season comes to a close, newly elected decision makers must take seriously the challenges facing the country. Peaceful elections in Tunisia have given a mandate to a new class of political leaders, and while credible elections are an important step in Tunisia's democratic consolidation, considerable work remains for the country.

Tunisia's high unemployment rate and stagnant economy represent not only an economic problem but also a security problem. The large population of unemployed young Tunisians that need access to jobs is a major issue the incoming government is well advised to address. Tunisia's unnecessarily complex bureaucracy also suppresses business growth and discourages innovation, and corruption still plagues the nation's administration. The new government must move quickly and creatively to begin addressing these admittedly difficult challenges if it is to build on the political success achieved since the revolution.

Background

Leading IRI's delegation was Luís Vales, a member of the Portuguese Parliament and deputy secretary general of the Social Democratic Party; and [Thomas E. Garrett](#), IRI's vice president for programs. Other delegates who observed the presidential run-off were:

- Kathy Bailey, member of the Board of Directors of the [Tunisian American Young Professionals](#) and managing shareholder of Bailey Law Group;
- Chris Clark, mayor of Mountain View, California;
- Charlotte Florance, research associate at the Heritage Foundation's [Davis Institute for National Security and Foreign Policy](#);
- Andrianos Giannou of Romania, vice president of the Youth of the Democratic-Liberal Party;
- Vincent Harris, founder and chief executive officer of Harris Media;
- Lewis Lucke, former U.S. ambassador to the Kingdom of Swaziland;
- [Scott Mastic](#), director of IRI's Middle East and North Africa programs;
- Riccardo Pozzi of Italy, vice president of [Youth of the European People's Party](#);
- Brad Smith, director of the [Annenberg-Dreier Commission](#) and served as a delegate on the [IRI-NDI pre-election assessment mission](#);
- Djordje Todorovic, resident country director of IRI's program in Tunisia; and
- Jess Yescalis, president of Yescalis Campaign Strategies.

As with the previous elections, IRI's [long-term observers](#), who have been in Tunisia since August 2014 monitoring the pre-electoral environment and election preparations, served as observers on Election Day.

IRI again had delegates in Belgium, England and the United States to witness voting of Tunisian citizens living overseas. Those delegates included:

- Curt Harris, a resident program director at IRI for the Middle East and North Africa;
- Duncan MacFarlane, a consultant for the United Kingdom's [Westminster Foundation for Democracy](#);
- Alex Russell, a program associate at the [Project on Middle East Democracy](#); and
- Arwa Shobaki, director of development and communications at the Project on Middle East Democracy.

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APPENDIX D: PRESIDENTIAL RUN-OFF ELECTION SNAPSHOT

Election Snapshot: Tunisia's 2014 Presidential Election

International Republican Institute

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Electoral Environment				
Electoral Integrity				
Voter Empowerment				
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