



## ENCYCLOPEDIA OF WOMEN AND ISLAMIC CULTURES

### Women and the Arab Spring: Tunisia

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- ❖ Due to the large presence and the salient role played by women during the Tunisian revolution in 2011, the movement was termed the "Jasmine Revolution".<sup>1</sup>
- ❖ According to the World Bank, after the outbreak of the revolution in 2011, female unemployment was at 21.6%, compared to 15.3% in 2010.<sup>2</sup>
- ❖ Prior to the 2011 uprisings in Tunisia, women held 27% of parliamentary seats, compared to 31% in 2015.<sup>3</sup>
- ❖ During the last days of former President Ben-Ali's rule in early 2011, women in Tunis became victims of sexual harassment and rape, a tactic to dissuade women from further participating in anti-government activities.<sup>4</sup>
- ❖ During the interim government of the Ennahdha party following the 2011 revolution, the ban on the niqab (a face veil that leaves an opening for the eyes) that existed during Ben Ali's presidency was lifted, granting more religious freedom to religious conservatives in Tunisia. However, in 2014, the Ministry of the Interior stated that stricter restrictions on the niqab would be introduced.<sup>5</sup>
- ❖ On April 14, 2011, Tunisian President Saleh declared that Islam forbade women from participating in the demonstrations, telling them to "return home." The following day, thousands of women took to the streets to affirm their right to peacefully assemble and to participate in public life.<sup>6</sup>
- ❖ In August of 2012, thousands of women took to the streets in protest against a possible constitutional amendment that they feared would "render regressive policies for women," and were successful in preventing this amendment from passing.<sup>7</sup>
- ❖ In May of 2011, a 217-member body passed a parity law that stipulated that at least 50% of each party's electoral lists must comprise of women, an important step forward for women's rights in Tunisia.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.e-ir.info/2013/09/04/the-arab-spring-and-womens-rights-in-tunisia/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.FE.ZS>

<sup>3</sup> <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS>

<sup>4</sup> <http://sdi.sagepub.com/content/44/5-6/393.full>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/politics/2015/4/30/lifting-the-veil-on-religious-freedom-in-tunisia-1>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/cont/201206/20120608ATT46510/20120608ATT46510EN.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <http://vc.bridgew.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1828&context=jiws>

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.academia.edu/5192899/Tunisian\\_Womens\\_Rights\\_before\\_and\\_after\\_the\\_Revolution\\_Monica\\_Marks](http://www.academia.edu/5192899/Tunisian_Womens_Rights_before_and_after_the_Revolution_Monica_Marks)