



الجمعية التونسية للنساء الديمقراطيات
Association Tunisienne
des Femmes Démocrates

Press release of January 14, 2022

Today we honor the martyrs of the revolution and we pledge, with our activists, our comrades and Tunisian women, to continue fighting with as much perseverance and defiance to eradicate the patriarchal system in its various oppressive and reactionary forms, no matter where it comes from.

Since its creation, the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women has been an active member of the political and social movement against patriarchy. ATFD continues to base this participation on its fundamental principles and on the conviction that women's rights cannot be won without the guarantee of collective and individual liberties. The association has fought side by side with all progressive forces for the realization of democracy and the guarantee of a civic state, chanting its historic slogan:

"No democracy without women's rights and equality, and no effective citizenship for women in the absence of freedoms"

Today we commemorate the eleventh anniversary of the Revolution of Freedom and Dignity in the context of simultaneous political, economic and health crises, which threaten many democratic, constitutional and feminist gains. During the course of this winding journey, the rights of women have known hours of glory and failure; a journey that started with the outbreak of the revolutionary process in 2008 and continued through December 17, 2010, to the fall of the oppressive regime on January 14, 2011, and throughout the past decade. The Association has always kept its doors open and has welcomed the revolutionaries, accompanied them in their legitimate claims, shared with them the dream of the revolution, and has faced all forms of oppression, discrimination, racism and exploitation. Moreover, throughout these years, it has accompanied women victims of violence, marginalization and exclusion, and supported the families of the martyrs and the wounded of the revolution.

"Freedoms in the face of all regressions!"

ATFD has fought against the reactionary current in all its forms throughout this decade and has achieved, with its partners, gains such as the constitutionalization of the principle of gender equality and obtaining parity in the electoral law. In addition, important steps were taken in raising awareness and advocacy for the drafting of Law n°58-2017 related to the elimination of violence against women and girls and the fight against gender- and race-based discrimination. The Association continues to campaign for total equality in inheritance, for equality in rights and duties, and the revision of the Personal Status Code in order to lift the patriarchal guardianship within the family.

Faced with the continued perpetuation of the same discriminatory policies, our struggle continues through advocacy and mobilization campaigns for the implementation of international conventions that guarantee women's rights in all socio-economic areas. These include, but are not limited to inheritance, safe transportation for female agricultural workers

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and decent work for domestic workers, in addition to women's rights to property and fair sharing of resources.

"Equality for women and the regions"

The Tunisian Association of Democratic Women has not forgotten the suffering of women in the regions due to the scarcity of water and lack of access to the most basic services, who, at the same time, face rising unemployment rates in the absence of inclusive development strategies.

The Association has also worked hard to ensure a legal framework to end injustice and discrimination. Today, the special government (under the 'state of exception') is undermining the right to equal access to work for women, through a governmental decree-law that removes equal opportunity from the recruitment criteria for civil servants and prohibits salary increases.

This decree-law preceded the 2022 finance law, which will increase taxes and interest rates for Tunisian women and men. This will effectively render the feminization of poverty a fundamental and guiding line of public policies, which will further impoverish the poorest members of the society and almost put an end to the middle class by breathing new life into the richest and most corrupt. This criminal "reconciliation process" comes in exchange for pseudo local enterprises to which women will not have equal access as long as the law does not guarantee the right to parity that the constitution stipulates.

"We rebelled together to build together"

... and because we want to build together, the Association exercised its constitutional right to participate in writing our common destiny by contributing to a feminist memorandum in which, together with its partners, demanded a participatory approach to defending social justice, freedoms, democracy and the fundamentals of civil state. Yet, the exceptional monopolization of the legislative and executive powers does not leave any room for civil society to fulfil its responsibilities in defending the rule of law and institutions and to put forward proposals and alternatives to overcome the crisis.

"We will not forget or compromise our rights and freedoms"

14 January historically symbolises the fall of the authoritarian regime and constitutes an indivisible part of the political and economic project of the revolution of freedom and dignity as formulated by the revolutionary masses, to which the feminist movement contributed considerably. At the heart of this project was a break with authoritarianism and oppression, and the establishment of a rule of law that guarantees equality and rights, without any discrimination, in accordance with the system of human rights in its universality and inclusiveness.

We observe this anniversary while going through unprecedented economic and health crises that have been further complicated by the political situation, through serious threats to individual and public liberties, a clear and intentional regression from constitutional freedoms



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of expression and assembly, and the increasing involvement of the security apparatus in the political affairs.

Such practices against the right to peaceful assembly, freedom of expression and the right to political opposition, as well as aggressions against demonstrators, remind us of practices of authoritarian systems and those of political Islam, which have failed in the face of youth movements and an active civil society committed to the achievement of democracy and human rights. The President's insistence on seizing full powers and managing the political sphere in a unilateral and secure manner does not only threaten democratic and civil gains and establishes an incipient authoritarianism, but also opens the door to political Islam, which the population has categorically rejected and to which democratic, youth and feminist movements are fiercely opposed.