

Key Developments in Tunisia and U.S. Responses Since July 25, 2021

POLITICAL EVENTS IN TUNISIA	A ARRESTS	HA HOUSE ARRESTS	2021	JULY	U.S. RESPONSES
<p>President Kais Saied suspends parliament and dismisses PM Hichem Mechichi, then rescinds immunity for MPs on July 29, citing Article 80 of the 2014 constitution.</p> 			25		<p>State Department Spokesperson Ned Price: “The United States is closely monitoring developments in Tunisia.”</p> 
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				29	<p>Secretary of State Antony Blinken phone call with Saied: “The Secretary urged President Saied to maintain open dialogue with all political actors and the Tunisian people, noting that the United States would continue to monitor the situation and stay engaged.”</p> 
				30	
			31		
			AUGUST		
<p>Saied extends the suspension of parliament and MP immunity indefinitely.</p>			2		<p>Principal Deputy National Security Advisor Jon Finer met with Saied and delivered a message from President Biden reaffirming his personal support for the Tunisian people and urging a swift return to the path of parliamentary democracy.</p> 
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			23		<p>Sen. Chris Murphy (D-CT) before visiting Tunisia in September: “I am deeply disappointed that today, rather than appoint a new prime minister and restore parliamentary democracy, Tunisian President Kais Saied announced his intent to extend the 30-day state of emergency indefinitely.”</p> 
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			SEPTEMBER		
<p>Saied issues Decree No. 117 transferring the powers of parliament to himself and allowing him to issue further decrees regulating the judiciary, media, political parties, unions, associations, domestic organizations, public order, internal security forces and customs, electoral law, freedoms and human rights, personal status, and the organic budget law.</p>			21		<p>Bipartisan leaders of House Foreign Affairs Committee: “We will continue to actively monitor the situation in Tunisia and work with the Biden Administration to encourage Tunisia’s return to a democratic path.”</p> 
			22		
			OCTOBER		
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NOVEMBER



Secretary Blinken phone call with Saied: “The Secretary encouraged a transparent and inclusive reform process to address Tunisia’s significant political, economic, and social challenges and to respond to the Tunisian people’s aspirations for continued democratic progress.”

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DECEMBER

Slim Jebali
blogger

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Saied announces that a referendum will be held July 25, 2022, on amending the constitution and scheduling a parliamentary election for December 17, 2022.

Former president **Moncef Marzouki**, Congress for the Republic party, sentenced to jail in absentia



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Spokesperson Price: “We welcome President Saied’s announcement of a timeline outlining a path for political reform and parliamentary elections and look forward to a reform process that is transparent and inclusive of diverse political and civil society voices.”

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2022

JANUARY

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Saied launches a national online consultation process to inform the drafting of the new constitution. When it concludes on March 20, 500,000 Tunisians out of 12 million participated.

FEBRUARY

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Saied dissolves the Supreme Judicial Council, then appoints temporary replacements on March 7.

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Spokesperson Price: “The United States is deeply concerned by Tunisian President Saied’s calls to dissolve the Supreme Judicial Council, and the reported barring of employees from entering the Supreme Judicial Council.”

Letter to Blinken from 21 Democrats led by House Foreign Affairs Committee chairman: “We have witnessed over the past eight months a clear and tangible erosion of the democratic institutions that the Tunisian people have spent over a decade building.”



MARCH

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Secretary Blinken congressional testimony: U.S. military and economic aid will not be restored fully unless Saied pursues a “transparent, inclusive—to include political parties, labor, and civil society—reform process.”

Spokesperson Price: “The United States is deeply concerned by the Tunisian President’s decision to unilaterally dissolve the parliament and reports that Tunisian authorities are considering legal measures against members of parliament.”



MP Noureddine Bhairi, former justice minister and senior Ennahda official, arrested; released March 7 after hunger strike

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Saied officially dissolves parliament after Speaker **Rached Ghannouchi** holds a virtual plenary session where a majority of MPs condemn Saied’s actions.





Saied takes control of the Independent High Authority for Elections, then appoints new members to the commission on May 9.

Saied launches another national dialogue excluding political parties.



Law professor **Sadok Belaid** appointed to head constitution drafting commission.

Influential trade union UGTT boycotts the commission.

Saied fires 57 judges, accusing them of corruption and protecting terrorists.

Saied unveils new draft constitution that gives the president broad powers, limits parliamentary authority, and curtails judiciary independence. Among the draft's critics is constitutional commission head **Sadok Belaid**.

Saied publishes minor constitutional amendments on defining the role of Islam and protecting the rights and freedoms of citizens.

More than 20 MPs investigated after participating in the March 30 session.

Chahrazed Akacha
Journalist



APRIL

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MAY

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JUNE

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JULY

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Sen. Menendez (D-NJ), Sen. Risch (R-ID), Rep. Meeks (D-NY), and Rep. McCaul (R-TX):
 “We condemn President Saied’s attempt to dissolve Tunisia’s parliamentary body...hours after it met to suspend the exceptional measures that expanded executive authorities beginning in July 2021. President Saied’s continued consolidation of power, the dismissal of Tunisia’s Supreme Judicial Council, efforts to restrict civil society organizations, and now possible threats to initiate legal proceedings against members of parliament all point to backsliding.”



The Millennium Challenge Corporation delays signing a \$500 million compact until “Tunisia is back on a democratic path.”

Spokesperson Price:
 “The United States is deeply concerned by the Tunisian president’s decision to unilaterally restructure Tunisia’s Independent High Authority for Elections (ISIE).”



Spokesperson Price:
 “President Kais Saied’s June 1 decrees dismissing 57 judges and amending the rules governing the Provisional Supreme Judicial Council follow an alarming pattern of steps that have undermined Tunisia’s independent democratic institutions.”

Salah Atiyah
Journalist



Hamadi Jebali
former Ennahda prime minister



Rached Ghannouchi, Hamadi Jebali, and several other high-level Ennahda officials have assets frozen.