



TUNISIA PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

OCTOBER 26, 2014

TUNISIA PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

OCTOBER 26, 2014

INTERNATIONAL REPUBLICAN INSTITUTE

www.iri.org | @IRIGLOBAL

Tunisia Parliamentary Elections, October 26, 2014

Copyright © 2015 International Republican Institute. All rights reserved.

Permission Statement: No part of this work may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system without the written permission of the International Republican Institute.

Requests for permission should include the following information:

- The title of the document for which permission to copy material is desired.
- A description of the material for which permission to copy is desired.
- The purpose for which the copied material will be used and the manner in which it will be used.
- Your name, title, company or organization name, telephone number, fax number, e-mail address and mailing address.

Please send all requests for permission to:
Attention Communications Department
International Republican Institute
1225 Eye Street NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20005
info@iri.org

Disclaimer: This publication is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under Award No. AID-OAA-A-13-00041. The opinions expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
POLITICAL LANDSCAPE	5
PRE-ELECTION PERIOD	9
Voter Registration	9
Election Administration	10
Political Parties and Election Campaigns	12
ELECTION PERIOD	17
Pre-Election Meetings	17
Election Day	17
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	27
APPENDIX A: ELECTION SNAPSHOT	31
APPENDIX B: PRELIMINARY ELECTION OBSERVATION STATEMENT	33
APPENDIX C: DELEGATION	39
APPENDIX D: OFFICIAL ELECTION DAY RESULTS	41

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On Sunday, October 26, 2014, nearly 70 percent of Tunisia's 5.2 million registered voters cast their ballots to elect the country's first post-revolution parliament under the new constitution. In a strong statement in favor of competitive politics, the country fielded more than 9,000 candidates for just 217 seats in Tunisia's National Constituent Assembly (NCA).

Per Tunisia's new constitution, the elections were administered by the [Independent High Authority for Elections](#) (ISIE), which is a permanent, independent public authority responsible for ensuring democratic, free, pluralistic, fair and transparent elections. In each electoral constituency the ISIE established an independent regional authority for elections (IRIE) to coordinate election administration and oversight of their jurisdiction.

Through the ballot box, Tunisians have told their political leaders that they expect them to work together to achieve a successful democratic transition and bring about the desired political stability and economic reforms needed. This was the hope of the democratic activists who took to the streets in 2011, but their dreams will not be realized without the cooperation of all political stakeholders and a concerted effort to empower Tunisia's youth for a successful democratic future.

In its findings, the International Republican Institute's (IRI) delegation commended the ISIE and respective IRIEs for administering a credible process that was well organized, orderly and allowed voters to express their will at the ballot box in a manner that was unfettered and private. All accredited Tunisian and international observers were granted full access to the process, including vote counting and tabulation, lending to the overall impression of transparency in the elections. Overall, polling station staff were aware of the electoral procedures and performed their duties with integrity and transparency. In addition, IRI observed a nearly equal number of men and women staffing polling stations.

These elections occurred in the context of a new constitution passed in January 2014, the creation of an independent election administration and approval of an inclusive election law, all of which indicate a commitment to pluralism and respect for human rights. The credibility, transparency and organization of these elections are particularly encouraging for Tunisia's democratic future. With the conclusion of the parliamentary elections, Tunisia has now held two credible legislative elections since the democratic transition began in January 2011. In a region where the Arab Spring has led to instability and chaos in many countries, Tunisia's democratic success is particularly notable.

In addition to IRI, other international observation missions included the [National Democratic Institute](#) (NDI), [The Carter Center](#), the [European Union](#) and the [African Union](#). All missions fielded long term and short term observers. All missions were present at the invitation of the ISIE who provided accredited observers with official badges for identification. Tunisian observation organizations included [Mourakiboun](#), [I-Watch](#), the [Association for Democratic Elections](#) and the [League of Human Rights](#). The election commission provided Tunisian organizations with official credentials as well which granted their observers access to all stages of the election process.

With more than 30 years of experience observing elections, IRI reached its own milestone on October 26 by observing its 200th and 201st elections with delegations in both Ukraine and Tunisia. IRI's observation mission in Tunisia was comprised of three major components: pre-election assessment, long-term observation and short-term observation.

IRI's long-term observation mission began in July with an observer deployed to monitor voter registration which ended in late August. On August 28, IRI deployed eight additional long-term observers (LTO) and one coordinator. In teams of two, IRI's LTOs covered all geographic regions of the country, with teams based in Bizerte (northwest), Mahdia (east), Medenine (southeast) and Tozeur (southwest). LTOs were tasked with observing and reporting on the pre-election environment, including voter registration, election preparations, media coverage, marginalized groups and campaign activity. Each day, LTO teams traveled to a different governorate within their region to meet with a wide range of electoral stakeholders, including political parties, electoral bodies, media, civil society representatives and security forces. IRI submitted weekly reports based on the findings of its LTO teams.

In September, IRI and NDI conducted a [pre-election assessment mission](#), in which delegates met with political parties and candidates, the ISIE, Tunisian observer groups and other persons involved in the election process. On September 15, the two organizations released a [joint statement](#) outlining the findings and recommendations from their mission.

IRI's short term-observation mission was comprised of 43 international observers who witnessed voting and ballot counting at more than 200 polling stations throughout the country. In addition to observing the elections in Tunisia, IRI had teams in Belgium, France and the United States, owing to the country's unique system of allowing Tunisian citizens living overseas to have representatives in Tunisia's parliament.

The day after the elections, IRI released its preliminary statement (Appendix B) at a Tunis press conference in Hotel Africa with NDI. This report constitutes IRI's final observations and assessment of Tunisia's 2014 parliamentary election process. This document will be shared with the Tunisian government and the ISIE as they continue to improve and refine their electoral system ahead of the municipal and, potentially governorate-level, elections tentatively expected in 2016.

POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

News from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has saturated the media over the past few years with stories of war, violence and despair. From the horrific atrocities of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria to the anarchic devolution in Libya and autocratic Egyptian rule, the MENA region has seen few stories of progress and success. Combine these challenges with the heightened expectations produced by the Arab Spring just four years ago, and cause for hope becomes even more elusive. Yet there remains reason for optimism in the place where democratic aspirations were first revealed during the 2011 Arab uprisings: Tunisia. Known locally as the Revolution for Freedom and Dignity, the ouster of Zine al Abidine Ben Ali in 2011 fixed the country on a trajectory toward systemic, democratic change. The October 26, 2014 parliamentary elections marked a significant milestone in that transition with the election of the country's first full-term parliament under the new democratic constitution.

In the aftermath of the Tunisian revolution, the country scrambled to put together the necessary legal and administrative fixtures to ensure a legitimate election cycle that would help galvanize democratic sentiment and minimize the possibility of anti-democratic groups gaining a foothold in the power vacuum created by rapid political transition. The primary Islamist party, Ennahda, won a plurality of votes in the October 2011 NCA elections, formed a governing coalition – referred to as the Troika – with the secular parties Ettakatol and Congress for the Republic (CPR) and set out to accomplish the next step in the country's democratic transition: drafting a constitution worthy of the new Tunisia.

Promising to complete the constitution in a year, the coalition struggled to meet its mandate, and debate continued into 2013. The process was further exacerbated by growing political polarization stemming from assassinations of prominent secular opposition figures in February and July of 2013. The violence and apparent lack of progress pitched Tunisian sentiment in a decidedly negative direction. According to an [IRI poll](#), at its height in October 2013, 79 percent of Tunisians thought that their country was headed in the wrong direction. Hope for a successful democratic transition began to wane, culminating in the suspension of NCA activity on August 6, 2013.

Uncertainty hung over the country until the formation of the National Dialogue in October 2013, an ad hoc, consensus-based process at which union and political leaders discussed and ultimately reached agreements on a path forward. From this dialogue came a plan to complete the constitution, change the governmental leadership, finalize the electoral law and set the dates for new elections. A constitution was subsequently passed on January 26, 2014, a technocrat government replaced the Troika, the election law was approved and the dates for the parliamentary and presidential elections were set (October 26 and November 23, respectively). This newfound progress brought with it a wave of optimism for Tunisians. However, amidst the positive redirection of a previously floundering political transition, the expectations of Tunisians rose rapidly and remained unmanaged by the political parties and their leaders.

Many Tunisians equated democracy with immediate change, not only in the political apparatus but also with regard to their personal economic well-being and the security of borders and neighborhoods. With the economy topping polls as the number one priority for Tunisians since the revolution, many in the country believed in the strong correlation between democratic progress and rapid economic progress. Unfortunately, the process generated unrealistic economic expectations that went largely unchecked by political leaders and ultimately led to a growing sense of public disillusionment. Further, the security situation became tenuous due to a loosening of the old regime's grip on security forces and turbulence among Tunisia's neighbors. A year after opposition leader Mohamed Brahmi was gunned down by terrorists in front of his Tunis home, the deadliest attack on the Tunisian army was carried out in July 2014 by Al-Qaeda affiliated groups in which 15 soldiers were killed and 20 were wounded. Whether economic solvency or simply feeling safe, Tunisians remained unsatisfied.

Poor communication on the part of politicians and political parties in the period between the 2011 and 2014 elections exacerbated Tunisians' frustration with the country's economic and security troubles. Leading up to the 2014 elections, undecided voters represented the biggest block within the electorate. Tunisian voters' lack of preference resulted from political leaders' failure to provide policy solutions or direction, as well as the perception that politicians were largely detached from the sufferings of ordinary people. In communicating to "average" Tunisians, the political class struggled to speak to the issues felt most intimately by much of the citizenry. Politicians and parties struggled to employ the content and manner of communication many voters expected.

One factor that shaped the rhetoric and focus of political parties in the campaign period was the electoral system itself. The new electoral system, borne out of the National Dialogue and subsequent legislation, was very similar to the system used during the 2011 elections. Tunisia had a closed-list proportional representation system, meaning each party could create a list of candidates for the available seats in each of the 33 voting districts (27 domestic, six international), and the voter could cast his or her ballot for the district party list as a whole, not for individuals. While this prevented voters from selecting specific candidates, the Tunisian electoral law was very inclusive regarding the ease with which parties and independent lists could run for office. The electoral law did not prohibit parties from competing on the basis of size or electoral success, and no minimum threshold of votes was required nationally or by district to obtain a seat in parliament. As a result, 1,327 candidate lists were approved to run in the 33 electoral districts in the October 2014 elections. With such an inclusive system, parties and independent lists were forced to narrow their political focus and speak directly to local issues and constituencies.

When the official campaign period started on October 4, 2014, parties began announcing their programs to bring Tunisia into the next phase of the democratic transition. The parties that competed in the parliamentary elections could be organized into three categories. The first category containing the two biggest political parties – Nidaa Tounes and Ennahda – presented their respective programs promising progress in economic development, security reform, health and education, environmental management and a range of other issues. They

attempted to behave like major political parties from established democratic systems, holding high profile national party congresses and national campaign launch events demonstrating access to considerable financial resources. The second category of political parties competed for a smaller percentage of the vote (five to 10 percent), and included parties such as Afek Tounes, CPR and Ettakatol. They focused on similar issues but relied more on human resources to run their campaigns, lacking the financial resources and media attention possessed by those in the first category. The parties in the final category competed for an even smaller percentage of votes and were limited in their geographic scope. They focused their resources where they believed their support was strongest messaging on economic reform, stronger security and other socio-economic issues.

The similarity of program content among the three groups placed high importance on the extent to which parties mobilized voters on Election Day. The size of the parties proved to be less of a determinant of potential success than internal organization. Both the larger Ennahda and the smaller Afek Tounes did well in establishing a thorough, organized and committed network of activists. The campaign machinery built by these two parties stood out from other parties which were hampered by budgetary constraints or internal strife. Yet perhaps the biggest challenge for all parties was the fight against voter mistrust and political disillusionment.

The mistrust and frustration many in the Tunisian electorate felt in the run-up to the October 2014 elections stemmed from the political class' negativity. Many parties actively engaged in negative campaigning, often leveling baseless attacks at their opponents. Across the spectrum, nearly all parties accused their rivals of vote buying. This dangerous rhetoric further alienated the Tunisian electorate already tired of negative politics. The Court of First Instance was established to hear cases of campaign finance violations, and the ISIE had controllers specifically tasked with investigating allegations and taking the proper legal action. But many doubted these institutions' ability to fully investigate infringements or enforce their laws.

The skepticism held by many Tunisian voters directly impacted the way parties messaged in their campaigns. Nidaa Tounes argued that the former Troika government formed after the 2011 elections proved to be unprepared to lead and thus the country needed change. They added nuance to their message by claiming their leadership, typified by the party's leader Beji Caid Essebsi, had the pre-revolutionary experience required to return the country to stability and security. Ennahda, in contrast, used its post-revolutionary governing resume to make the case that it was the only party with the requisite experience to handle the major issues facing the country. Ennahda further argued that it prioritized the country's national democratic interests by: 1) joining in a coalition with two secular parties (Ettakatol and CPR) after its electoral victory in 2011 and 2) handing power over to the transitional government agreed upon in the National Dialogue.

Ennahda was faced with a rising tide of frustration by Tunisians who blamed the Troika government, led by Ennahda, for the unmet expectations following the removal of Ben Ali. But the party's extensive, well-organized ground network worked to actively persuade less conservative, undecided voters to support them at the polls. In contrast, the challenges faced

by Nidaa Tounes came from within. Most party leaders and members unified primarily around their equal mistrust of Islamist rule and trust in Essebsi. Beyond these points of common purpose, the party struggled to find consensus on policy positions and fought bitterly over internal politics, namely the finalization of its parliamentary candidate lists. Many questioned whether it would have the discipline to turn out enough voters on Election Day.

The October 26 elections were about convincing voters of the importance of elections as much as it was about the specific policy nuance of each political program. The political blocs that took the country's helm after the election dust settled have been tasked with executing significant reforms essential to the long-term feasibility of a Tunisian democracy. From bureaucratic overhaul to tax reform, modernizing the security forces to fighting corruption, Tunisia's election victors have to chart a course through difficult and uncharted waters. While the specifics of their respective programs differed slightly, most political parties focused on stability and the economy. Many Tunisian voters likewise were voting for an opportunity to move beyond the transitional period and realize stability and tangible prosperity.

PRE-ELECTION PERIOD

Voter Registration

Instead of allowing passive registration as in past elections, where anyone with a national identity card could vote, the ISIE opted for active registration for the 2014 elections. The voter registration period began without much advance notice to the public on June 23, and IRI deployed an observer to monitor the process in early July. The first voter registration period ended on July 29, but ISIE officials decided to extend the process, due to lower than anticipated registration, and added a second period from August 5-26.

After a noticeably slow start, the rate of voter registration increased rapidly in the final week of the initial voter registration period, presumably in response to the ISIE's efforts to raise awareness of registration through the media. The registration rate in the second period was slower than that of the first by half. However, in the end, 993,696 new voters were added to the registry, making the total number of registered voters 5,236,444, or roughly 67 percent out of an estimated 7,800,000 eligible voters.

IRI observed voter registration throughout the governorates of Ariana, Beja, Bizerte, Kairouan, Kasserine, Mahdia, Manouba, Monastir, Sousse and Tunis. Systems and procedures of voter registration largely operated smoothly, and ISIE staff were consistently professional, competent and well trained. However, ISIE efforts to promote registration through media or physical advertisements were severely lacking for most of the period.

During voter registration observation, IRI encountered mixed attitudes toward the elections process. While some Tunisians were excited to participate, the prevailing mood seemed to be that of apathy and general disaffection due to frustration with the performance of transitional governments. More troubling, some groups, mostly Salafists, actively discouraged electoral participation among their followers.

Reports were mixed on the level of support provided by election administrators, political parties and local civil society groups during the second registration period. Limited coordination and communication with the ISIE frustrated political parties' and civil society organizations' efforts to support registration. Voter registration campaigns conducted by these groups seemed to have minimal impact on registration rates. Media and television coverage of voter registration was limited during the initial registration phase, but IRI did observe that the ISIE and media outlets slowly increased coverage over the month of August. IRI found that the ISIE could have done more to adequately promote registration, but is equally cognizant of enormous demands placed upon this new institution with limited time to prepare.

Before registration ended on July 29, those connected with the election process expected that registration would be extended. However, the announcement extending registration to August 26 was not given until July 31, and the ISIE did not reopen registration until August

5. While the delay resulted in a lost week, it allowed time for ISIE officials to evaluate their performance and make needed adjustments.

While still falling short of the ISIE's original goal of 2.5 million registered voters, the total for both registration periods in 2014 of just under one million is commendable given the short time for preparation, budgeting challenges and the domestic and regional political climate. The addition of about 233,000 voters to the rolls during the extension is important, although the ISIE could have registered higher numbers with stronger promotion efforts.

Election Administration

Since July 2014, IRI's LTOs consistently engaged IRIE representatives in governorates across the country. Each IRIE was broadly supported by governors who publicly promoted active participation in elections, while emphasizing the importance of the neutrality of state officials. Support from the governorate, along with regular communication with the ISIE, was critical during this busy phase of the electoral process. To prepare for the elections, Tunisia's electoral administration processed, published and finalized candidate lists for the parliamentary elections; recruited, selected and trained polling staff; located and established polling centers and polling stations; processed and published the preliminary list of presidential candidates for the November 23 presidential election and trained and deployed campaign monitoring staff for the ongoing parliamentary campaign period. Concurrently, the ISIE continued to engage with political parties, civil society, media and election observers and attempted to respond to their concerns.

Candidate Lists

On August 22, the candidates and parties began submitting their candidate applications for the parliamentary elections to the ISIE. IRI observers found that ISIE and IRIE representatives were well versed in the electoral law, particularly as it related to electoral lists. The ISIE formally published preliminary lists of candidates on September 5 in accordance with the timeline established by the electoral calendar. Long-term observers found the process to be transparent, as IRIEs posted the lists as soon as they were published by the ISIE and provided appropriate, technical explanations for any of the lists that were rejected. More than 1,500 candidate lists were submitted and, after a busy period of appeals, 1,327 lists comprising more than 15,000 candidates were approved.

Separately, from September 8-22, the ISIE received applications from candidates for the scheduled November presidential election. In the final 72 hours of the acceptance period, the ISIE received more than 59 applications for a total of 70, which created logistical challenges that proved quite cumbersome. After thorough review, the ISIE accepted 27 applications for presidential candidacy.

Polling Staff Recruitment and Polling Center Establishment

After concluding candidate application review, the IRIEs focused their efforts on finalizing the provisional lists of polling staff and publishing the lists for public review. During this period IRIE staff also confirmed polling center locations and determined the appropriate number of polling stations to be organized at each center.

Recruitment and selection was publicized and transparent throughout the process. Lists of prospective polling workers were posted, and their final selection was made only after thorough review and scrutiny by political parties and civil society. Affiliation with a political party was cited as the cause for most rejections.

IRI was also encouraged by the large number of women and youth who comprised polling center staff. Although most IRIEs were able to recruit enough staff, IRI observers noted that IRIEs encountered difficulty finding a sufficient number of poll workers in rural areas in both the north and south of the country. On Election Day, IRI observers found that most rural polling centers were staffed largely by female school teachers.

Administration

Across the board, IRIEs said they had adequate support from the ISIE and that regular communication occurred, thanks in part to consistent training and well-established internal communication structures. However, IRI also heard that the main difficulty for the electoral management body was the lack of human resources and concerns related to logistical and administrative constraints. It was apparent to IRI observers that additional staff were needed to enforce the electoral law and monitor adherence, particularly in rural areas. Overall, IRI found the electoral administration of the pre-election period to be adequate. The ISIE and IRIEs' main deficiency was their inability to monitor and enforce vague and arbitrary campaign finance laws or control early campaigning.

According to the election law, candidates for parliamentary elections were allowed to campaign from October 4-24. However, the ambiguity in the electoral law on what constitutes inappropriate party campaign activity prior to the official campaign period contributed to discord between political parties and the electoral administrators. Many parties conducted what could easily be interpreted as campaign activities in advance of the start of the official campaign period, but several IRIE workers lamented to IRI their inability to tamp down on such activities. Some IRIEs registered formal complaints to the ISIE about the law's lack of clarity; however, the complaints were not addressed due to the demanding electoral schedule and an insufficient strategy for addressing accusations of campaign violations.

When the official campaign period began, IRIEs had much more authority over campaigning. Campaign controllers were trained and deployed to monitor party activity. According to the IRIEs, the most numerous campaign infractions registered involved the destruction of party campaign posters and posting campaign material in unauthorized spaces. These infractions were considered minor by the IRIEs, which allowed parties a period of 24 hours to resolve any infraction. If the party or list obeyed the IRIE's warning, the issue was considered resolved. If the list or party refused to address the issue, then the list or party was subject to fines. However, the extent to which the IRIEs were able to collect these fines remains unknown.

Additionally, it became apparent to IRI LTOs that the ISIE lacked the capacity to monitor and enforce some electoral laws. For example, the electoral procedures required parties to give 48 hours' notice before holding any campaign events. IRI noted multiple instances in which parties failed to request permission from their respective IRIEs to hold campaign events. In one instance, IRI observers met with campaign controllers at a political party campaign event in which the IRIE representatives stated that the event had taken place without the mandatory 48 hours prior approval. When asked about repercussions, the IRIE representative explained that it was unlikely that the party would be penalized.

It was apparent to IRI observers that campaign laws were, while well-intended, overly restrictive and difficult to enforce or penalize. The ISIE attempted to give smaller parties a better chance at competing with larger parties by designating a short period in which campaigning was allowed and by restricting the areas in which campaign posters and other publicity materials were permitted to appear. However, the ISIE's own limitations prevented it from effectively enforcing these laws. The ISIE only issued the regulations concerning campaigning on September 15, at which point many parties had already begun campaigning. The ISIE also experienced delays in hiring and training campaign controllers, so that campaigns effectively began to be monitored around the start of the defined campaign period. Additionally, parties found it difficult to comply with the two-day advance notification of campaign events rule, a significant organizational burden to place on nascent political groups during a campaign period.

Beyond the impracticality of the campaign regulations, there are other downsides to a short campaign period. Long campaign periods give parties more time to present their programs and voters more time to learn about parties' positions, which would result in voters making more informed choices at the ballot box. In IRI's estimation, ISIE resources could have been better spent publicizing voter registration and monitoring and investigating serious electoral violations rather than penalizing overzealous campaigning. But overall, these restrictions did not significantly dampen party competition.

Political Parties and Election Campaigns

Generally, IRI's observers encountered enthusiastic party activists and candidates who, encouraged by voter registration, presented themselves and their party's policy positions to voters throughout the country during the campaign period.

Pre-Campaign Period Preparation and Administration

Many political parties expressed confidence in their logistical and organizational preparedness, as well as their readiness to communicate with voters. In the lead-up to the campaign period, parties drafted campaign messages, formed regional campaign committees, recruited party agents for polling centers and trained party activists on various campaign strategies. Some smaller parties and coalitions worked together to assign observers to polling stations, minimizing logistical expenditures and encouraging broader collaboration in monitoring.

Throughout IRI's long- and short-term observation, most parties consistently conveyed general confidence in the ISIE's and IRIEs' ability to administer the elections. The parties that remained skeptical were mainly concerned by the logistical challenges, affirming what some IRIEs themselves had already communicated to IRI.

Election Campaigns



IRI observers inspect the designated area for all parties' campaign posters and platforms in Gafsa, Tunisia.

The campaign period began on October 4, 2014, with little fanfare due to the *Eid Al-Adha* holiday weekend. IRI teams did not witness or hear of any large scale campaign rallies or similar activities during the first week of the campaign period. Instead, this time appeared to be dedicated to laying the groundwork for larger campaign activities later in the month. However, overall, visible campaign activity was sporadic throughout the month of October. The

inconsistent presence of campaign activity could have been due, in part, to confusion about electoral laws governing campaigns and a hesitancy to be in violation. This issue is discussed in more detail later in this report.

At the onset of the campaign period, parties focused on posting their party posters to the walls surrounding public spaces that were reserved for campaign events. In every town, these walls were outlined with boxes showing the number assigned to a political party's candidate list, which corresponded to the party's position on the ballot. The parties were only allowed to put their posters in these designated boxes. The order of parties on ballots was randomly selected and different in each of the 33 electoral districts. Parties generally appeared to abide by the campaigning rules, though as previously mentioned, the destruction of party posters (pictured below) as well as campaigning before October 4 were frequent violations.



A destroyed campaign poster.

It is important to note that political parties also expressed dissatisfaction with the ambiguity surrounding the rules for the pre-campaign period. Many parties accused each other of starting to campaign prior to the official campaign period as established by the electoral calendar, and, according to IRI's observers, it does appear that most parties naturally began publicizing their party and their platform before October 4. Some of these instances were reported directly to IRIEs as campaign violations, but there was no extensive follow-up due to the limited staff and growing responsibilities of the electoral administration.

Women and Youth

IRI and other observers applauded the participation of women and youth involved in preparing for and administering the elections. Civil society organizations conducting election-related activities tended to be made up predominately of youth and IRIEs were encouraged by the number of young people who volunteered as polling center staff and controllers. Additionally, going beyond the requirement in the electoral law requiring political parties to list at least one person younger than the age of 35 in the top four spots on

their lists, several parties submitted candidates on their lists who are in their twenties, and in certain governorates, some parties had more than 40 percent youth representation.

Despite these encouraging developments, youth involved in parties and civil society represent only a small segment of Tunisia's youth population. International observers agreed that youth voter turnout on Election Day was low. With the exception of those involved directly with the elections, there was a sense that Tunisia's youth were disengaged from politics and unimpressed by the political options available to them.

On the other hand, women expressed their democratic franchise in high numbers. IRI observers noted that women voted in nearly equal, and in some instances, greater numbers than men. However, women's participation in politics and the campaign period was still unequal. IRI's LTOs frequently reported that parties and civil society were concerned by the lack of women's representation in politics.

Despite this, women's representation in parliament was ensured to a degree thanks to the electoral law which instituted a "vertical zipper system" to ensure gender parity in each voting district party lists, with men and women candidates alternating down the list. However, this requirement was not always met. In the south, particularly in more conservative governorates, IRI observers learned that it was difficult for political parties and independent lists to integrate women in their lists and that most parties struggled to create space for women in their internal structures. In all, 145 lists out of 1,327 had women candidates at the head, but most did have at least one women in the top four candidates. The new legislature is comprised of approximately 33 percent women.

Vote Buying and Intimidation

Most of the parties IRI met with during the campaign period claimed that vote buying was a common practice and often accused competitors of engaging in it. However, no parties presented proof or evidence of vote buying violations to IRI observers, despite the fact that several parties said that they were aware of alleged vote buying during the period before the *Eid* celebration. In some instances in the southern interior, parties alleged that hundreds of sheep were purchased and distributed in an effort to purchase votes. This concern resembled allegations IRI heard at the start of the school year, in which vouchers for school supplies bearing a party stamp were distributed to families.

Another campaign-related concern IRI heard was foreign financing of parties' campaigns. Smaller parties and independents in particular argued that this alleged foreign support tipped the scales in favor of certain parties. However, accusers found it challenging to provide concrete evidence through the formal channels set-up to process these claims. Small parties also consistently told IRI's LTOs that larger, better-funded parties did not mind paying fines for violating electoral laws, further undermining the ideal of equal competition.

There were also reports of alleged party intimidation throughout the campaign period. This was not unique to any particular party, as several parties registered complaints to IRIEs, police, local courts and the media. IRI observers covering Gafsa, Sfax and Tozeur

encountered instances of alleged political violence against activists and party members and, in one case, an independent candidate reported detention and physical abuse by police. Overall, however, IRI observers found the campaign period largely absent of violence, intimidation and large-scale campaign violations.

Pre-Election Assessment Mission

From September 9-12, IRI and NDI jointly conducted a pre-election assessment mission to accurately and impartially assess electoral preparations, review the broader political environment, examine factors that could affect the integrity of the electoral process and offer recommendations. The five-person delegation met with political parties and candidates, the ISIE, national and international observer groups, members of the NCA, journalists, women and youth civic groups, members of the international and diplomatic communities and the Independent High Authority for Audiovisual Communication (HAICA) the body responsible for monitoring and regulating television and radio broadcasts in Tunisia. The delegation published its observations and recommendations on September 15 to allow time for election administrators, political parties, HAICA, civil society groups and journalists to consider and respond to the report ahead of elections.

While the delegation contended that Tunisia appeared to be set on its democratic path, it made a number of recommendations related to the legal and administrative framework for the elections, the political environment, civil society and the role of the media. The members called on the media to avoid bias; civil society groups to promote women and youth to engage in the election process; political parties to enable voters to make informed choices; relevant authorities to monitor, investigate and prosecute campaign financing violations; government agencies to work with each other to secure Election Day and tabulation processes; the HAICA to enforce existing media laws relating to election coverage; and for the ISIE to provide timely and consistent public access to election information.

ELECTION PERIOD

Pre-Election Meetings

In order to provide impartial observation of Tunisia's electoral processes, IRI's international delegation of short-term observers arrived in Tunis on October 21 to prepare for deployment to their observation location. In Tunis, delegation members received briefings on the political situation in Tunisia, the unique aspects of Tunisia's electoral codes and the progress of the campaign period. In addition, delegation members held meetings with political party representatives, ISIE leadership and other Tunisian government officials, including with Prime Minister Mehdi Jomaa and with the Minister of the Interior. The delegation also met with U.S. Ambassador Jacob Walles and embassy staff to gain additional perspective on the political context of the elections and the effect of the transitional process and election preparations. The delegates were additionally briefed on the rights and responsibilities of international observers and Tunisian voting procedures.

Two days prior to Election Day, IRI observers deployed to their assigned regions to meet with municipal and regional ISIE officials, candidates, civil society representatives and other international observer teams. IRI observer teams interviewed these groups, along with local citizens, to identify the issues of specific local concern for Election Day. In general, local authorities, candidates and other stakeholders expressed confidence for successful elections and high turnout.

Throughout Tunisia, the pre-election environment was calm. Observers noted that in most areas business continued as usual and political activity was minimal after campaigning officially ended. While IRI observers did not witness any significant campaign activity during the campaign silence period (the day before the elections), campaign materials were still present in public areas throughout the country, technically a violation of electoral law. Most of these materials were posters displaying party names and ballot symbols. Outfitting of the polling centers went smoothly, and security forces were observed guarding entryways to polling areas.

Election Day

On October 26, 2014, IRI's 43 international observers visited more than 200 polling stations throughout 15 of Tunisia's 24 governorates, as well as polling stations in Belgium, France and the United States, where Tunisian citizens living abroad had the opportunity to vote for representatives in Tunisia's parliament. 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 local polling officials, party representatives and other observers present at the time. Observers completed a detailed written checklist after departing each polling station and sent real-time reports 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 elections were 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 elections according to established procedures. This is especially notable given that many were new to electoral administration and were under significant pressure due to the stringent electoral calendar. Although a few irregularities were observed, these did not constitute a systemic pattern of violations, nor did they have any significant effect on the integrity of the elections or the results.

Voter turnout on Election Day reached 68.9 percent of registered voters. Turnout was higher in urban centers than in rural areas, reaching as much as 78.15 percent in Tunis 2, compared to 59.99 percent in Sidi Bouzid, the governorate with the lowest turnout. Turnout was considerably higher in the early hours and remained steady throughout the late morning and early afternoon. The youth turnout was markedly low, however. In a few cases, polling station staff refused to give information about the number of ballots cast, making it difficult for observers to gauge turnout. By the end of the day, however, observers were able to get information on the number of ballots cast without any issues. 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.

Governorate	Number of Registered Voters	Voter Turnout Percentage
Ariana	90,523	73.74%
Béja	93,214	65.77%
Ben Arous	65,362	75.99%
Bizerte	97,715	68.08%
Gabès	91,701	68.45%
Gafsa	51,299	66.91%
Jendouba	86,701	64.20%
Kairouan	95,413	61.73%
Kasserine	95,227	60.51%
Kebili	57,867	69.51%
Kef	97,476	66.46%
Mahdia	108,828	71.80%
Manouba	122,232	71.00%
Medenine	69,948	67.35%
Monastir	85,203	74.21%
Nabeul 1	89,782	75.58%
Nabeul 2	95,536	74.98%

Sfax 1	79,779	73.88%
Sfax 2	98,975	76.61%
Sidi Bouzid	123,002	59.99%
Siliana	64,606	63.48%
Sousse	162,076	74.46%
Tataouine	47,794	55.98%
Tozeur	45,778	51.97%
Tunis 1	23,651	72.06%
Tunis 2	83,908	78.15%
Zaghuan	36,501	69.02%

Opening Procedures

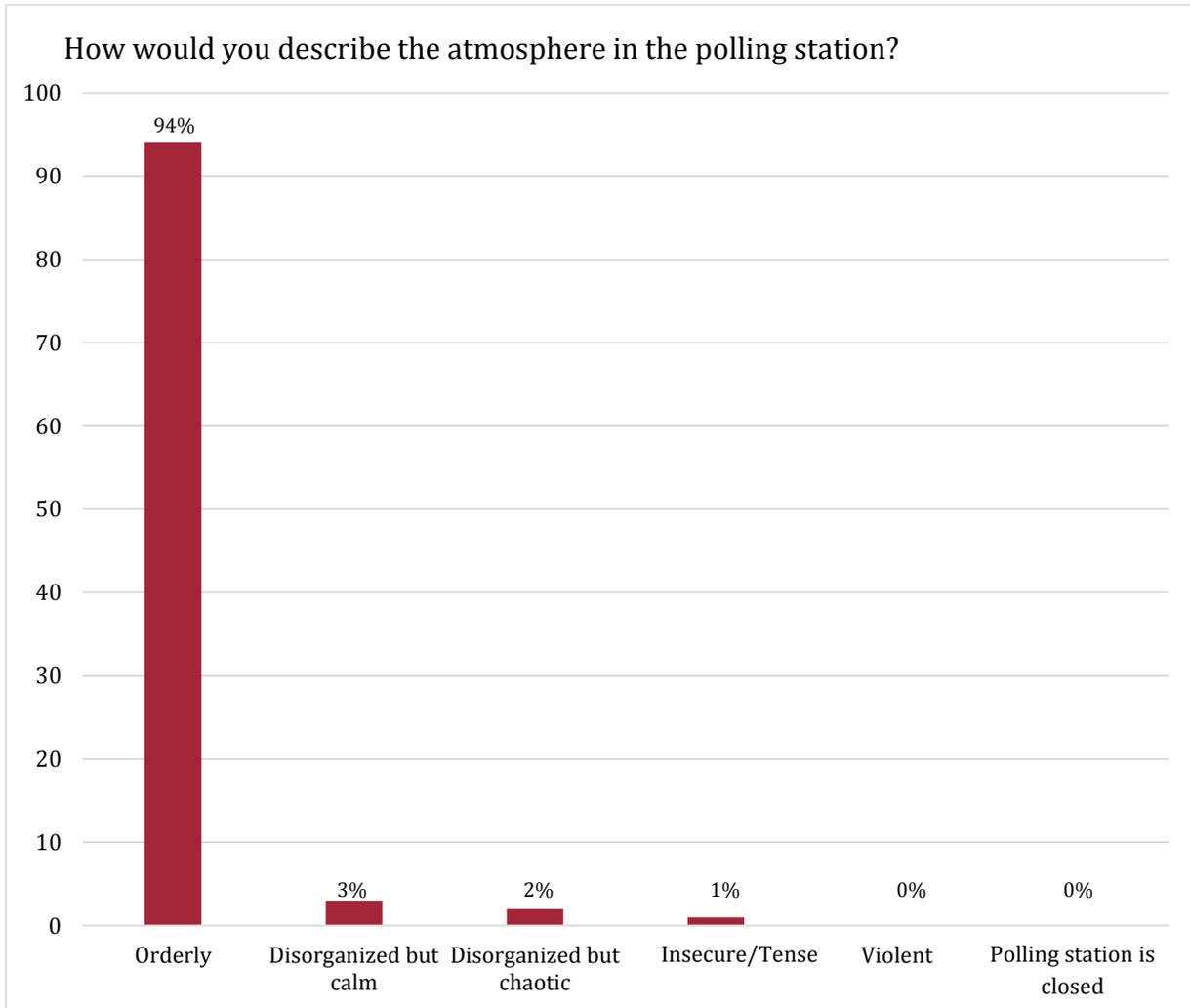
Overall, IRI observers concluded that election procedures were largely followed and polling staff acted in a professional manner. Polls opened at 7:00 am, or within minutes thereof, and closed at 6:00 pm, according to schedule. IRI observers arrived at polling stations as early as 6:00 am to observe opening procedures by IRIE staff. The majority of polling stations observed at the opening 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.

IRI observers were present for opening procedures at a total of 17 polling stations. While there were some irregularities noted, the opening of the polls passed with no major incidents, and observers found no pattern of irregularities or violations that would have affected election results in their assigned areas. Procedures were observed closely by polling station staff and international and local election observers. In every location they observed, 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 local civil society monitors and party representatives in many polling stations; police and security permitted entry to any visitor with official credentials to observe the voting.

Voting

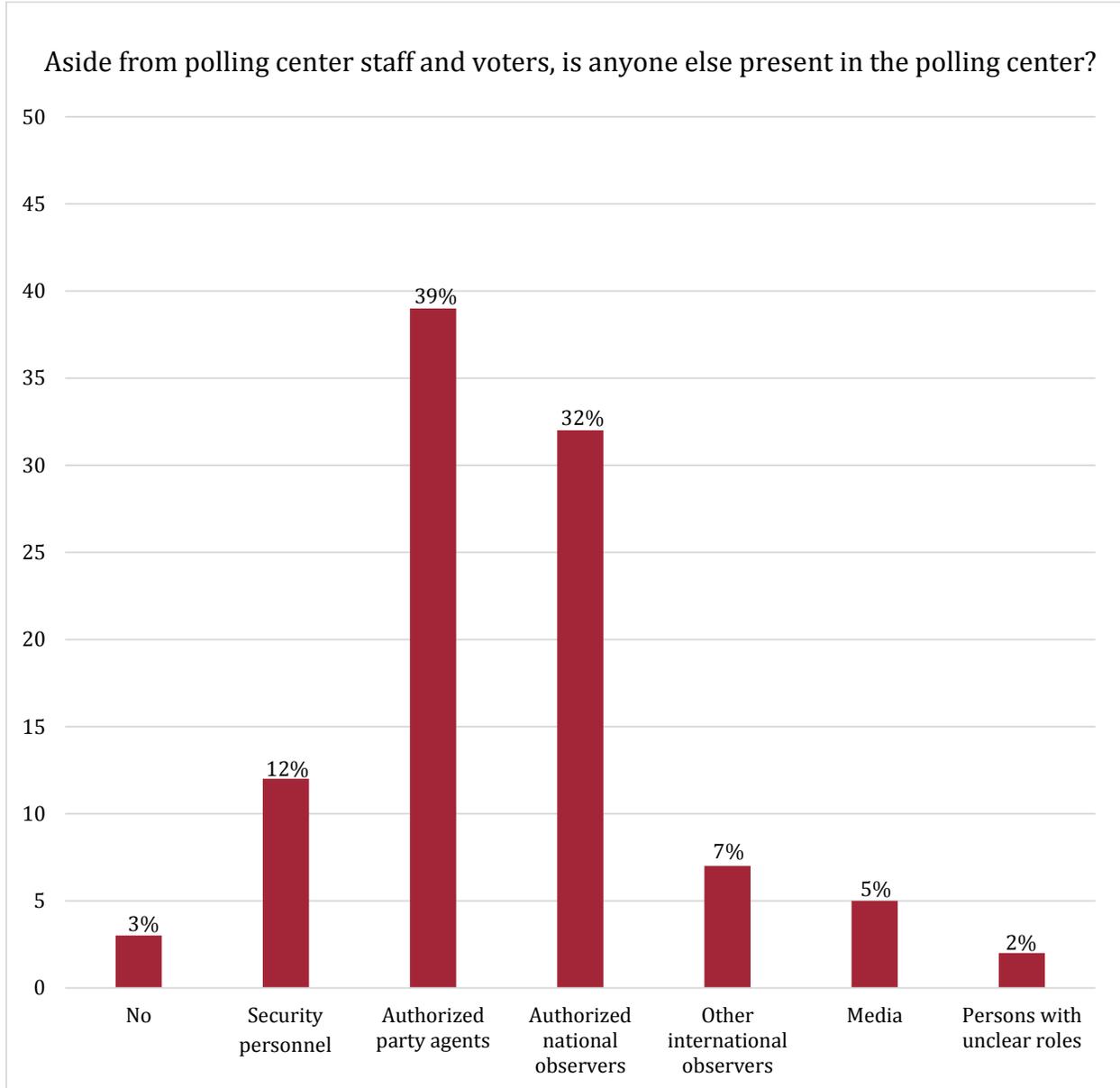
At the vast majority of polling centers visited, IRI observers rated the level of organization and security positively. Observers were impressed with the consistency with which polling stations were set up and voting procedures were conducted. Polling stations were uniformly organized according to specifications 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 in the vicinity of the polling centers. Security arrangements were consistent at polling stations throughout the country. With no notable exceptions, security personnel were found at the entrance of the polling center, occasionally inside the polling center, but never 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. Party observers had visible credentials that appeared to be checked by the electoral commission before they were allowed in the room. Typically police did not check voters' identification at polling center entrances, in keeping with the election law. IRI observers did not witness any undue denial of entry to polling centers, and a designated ISIE official verified the identity of all voters.



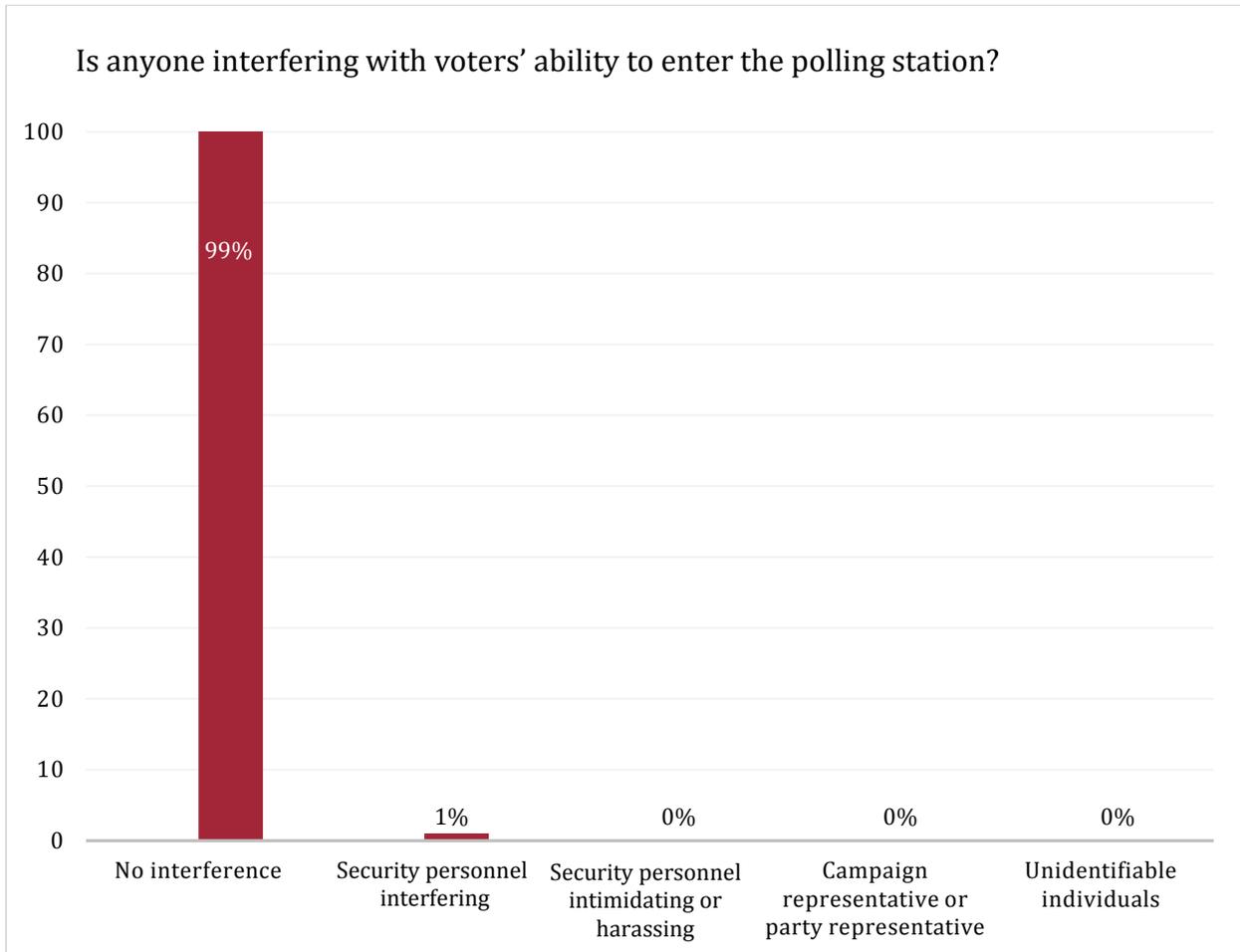
Source: IRI's IVR system.

IRI observers were impressed with the widespread deployment of political party agents and nonpartisan national observers, who were in nearly every polling station visited. National observers were well-trained and knowledgeable of the election procedures, and generally performed their roles proficiently. However, most national observers received ISIE accreditation very late in the night before Election Day. This was an issue across the country and ultimately contributed to some party agents' inability to observe polling operations. IRI observation reports suggest that Nidaa Tounes and Ennahda deployed the largest number of party observers.



Source: IRI's IVR System.

Isolated incidents did occur where national observers attempted to interfere in the voting process by offering assistance in explaining voting procedures. In those cases witnessed by IRI observers, the violation did not appear to be intentional but rather the result of a genuine misunderstanding of their role in observing the electoral procedures.



Source: IRI's IVR System.

In no instance did IRI witness national observers posing an undue influence over voting, and generally polling center staff and other observers in the area were able to correct any improper conduct.

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 sometimes created very long lines for older voters and short lines for youth who appeared to turn out in far lower numbers. While this problem did not threaten the integrity of election results, it did limit efficiency at the polls and may have hurt effective voter participation. IRI believes that a minor adjustment to voting procedures could reduce or eliminate this inefficiency.

Overall, IRI's observers were impressed by the level of preparation 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

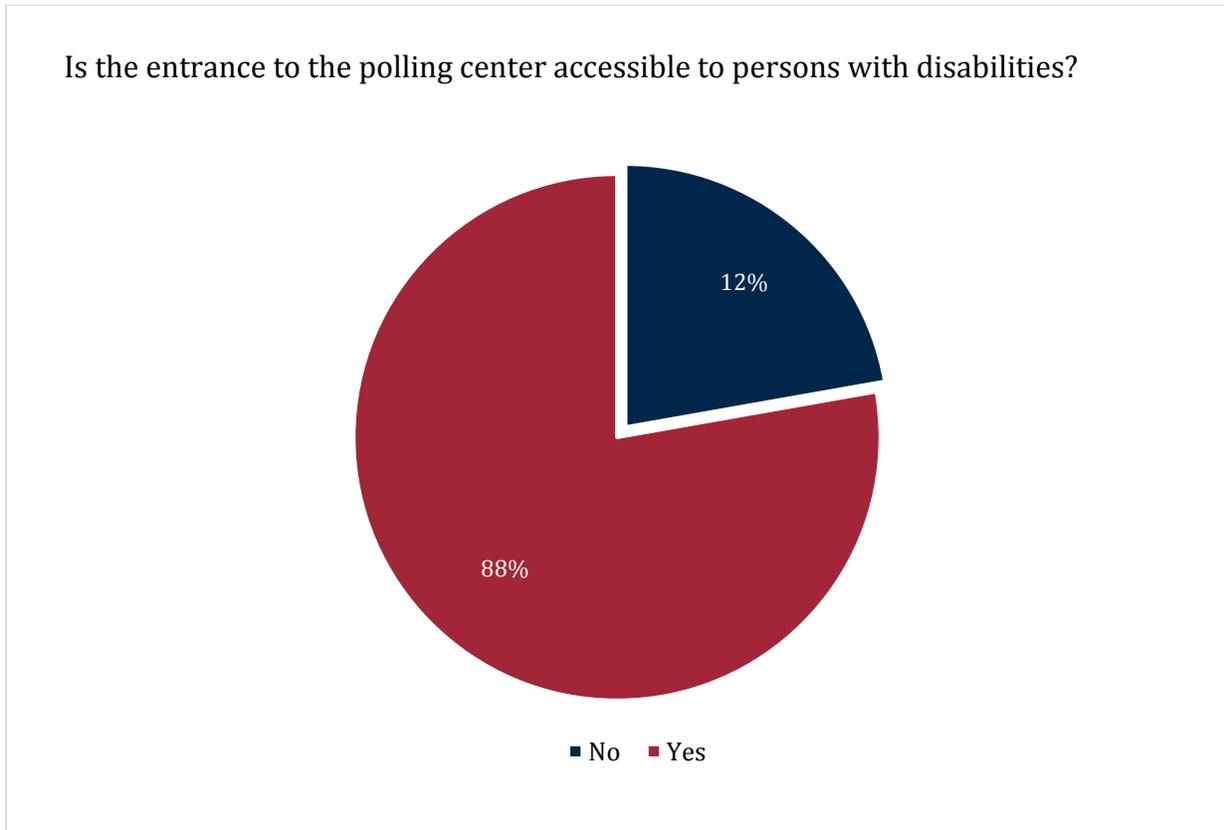
polling centers and stations had been well trained by the ISIE for their specific roles. Independent and political party observers were granted full access to the process, including vote counting and tabulation, lending to the overall impression of transparency of the election. Although IRI observers often witnessed security personnel inside polling centers, a violation of the election law, the presence of security forces did not seem to interfere in the voting process or appear threatening.

Underrepresented Groups

Women turned out in strong numbers to vote, and their participation in the entire 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 30 percent of stations observed by IRI, the polling center president was a woman. There were also cases in which the polling station staff were made up entirely of women.

Youth turnout, however, was low. A significant proportion did not register to vote. Furthermore, a number of those registered did not cast a ballot. It is important for political parties to engage the youth population in the future, as broad voter apathy is apparent.

Most of the schools used as polling centers were accessible to voters with physical disabilities. However, in some instances, the rooms chosen as polling stations were on the second floor, proving cumbersome for people with physical disabilities. Teams observed that the centers were equipped with at least one tool to enable blind voters. The polling staff, however, 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.



Source: IRI's IVR System.

Closing and Counting

Closing procedures were mostly followed at the polling stations observed. 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 ballots. The counting process was transparent, although tabulation was often drawn out and time consuming due to the number of lists and the limited staff at polling stations to sort the piles of ballots. Generally, observers, candidates and their agents were able to access all proceedings in the polling stations without obstruction. However, some teams observed party agents being refused access to the closing and counting with no valid explanation. By law, it is clear that all candidates have the right to be represented through observation. This refusal of access indicates that more thorough training of candidate agents and polling staff is necessary, as is increasing understanding among all actors of the important role that party agents play inside polling stations.

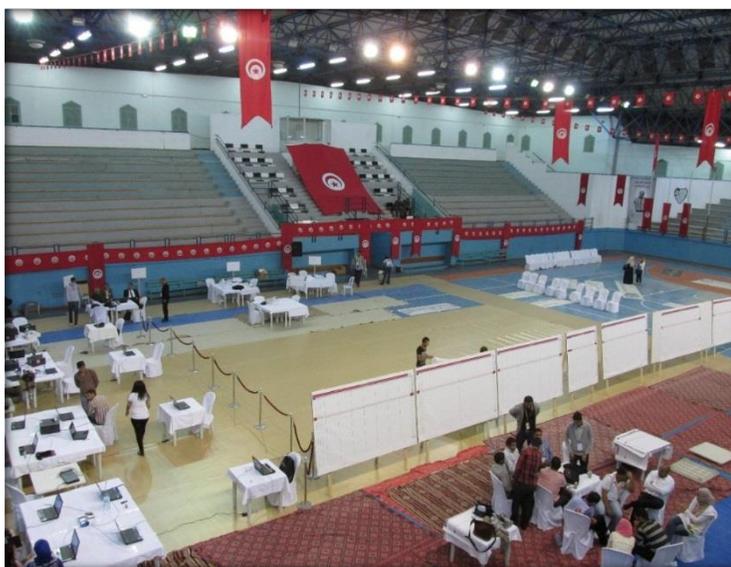
While the closing of the polls and sorting and counting of ballots passed with no critical errors, counting proceeded slowly as officials undertook their roles with great care and often had to stop to ensure they were adhering to procedure. In the stations IRI observed, sorting and counting of ballots 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, possibly due in part to fatigue among the election commission staff and perhaps a less comprehensive understanding of the counting process.

The lack of clear procedure for correcting errors caused some delays in counting. IRI observers found that polling station officials usually went to painstaking lengths to ensure that counting was conducted precisely and accurately. In one instance in Tunis 2, the vote had to be recounted multiple times over the course of several hours. The counting protocols were also extremely time-consuming. Some stations stayed until the early hours of the morning finalizing vote counting and tabulation.

In some minor cases, counting procedures were not strictly followed. In one isolated example, party agents were not authorized to comment or ask questions in the polling station. In another instance, the counting of ballot papers was not loud enough for party agents and observers in the polling station to hear. In some cases, observers noted the number of voter signatures were counted by the polling staff, but the staff did not disclose the information until the end of the counting process. Often after the posting of the results sheet at the polling stations, observers were asked by the polling center managers to leave the premises. This prevented observers from seeing the transmission of results from the polling center to the tabulation center. Isolated incidents like these contributed to post-election accusations by parties and supporters that some polling center staff were partisan. This was investigated and rectified in subsequent elections held in November and December 2014.

Upon completion of the counting, each polling station turned over their ballot boxes to the polling center president, who then delivered them to the military stationed outside the polling center for transport to the regional tabulation center. The tabulation centers were generally spacious facilities, such as stadiums, and were sufficiently equipped and ready to receive election results.

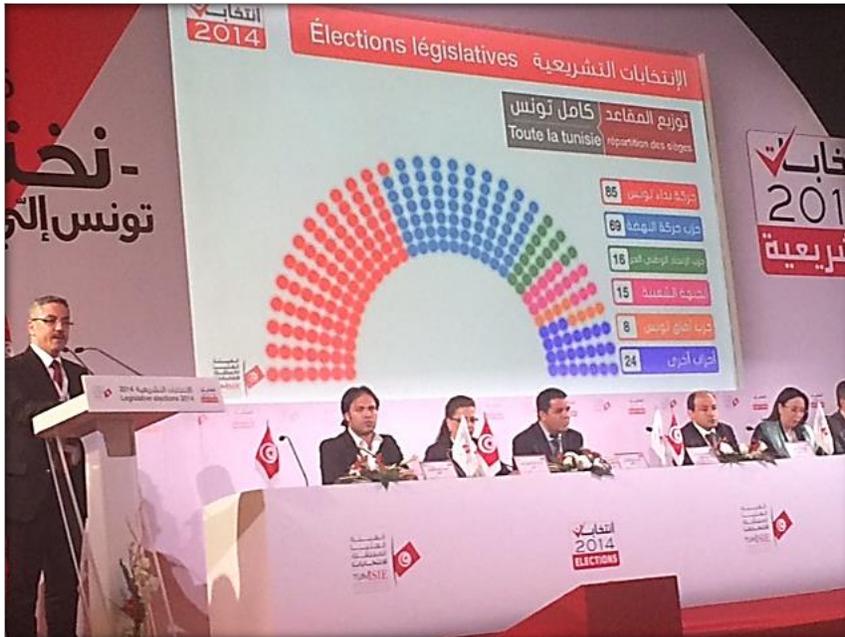
Many human and logistical resources were mobilized for the tabulation process. Tallying started late on Election Day as soon as the election results were received, and election results displayed on a series of boards visible to observers. A group of tally personnel was in charge of verification and correction of tally sheets. Another group was responsible for entering the data online. A third group was in charge of control of the data online. However, there was no communication to observers and party agents during the tallying process, resulting in an inability of party agents to adequately follow the process.



A regional tabulation center prepares to receive ballot boxes from polling centers in its circonscription.

In spite of a few minor irregularities and with a few exceptions, closing and counting were conducted properly and in accordance with the election law, giving IRI observers no reason to doubt the accuracy of the final results. Ultimately, the irregularities observed were minor in nature and the counting process overall was characterized by a rigorous attention to detail and meticulous observance of election rules.

Results



The leadership of the ISIE deliver the official election results on October 30, 2014.

Four days after the election, on October 30, 2014 at 1:00 am, the ISIE announced the official election results at a press conference in Tunis. It was announced that Nidaa Tounes had won 85 seats, instead of 86, due to an appeal from Ettakatol in Kasserine that Nidaa was campaigning inside a polling station. This appeal was later overturned, returning the seat to Nidaa for a total of 86. Ennahda won 69 seats. The Free Patriotic Union won 16 seats, the Popular Front 15 and Afek Tounes eight. The

24 remaining seats were split between small parties and independent candidates.

Of the 217 members elected, 44 were younger than 40. Of those, 28 were women and 16 were men. In total, the new legislature is composed of 145 men and 72 women.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As stated in IRI's initial press statement released on October 27, 2014, the Institute's delegation found polling station officials to be professional and knowledgeable about their duties and committed to conducting the elections according to established rules and procedures. In the press statement, IRI unveiled its new *Election Snapshot*, which gives citizens and media an easy-to-use reference on how Tunisia preformed 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 processes

The tool 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. The *Election Snapshot* and the details regarding how the scorecard was prepared can be found in the appendix.

Based on the observations of IRI during the pre-election period and on Election Day, IRI offers the following recommendations to improve future elections:

1) *Improved Transparency*

Future elections would be strengthened with timely publicizing of electoral rules and procedures. IRI's observation efforts during the voter registration and pre-electoral period also noted that a more proactive public communications effort by ISIE would have resulted in greater transparency of its decisions and improved awareness on the part of electoral stakeholders of electoral procedures.

2) *Improved Efficiency*

A key procedural improvement that IRI recommends is a more equitable distribution of registered voters within polling centers. 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.

As older voters globally turn out in higher numbers than younger voters, in essence this system resulted in longer lines in lower numbered stations earlier in the day and fewer voters in higher numbered stations. This not only lengthened wait times for

some voters but also created greater workloads for some election workers. Future elections will go more smoothly and the burden on poll workers will be reduced if polling stations are assigned in a different fashion, such as by surname, a randomization of voter identification number or by home address.

3) *Vote Counting and Tabulation*

Although vote tabulation and counting were conducted according to established electoral procedures, the efficiency and orderliness of future elections would be strengthened with additional training of poll workers. Greater adherence to electoral rules to ensure non-interference in the counting and tabulation process is also required of independent and political party observers.

Making these changes and changes to the distribution of registered voters within polling centers would also more equitably distribute workloads for election workers and reduce fatigue at the end of the day.

4) *Voter Empowerment and Participation*

The increase in voter turnout from the 2011 NCA elections from 51 to nearly 70 percent of registered voters suggests that Tunisians are engaged in their democratic transition and enthusiastic about newfound freedoms. Still, voter participation for the October 26 elections represented a little more than half of eligible voters, suggesting there is still more work to be done in fostering an inclusive, fully participatory electorate. Young voters appear not to have turned out in as large of numbers as older voters. Regardless, 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.

5) *Role of Civil Society*

Many people believe that conducting a successful election simply consists of citizens casting ballots and votes being counted. However, elections are ultimately embodied in countless citizens both inside government and in civil society. The role of Tunisian civil society is especially important in elections with more than 1,300 political party and candidate lists, particularly since this is only Tunisia's second democratic election since the 2011 revolution.

The widespread presence of independent observers representing civil society contributed to the transparency of Election Day. They also helped educate voters, held political parties and candidate lists accountable for their electoral promises, raised awareness of violations of campaigning rules and added to the strength of the overall process.

6) *Freedom to Campaign*

Although political campaigning intensified over the course of the 21-day campaign period, political parties and candidates appeared to struggle to outline clear platforms based on policy. This was partially due to the large number of political

parties and candidate lists, but was also due to an overly restrictive campaign calendar that made it more difficult for voters to distinguish between political competitors.

IRI's long-term observation effort revealed that many parties engaged in campaign-like activities prior to the start of the official campaign period and that this practice occurred widely without respect to a particular party or group. Relaxing campaign rules in future elections would provide Tunisian voters with more opportunity to make informed choices and would likewise ease the burden on electoral institutions forced to administer unnecessarily burdensome rules about campaign activities.

7) *Campaign Finance*

IRI heard a number of accusations of illicit campaign financing during the pre-electoral period. In future elections, greater clarity from electoral authorities on use of campaign funds and more realistic reporting and expenditure rules would produce a more vibrant campaign environment with greater clarity and improved enforcement of campaign finance rules.

Other Items to Consider

1) *Party Agent Badges*

IRIEs delivered accreditation badges to party agents late the night before Election Day. This made it extremely difficult for the candidates to distribute badges to their agents in all constituencies on time. IRIEs should work to deliver accreditation badges earlier.

2) *Delegation of Region-Based Tasks*

ISIE should give authority to IRIEs for regional tasks, such as printing and delivering accreditations, locally.

3) *ISIE Internal Administrative Procedures*

ISIE should improve administrative procedures, particularly timely payment of IRIE staff salaries.

4) *ISIE Staff Rotations During Regional Collation*

ISIE should organize rotations and prepare a supplementary list of data entry clerks working in the results collation centers.

5) *IRIE Engagement with Political Parties and Civil Society*

IRIEs should engage more regularly with political parties and civil society throughout the electoral process in order to prevent miscommunication and misunderstanding of electoral rules and increase confidence and trust.

6) *Voting Logistics for Staff and Observers*

Polling station members as well as political party representatives should be allowed to vote in the same polling station they are administering and covering.

7) *Election Day Procedures for Special Needs Voters*

Clearer rules for Election Day procedures regarding disabled and illiterate voters are needed. Both legal clarity and improved training could help mitigate confusions surrounding the procedures for assisting special needs voters.

8) *Voter Education*

A more robust voter education campaign aimed at youth is needed as voter registration and turnout was remarkably low in this demographic. Further voter education campaigns are also needed in rural areas for illiterate constituents.

APPENDIX A: ELECTION SNAPSHOT

Election Snapshot: Tunisia's 2014 Parliamentary Elections

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's website](http://iri.org).

APPENDIX B: PRELIMINARY ELECTION OBSERVATION STATEMENT

For Immediate Release
October 27, 2014

Tunisian Elections Mark Democratic Milestone, Much Work Remains

Tunis, Tunisia – Tunisian citizens at home and abroad spoke strongly in favor of democracy on October 26 to elect the country’s first post-revolution parliament. An international delegation from the [International Republican Institute](#) (IRI) said the process was “credible, transparent and allowed for genuine political competition among political stakeholders.”

Tunisian citizens should be proud of the significant strides the country has made since the 2011 revolution. The October 26 elections represent a key milestone in the country’s consolidation of democratic institutions and practices. Nearly 60 percent of Tunisia’s 5.2 million registered voters cast their ballots in the October 26 parliamentary elections that delegation chairman Andrew S. Natsios called a “step forward in Tunisia’s difficult path to democracy.”

Natsios, who served as administrator of the [U.S. Agency for International Development](#) from 2001-2006, said he was impressed with the ability of Tunisians to conduct these elections during challenging times for the country. “Not only was Tunisia facing threats of violence from extremists who would like to stop democracy from gaining a new foothold in the region, but the country also had to tackle the logistical challenges of holding these elections while simultaneously preparing for the presidential election that is just a few weeks away.”

Despite these challenges, IRI said the October 26 elections place Tunisia on a solid course to consolidate its new democratic institutions with a presidential election on November 23 and a potential presidential run-off election in December. These elections occurred in the context of a new constitution passed in January 2014, the creation of an independent election administration and approval of an inclusive election law, all of which indicate a commitment to pluralism and respect for human rights.

Mark Green, president of IRI, and former ambassador and U.S. Congressman commented, “These elections were an important step in Tunisia’s democratic transition, one that still faces numerous challenges if Tunisia is going to fulfill the hopes of those who took to the streets in 2011 to demand a greater voice in their government and greater freedom in their daily lives.”

IRI reached its own milestone on October 26 observing its 200th and 201st elections with delegations in both Ukraine and Tunisia. The nonprofit Institute also unveiled its new *Election Snapshot*, which gives citizens and media an easy to use reference on how Tunisia preformed 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 Integrity and Election Day Logistics

IRI commends the [Independent High Authority for the Elections](#) (ISIE) and respective Independent Regional Authorities for Elections (IRIE) for administering a credible process that was well organized and orderly, and which allowed voters to express their will at the ballot box in a manner that was unfettered and private. ISIE and IRIE election workers appeared to be aware of the electoral procedures and had received training in advance of Election Day.

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.

Although IRI observers often witnessed security personnel inside polling centers, which is a violation of the election law, the presence of security forces did not appear to interfere in the voting process or appear threatening.

IRI noted several areas where future elections could be strengthened. Although an improvement from the 2011 national constituent assembly (NCA) elections, the delayed issuance of electoral procedures resulted in delayed training of election workers.

Improved Transparency

Coming elections would be strengthened with timely publicizing of electoral rules and procedures. IRI's observation efforts during the voter registration and pre-electoral period also noted that a more proactive public communications effort by ISIE would have resulted in greater transparency of its decisions and improved awareness on the part of electoral stakeholders of electoral procedures.

Improved Efficiency

A key process point of improvement that IRI would encourage ISIE to make before the presidential election is a more equitable distribution of registered voters within polling centers. 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.

In essence, this resulted in longer lines in lower numbered stations earlier in the day and fewer voters in higher numbered stations. Not only did this lengthen wait times for some voters but also created greater workloads for some election workers. Coming elections will go more smoothly and the burden on poll workers will be reduced if polling stations are assigned in a different fashion, such as by surname, a randomization of voter identification number or by home address.

Vote Counting and Tabulation

Although vote tabulation and counting were conducted according to established electoral procedures, the efficiency and orderliness of future elections would be strengthened with additional training of polling workers. Greater adherence to electoral rules to ensure non-interference in the counting and tabulation process is also required of independent and political party observers.

Making these changes, and changes to the distribution of registered voters within polling centers would also more equitably distribute workloads for election workers and reduce fatigue at the end of the day.

Voter Empowerment and Participation

The increase in voter turnout from the 2011 NCA elections from 51 to nearly 60 percent suggests that Tunisians are engaged in their democratic transition and enthusiastic about newfound freedoms. Still, voter participation for the October 26 elections represented a little more than half of eligible voters, suggesting there is still more work to be done in fostering an inclusive, fully participatory electorate. Anecdotal evidence suggests young voters may not have turned out in as large of numbers as older voters. Regardless, 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.

Role of Civil Society

Many people believe that conducting a successful election simply consists of citizens casting ballots and votes being counted. However, elections are ultimately embodied in countless citizens both inside government and in civil society. The role of Tunisian civil society is

especially important in elections with more than 1,300 political party and candidate lists and since this is only Tunisia's second democratic election since the 2011 revolution.

The widespread presence of independent observers representing civil society contributed to the transparency of Election Day. They also helped educate voters, held political parties and candidate lists accountable for their electoral promises, raised awareness of violations of campaigning rules, and added to the strength of the overall process.

Freedom to Campaign

Although political campaigning intensified over the course of the 21-day campaign period, political parties and candidates appeared to struggle to outline clear platforms based on policy. This was partially due to the large number of political parties and candidate lists, but was also due to an overly restrictive campaign calendar that made it more difficult for voters to distinguish between political competitors.

IRI's long-term observation effort revealed that many parties engaged in campaign-like activities prior to the start of the official campaign period and that this practice occurred widely without respect to a particular party or group. Relaxing campaign rules in future elections would provide Tunisian voters with more opportunity to make informed choices and would likewise ease the burden on electoral institutions forced to administer unnecessarily burdensome rules about campaign activities.

Campaign Finance

IRI heard a number of accusations about illicit campaign financing during the pre-electoral period. In future elections, greater clarity from electoral authorities on use of campaign funds and more realistic reporting and expenditure rules would produce a more vibrant campaign environment with greater clarity and improved enforcement of campaign finance rules.

Looking Toward the Future

Tunisian leaders will need to work hard to meet the expectations the public has for freedom, prosperity and stability. As Tunisian Prime Minister Mehdi Jomaa recently told IRI, Tunisia must turn the lofty language of the constitution into behavior if it is to advance its democracy.

Tunisians have told their political leaders that they expect them to work together to achieve a successful democratic transition and bring about the desired political stability and economic reforms needed. This was the hope of the democratic activists who took to the streets in 2011, but their dreams will not be realized without the cooperation of all political stakeholders.

Background

IRI's international delegation of 43 observers witnessed voting and ballot counting at more than 200 polling stations throughout the country. In addition to observing the elections in

Tunisia, IRI had teams in Belgium, France and the United States owing to the country's unique system of allowing Tunisian citizens living overseas to have representatives in Tunisia's parliament.

Additionally, [IRI long-term observers](#) witnessed the voter registration process, pre-electoral preparations and electoral campaign period to gain a complete perspective of the October 26 elections.

IRI's delegation was led by Andrew S. Natsios, former administrator of the [U.S. Agency for International Development](#) and currently executive professor and director of the Scowcroft Institute of International Affairs at the [Bush School of Government and Public Service](#) at Texas A&M University. Natsios was joined on the delegation by Ambassador [Mark Green](#), president of IRI, former U.S. ambassador to Tanzania and former U.S. congressman representing Wisconsin's 8th District.

Other delegates were:

- [Rep. Tom Petri](#), member of the U.S. House of Representatives representing Wisconsin's 6th District;
- Tami Longaberger, chief executive officer of the Longaberger Company, chair of the [Arab Women's Leadership Institute's](#) Board of Directors and a member of IRI's Board of Directors;
- [Max Boot](#), the Jeanne J. Kirkpatrick senior fellow for national security studies at the Council on Foreign Relations;
- Scott Carpenter, deputy director of [Google Ideas](#);
- Bruce Chapman, chairman of the board of the Discovery Institute;
- Barbara Haig, deputy to the president for policy and strategy at the [National Endowment for Democracy](#);
- Amy Hawthorne, resident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council's [Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East](#); and
- Pierre Prévôt-Leygonie, strategic and campaign communications consultant and former Director of Fundraising and Communications for *Mobilisation Directe* in France.

[Judy Van Rest](#), IRI executive vice president, and [Scott Mastic](#), director of IRI's Middle East and North Africa programs also assisted in the mission.

Prior to the elections, 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. Delegates were then deployed throughout the country where they observed at polling stations to identify and evaluate strengths and weaknesses in Tunisia's election system, including campaign regulations, the balloting process, vote tabulation and reporting.

In addition to the findings of its international delegation, IRI long-term observers have issued reports available at [Tunisia Elections Dispatch No. 1: Voter Registration](#), [Tunisia Elections Dispatch No. 2: Voter Registration](#) and [Tunisia Elections Dispatch No. 3: Pre-Election Period](#).

From September 9-12, an IRI-[National Democratic Institute](#) pre-election assessment mission [reported](#) that Tunisia was on a decidedly democratic path, but cautioned that to maintain public confidence, it must ensure parliamentary and presidential elections are free of undue partisan interference and manipulation. The full report is available in [English](#), [Arabic](#) and [French](#).

IRI endorses the [Declaration of Principles for International Election Observers and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers](#), and since 1983, through international election observation missions and assessments, has monitored 201 elections in 56 countries.

APPENDIX C: DELEGATION

Leaders

- Andrew S. Natsios, former administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development and currently executive professor and director of the Scowcroft Institute of International Affairs at the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University;
- Mark Green, president of IRI, former U.S. ambassador to Tanzania and former U.S. congressman representing Wisconsin's 8th District

Delegates

- Rep. Tom Petri, member of the U.S. House of Representatives representing Wisconsin's 6th District;
- Tami Longaberger, chief executive officer of the Longaberger Company, chair of the Arab Women's Leadership Institute's Board of Directors and a member of IRI's Board of Directors;
- Max Boot, the Jeanne J. Kirkpatrick senior fellow for national security studies at the Council on Foreign Relations;
- Scott Carpenter, deputy director of Google Ideas;
- Bruce Chapman, chairman of the board of the Discovery Institute;
- Barbara Haig, deputy to the president for policy and strategy at the National Endowment for Democracy;
- Amy Hawthorne, resident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council's Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East; and
- Pierre Prévôt-Leygonie, strategic and campaign communications consultant and former director of fundraising and communications for *Mobilisation Directe* in France

IRI Staff

- Judy Van Rest, executive vice president
- Scott Mastic, regional director, Middle East and North Africa division
- Djordje Todorovic, resident country director, Tunisia
- Mohieddine Abdellaoui, resident program officer, Tunisia
- Nathaniel Breeding, resident program officer, Tunisia
- Casey Cagley, program assistant, Latin America and Caribbean division
- Jessica Clough, election observation facilitator, Tunisia
- Dylan Diggs, assistant evaluation specialist, Middle East and North Africa division
- Pasom Van Duker, systems administrator
- Kathy Emerick, controller
- Hal Ferguson, deputy director, Middle East and North Africa division

- Lisa Gates, director of communications
- Johanna Hellrigl, senior assistant program officer, Women's Democratic Network
- Derek Luyten, deputy director, Asia division
- Paul McCarthy, program director, Syria and Lebanon
- Lara Petricevic, resident country director, Uganda
- Leo Siebert, program officer, Tunisia
- Sinclair Stafford, assistant program officer, Tunisia
- Luke Waggoner, resident program officer, Tunisia

Short-Term Observers in Foreign Voting Locations

- Cole Bockenfeld, advocacy director, Project on Middle East Democracy
- Ian Cash, Committee to Protect Journalists
- Todd Ruffner, advocacy associate, Project on Middle East Democracy
- Camilla Wuensch, Center for Strategic and International Studies
- Curt Harris, program director, Middle East and North Africa division

Long-Term Observers

- Djeri Akpo, Togo
- Serena Alborghetti, Italy
- Younes Alhammedi, Morocco
- Jamal Boubouch, Morocco
- Fernanda Damaso, Portugal
- Indiana Falaise, France
- Marguerite Garcia, France
- Sameh Ibrahim, Egypt
- Lauren Seaman, United States

APPENDIX D: OFFICIAL ELECTION DAY RESULTS

Party/Coalition/Independent List	Percent of Votes	Number of Seats
Nidaa Tounes	37.56%	86
Ennahda	27.79%	69
Free Patriotic Union	4.13%	16
Popular Front	3.64%	15
Afek Tounes	3.02%	8
Congress for the Republic	2.05%	4
Democratic Current	1.95%	3
People's Movement	1.34%	3
National Destourian Initiative	1.34%	3
Current of Love	1.20%	2
Republican Party	1.65%	1
Democratic Alliance	1.27%	1
Farmers' Voice Party	<1%	1
Movement of Socialist Democrats	<1%	1
National Front for Salvation	<1%	1
Independent Lists	<1%	3
Total	100%	217

Source: Tunisia's election commission (ISIE)



This report is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under award number AID-OAA-A-13-00041. The opinions expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.



INTERNATIONAL REPUBLICAN INSTITUTE
(202) 408-9450 PHONE
(202) 408-9452 FAX
INFOR@IRI.ORG
WWW.IRI.ORG | @IRIGLOBAL