



FINAL REPORT ON THE 2014 LEGISLATIVE AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN TUNISIA

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For NDI’s pre-election statement and election day statements from each round of polling, please refer to NDI’s website: www.ndi.org.

I. About NDI

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, nongovernmental organization that responds to the aspirations of people around the world to live in democratic societies that recognize and promote basic human rights.

Since its founding in 1983, NDI and its local partners have worked to support democratic institutions and practices by strengthening political parties, civic organizations, and parliaments; safeguarding elections; and promoting citizen participation, openness, and accountability in government.

With staff members and volunteer political practitioners from more than 100 nations, NDI brings together individuals and groups to share ideas, knowledge, experiences, and expertise. Partners receive broad exposure to best practices in international democratic development that can be adapted to the needs of their own countries. NDI's multinational approach reinforces the message that while there is no single democratic model, certain core principles are shared by all democracies.

The Institute's work upholds the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It also promotes the development of institutionalized channels of communications among citizens, political institutions, and elected officials, and strengthens their ability to improve the quality of life for all citizens. For more information about NDI, please visit www.ndi.org.

II. List of Acronyms and Terms

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Afek Tounes	Tunisia's Horizons Party
Al Amen	Safety Party
Al Joumhour	Republican Party
Al Moubadara	The Initiative / National Destourian Initiative
ARP	Assembly of Representatives of the People (<i>Assemblée des Représentants du Peuple</i>)
CPR	Congress for the Republic (<i>Congrès pour la République</i>)
DFATD	Government of Canada Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development
Ennahdha	Renaissance Movement
Ettakatol	The Front
HAICA	High Independent Authority for Audiovisual Communication (<i>Haute autorité indépendante de la communication audiovisuelle</i>)
IRIE	Regional Independent Election Authority (<i>Instance régionale indépendante pour les élections</i>)
ISIE	High Independent Election Authority (<i>Instance supérieure indépendante pour les élections</i>)
Jabha Chaabia	Popular Front (<i>Front populaire</i>)
MEPI	Middle East Partnership Initiative
MP	Member of Parliament
NCA	National Constituent Assembly (<i>Assemblée Nationale Constituante</i>)
NDI	National Democratic Institute for International Affairs
Nidaa Tounes	Tunisia's Call
PWD	Persons with disabilities
TND	Tunisian dinar
UPL	Free Patriotic Union (<i>Union patriotique libre</i>)
UPT	Union for Tunisia (<i>Union pour la Tunisie</i>)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States dollar
Wafa	Loyalty Movement

III. Acknowledgements

NDI extends its gratitude to each of the 109 international delegates who served as election day observers, long-term election observers, and members of a pre-election mission, for the time and expertise they volunteered to contribute to the success of this mission.

NDI is also grateful for the efforts of government officials, candidates, polling staff, political party leaders and members, and civic activists to contribute to this mission. Similarly, NDI expresses its appreciation to the citizens of Tunisia for the warm welcome and cooperation they offered throughout the mission.

The Institute would like to thank in particular the High Independent Election Authority (ISIE) of Tunisia for accrediting the Institute to conduct this international election observation mission and for its spirit of cooperation demonstrated throughout the electoral process.

NDI also expresses its appreciation to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the U.S. Department of State Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), and the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Development (DFATD), which funded the work of the mission and have supported NDI's democracy assistance programs in Tunisia.

IV. Executive Summary

Nearly four years after Tunisians descended into the streets to demand political change, the 2014 legislative and presidential elections constitute an important step forward in the country's democratic transition. Under the framework of a new democratic constitution, voters went to the polls to determine their country's leadership for the next five years. Citizens freely expressed their will at the ballot box and now look to the country's new leaders to demonstrate how the new political system can produce positive changes in their daily lives.

To impartially observe every stage of the election process and demonstrate the support of the international community in the development of a democratic political process in Tunisia, NDI led a comprehensive international election observer mission. The mission was conducted through the deployment of a pre-election assessment team, and delegations to observe voting on each of the three election days: the October 26 legislative elections; November 23 first-round presidential election; and December 21 presidential run-off. The Institute also deployed long-term observers across the country for seven months around the electoral process. Each election day delegation issued preliminary statements that in addition to findings from election day also included observations from the pre-election and campaign periods.



Voters queue outside a polling station to vote for members of parliament.

The 2014 elections complied with international standards and featured a number of positive developments that built on the success of Tunisia's first democratic election, the October 23, 2011 vote for a National Constituent Assembly (NCA). Foremost among these was the role of the independent election commission. Disbanded after the 2011 vote, the commission was reconstituted to organize the 2014 elections, this time as a permanent institution with nine members serving a five-year mandate. In addition to establishing itself as a permanent body, the commission faced the daunting task of organizing up to three election days—the legislative vote, the first-round presidential election, and a run-off election, if necessary—before the end of 2014, as stipulated in the constitution.

Despite this challenge, the ISIE and its staff succeeded in administering three well-organized elections that earned the confidence of voters and political contestants. The commission attempted to perpetuate the atmosphere of consensus established by Tunisia's politicians throughout the transition period. Due in part to the commission's efforts to continually evaluate its work after each election day, small-scale issues with voting procedures that took place during the legislative elections were significantly improved by the presidential run-off. Procedural irregularities and incidents were minor, isolated, and unlikely to have materially affected the outcome of the elections.

Although the election day processes were largely well-organized, the election administration struggled to ensure adequate voter education and public outreach. Official voter education campaigns were conducted



NDI observers meet with polling staff in Bizerte during the legislative elections.

on an intermittent basis and could have benefited from greater investment of resources and attention, as well as from more collaboration with civil society. The ISIE's challenges with internal organization and communication—particularly between the national and district levels—produced significant confusion among political contestants and civil society groups about electoral procedures. At the request of observer groups, the ISIE did undertake efforts to improve its release of public information about the process and its results over the course of the electoral cycles.

The elections featured active participation by citizens as candidates, voters, observers, and polling officials. As the votes approached, many feared that citizens would abstain from participating due to growing dissatisfaction with politics. The lack of a same-day voter registration option diminished the total number of eligible voters, although nearly one million new voters registered. While turnout as a percentage of registered voters did not attain the levels seen in 2011, the rates of participation across the three elections (ranging from 60 percent to 67 percent) were still positive. Turnout among young people appeared noticeably low, making youth engagement a priority for future elections. Youth were better represented as polling station officials and election observers than they were as voters.

A range of political parties, independents, and coalitions competed in the elections. In comparison to 2011, political contestants made some progress in developing concrete platforms and running issue-based campaigns, although campaigning frequently became negative, particularly during the presidential elections. Mutual accusations and complaints among political contestants, particularly involving vote-buying and financial infractions, were common but difficult to substantiate. Much attention also focused on alleged misconduct by presidential candidates in obtaining the required number of voters' signatures for eligibility. The ISIE and the judiciary consistently demonstrated their commitment to political neutrality in handling these cases. Media coverage of political campaigns, on the other hand, was often viewed as biased.

Civil society, which played influential roles in facilitating the country's political transition, made strong contributions to the success of the elections. Non-partisan observer groups monitored and reported on each stage of the electoral process, and deployed tens of thousands of observers to polling stations for each election. One network, Mourakiboun, conducted statistically-based observation, including a parallel vote tabulation for the presidential elections that seemed to contribute to greater confidence in the process and result. Across the country, civil society organizations used their modest resources to raise voter awareness and encourage participation.



Presidential candidate posters outside a polling station.

The results of the elections served as an important test for Tunisia's political leaders in the peaceful alternation of power. While some political contestants alleged instances of wrongdoing and filed appeals

through the court system, they universally accepted the official results of the elections as announced by the ISIE. More broadly, while the lack of a threshold for representation in legislature allowed for some degree of inclusivity for smaller political parties and localized independent lists, the five largest parties hold a dominant share of seats. Thanks to a provision requiring alternation by gender on legislative candidate lists, women candidates secured 31 percent of seats, a modest increase from 2011.

Tunisia's new leaders can capitalize on the gains achieved during these elections to illustrate how democracy can deliver positive change for citizens. They will need to translate their elected legitimacy into credible and responsive governance that can address economic, security, and other issues that are of great concern to citizens. Tunisians can draw on their experience with national dialogue and inclusive debate that led to the adoption of the new, democratic constitution and the convening of these elections that form the foundation for the country moving forward.

Based on observations drawn by its delegations from throughout the electoral process and in the spirit of international cooperation, NDI offers the following recommendations to enhance future elections and Tunisia's democratic process as a whole:

To the legislature:

1. Evaluate the 2014 electoral law to improve clarity, reduce excessive restrictions on campaigns, and strengthen sanctions to deter wrongdoing.
2. Debate the merits of adopting a minimum threshold for candidate list representation in the legislature.
3. Review the benefits and drawbacks of the current out-of-country constituency system and consider alternative models that reduce burden on the election commission.
4. In the context of decentralization, weigh measures to enhance the powers of local courts to adjudicate election-related matters.
5. Reconsider the timing and sequence of future elections to ward against voter fatigue, overlapping deadlines and processes, and strain on the election commission.
6. Dedicate resources to empower the ISIE as it develops as a permanent institution.
7. Strive to fulfill the body's constitutional responsibilities as a key institution within Tunisia's emerging democratic political system through responsive legislation, thorough oversight of the executive, and more effective representation of citizens' interests.



A voter in La Goulette displays his inked finger.

To the ISIE:

8. Thoroughly review the current voter registration system and consider strategies for expanding the number of registered voters for upcoming municipal elections. Dedicate more resources to raising public awareness of the voter registration process.
9. Devote greater attention and resources to a sustained and thorough voter education initiative that begins in conjunction with the opening of the electoral period and draws on partnerships with civil society. Prioritize outreach to youth, illiterate, and rural voters.
10. Continue to develop and implement new practices for greater transparency of ISIE decision-making and internal procedures, as well as complete and timely release of election-related information.



A pollworker helps a Bizerte voter find his polling station.

11. Streamline communication between the national and local levels of election administration and ensure that local administrations are adequately resourced.

12. Communicate more frequently and clearly with political contestants and civil society groups on all aspects of the electoral process and devote staff at the district level to respond to inquiries.

13. Strengthen capacity to monitor electoral violations and ensure that documentation of violations is adequately prepared for review by the judiciary.

To political parties and candidates:

14. Pursue strategies for improved citizen engagement during upcoming municipal elections and create pathways to empower a new generation of leaders to run as candidates.
15. Take steps to reverse the trend of citizen disillusionment with politics by orienting future electoral campaigns around concrete policy platforms that share a positive vision for improving the country, instead of around negative rhetoric or fear-based campaigning.
16. Demonstrate commitment to adhering to the legal framework and support measures to enhance the election commission and judiciary's ability to enforce the law and sanction wrongdoing.

To civil society:

17. Work collaboratively to present findings on the 2014 electoral process, contribute ideas to the legislature during the drafting of legislation on decentralization and municipal elections, and prepare to observe such elections.
18. Organize ongoing civic education activities between elections, particularly targeting underserved citizens such as youth, women, and residents of rural areas. Engage the ISIE in advance of the

next electoral period to examine opportunities to collaborate on a comprehensive, consistent voter education initiative.

19. Prevent overlapping initiatives during future elections by focusing on respective areas of strength.

To the media:

20. Devote more attention to ensuring accurate and balanced coverage of the electoral process.

V. Mission Overview

The objectives of NDI’s international election observation mission in Tunisia were to impartially observe every stage of the election process—including the voter registration period, the electoral campaign, the casting and counting of ballots on election day, and the post-election period—and to demonstrate the interest of the international community in the development of a democratic political process in Tunisia. The mission was conducted through the deployment of a pre-election assessment delegation, delegations to observe preparations for and voting on each of the three election days, and deployment of long-term observers across the country for the duration of the electoral process.

NDI’s observation mission received official accreditation from the ISIE. The mission was conducted in accordance with Tunisian law and the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, which has been endorsed by 47 intergovernmental and international nongovernmental organizations worldwide. NDI is grateful for the welcome and cooperation that the mission received from voters, election officials, candidates, political party leaders and members, government officials, and representatives of media and civil society. The NDI mission also cooperated with other international observer missions and Tunisian non-partisan citizen observation groups, particularly with the Institute’s local partner, Mourakiboun.



NDI observers enter a polling station in Medenine during the first-round presidential election.

NDI initiated its mission in June 2014 by fielding a long-term observer to assess the voter registration process. The observer visited voter registration centers in districts across Tunisia and met with local and national election authorities, political contestants, and civil society representatives. Six additional long-term observers joined the mission in August 2014 and deployed to four locations across the country: Gafsa, Kef, Sousse, and Tunis. Each team of long-term observers was responsible for observing the electoral process in its region, each of which comprised between six and eight districts. In each of



Leadership of the delegation to the first-round presidential election.

Tunisia’s 27 in-country districts, long-term observers met with election authorities, political contestants, civil society groups, the media, and citizens. They also directly observed election preparation efforts, campaign events, voting on election days, and the tabulation of election results.

NDI collaborated with the International Republican Institute (IRI) to organize a pre-election assessment delegation from September 9 to 12. The delegation was led by Isabelle Durant, former Vice-President of the European Parliament, Robin Carnahan, former Secretary of State of the U.S. state of Missouri, and

Brad Smith, director of the Annenberg-Dreier Commission and former advisor to several members of the U.S. Congress, and was accompanied by Nicole Rowsell, NDI's resident director in Tunisia, and Djordje Todorovic, resident director for IRI in Tunisia. The delegation assessed the state of electoral preparations, examined factors that could affect the integrity of the electoral process, and issued targeted recommendations to support peaceful, credible elections and public confidence in the process.

For each of the three elections, NDI deployed short-term election observers to witness pre-voting preparations and visit polling centers to observe voting and ballot counting across the country. These observer delegations consisted of elected representatives, regional specialists, election experts, and civil society leaders from around the world. The size, composition, and coverage of each election day delegation was as follows:

- October 26 legislative elections:* Fifty-one observers representing 22 countries who on election day visited more than 150 polling stations in 18 of 27 in-country districts. The delegation was led by Darrell Dexter, former premier of the Canadian province of Nova Scotia; Zakia Khattabi, member of the Belgian parliament; and Kenneth Wollack, president of NDI.



The delegation to the October 26 legislative elections.

- November 23 first-round presidential election:* Sixty-four observers representing 27 countries who visited more than 220 polling stations in 21 of 27 in-country districts. The delegation was led by Olivia Chow, former member of parliament of the Official Opposition of Canada; Ana Gomes, member of the European Parliament from Portugal; U.S. Representative David E. Price, D-NC; and Shari Bryan, vice president of NDI.
- December 21 presidential run-off election:* Forty-five observers representing 21 countries who visited more than 180 polling stations in 18 of 27 in-country districts. The delegation was led by Darrell Dexter (see above); Ken Dryden, former Minister for Social Development in Canada; Zakia Khattabi (see above); and Leslie Campbell, NDI's Senior Associate and Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa.



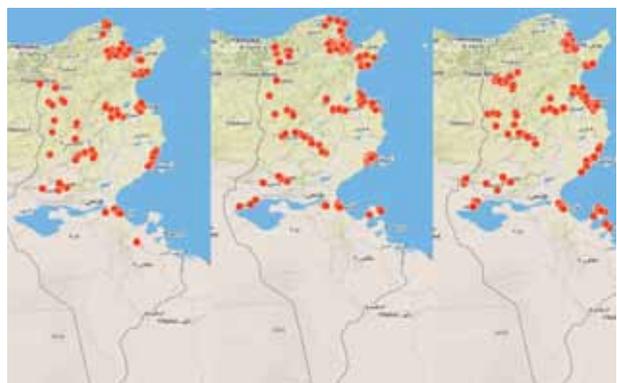
The delegation to the November 23 first-round presidential election.

Each election day delegation issued preliminary statements that in addition to findings from election day also included observations from the pre-election and campaign periods. The day after each election day, the NDI delegations issued these statements at press conferences in Tunis attended by Tunisian and international media, civil society activists, and representatives of political campaigns. They were also disseminated in hard copy and through NDI's website. Following each election, NDI met with the leadership of the ISIE to share the delegation's findings.



The delegation to the December 21 presidential run-off election at a press conference the day after the polls.

International election observation has become widely accepted by countries around the world and it now plays an important role in informing citizens and the international community about the nature of each country's electoral process. When conducted in accordance with accepted principles for impartial assessments, international election observation seeks to enhance the integrity of election processes by encouraging best electoral practices and deterring misconduct, as well as by identifying problems and irregularities, which can lead to effective redress. International election observers are welcomed by countries in all stages of democratic development. NDI's 2014 mission in Tunisia builds on the Institute's 30 years of experience observing more than 200 elections around the world, including delegations in Jordan, Morocco, Egypt, Lebanon, Mauritania, Algeria, the West Bank and Gaza, and Yemen.



Polling stations visited by NDI observers on (from left to right) October 26, November 23, and December 21.

VI. Political Context

The 2014 legislative and presidential elections in Tunisia were a milestone in the country's political transition. Since January 2011, when a popular uprising overthrew the authoritarian regime of former president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, the country and its new leaders made significant progress toward establishing democratic institutions and practices. A transitional constituent assembly, whose members were selected in October 2011 in the country's first democratic elections, succeeded in drafting a new constitution after more than two years of deliberation and compromise.

During this transitional period, a dynamic political party landscape has emerged. Tunisia transformed from a state with de facto one-party rule to one with over 90 legalized political parties and a range of independents competing to represent their constituents in an elected legislature. A governing coalition headed by the Ennahdha party led the country through the transition under the close scrutiny of opposition parties. In 2013, the assassination of two leading opposition figures resulted in a political stalemate that threatened to derail the transition process. Through a national dialogue process brokered by prominent civil society organizations, political parties reached agreement on a roadmap for concluding this transitional period. The roadmap called for the coalition government to cede power to a caretaker government, the adoption of a progressive constitution, and the election of a new legislature and president.

The success of the dialogue reaffirmed Tunisian leaders' steadfast commitment to negotiation, compromise, and consensus, though many challenges to holding successful elections remained. Tunisia's delicate political transition is taking place within a region mired by increasing instability. In an increasingly contentious political environment, many Tunisians anticipated the 2014 legislative and presidential elections to be fiercely contested, with the potential for disputes among political competitors to threaten the stability of the country. A transparent and credible electoral process, leading to a peaceful transfer of power, therefore had the potential to put Tunisia's fledgling democracy on strong footing.

The results of the elections hold far-reaching implications for the direction of the country over the next five years. The newly adopted constitution outlines a semi-presidential political system with a president and legislature each directly elected to a five-year term. The political party or coalition that wins the most seats in the legislature nominates a prime minister to form a cabinet empowered to act on a range of domestic issues. In particular, the government will work with the legislature, business, and labor to invigorate Tunisia's economy, a primary concern for most Tunisian citizens that is interwoven with the success of the political transition. The government will also assume responsibility for maintaining security in the face of the mounting terrorist threat. The newly elected legislature will also establish a body of laws in accordance with the new constitution.

The president's powers, in contrast, were reduced in scope. After passionate debate, the constitution's drafters ultimately opted to limit the scope of the president's mandate to three areas—defense, national security, and foreign affairs—and he or she is only permitted to serve two terms. Among other responsibilities, the president is also tasked with reviewing laws passed by the legislature, known officially as the Assembly of Representatives of the People (ARP), as well as ratifying treaties and appointing senior state officials, including members of the supreme court and constitutional court. Under certain conditions, the president also reserves the right to dissolve the legislature and call new elections.

After four years of transition that featured moments of euphoric national unity and poignant tragedy and discord, Tunisia's new leaders are now positioned to cement recent democratic gains. The 2011 uprising was propelled by citizens who shared aspirations for the political and economic development of their country. Many Tunisians want to believe that the renewal of political leadership through elections can translate into positive changes in their daily lives. These elections alone will not remedy the grievances that provoked the popular uprising nearly four years ago, but can provide a foundation for new leaders to pursue an agenda that begins to meet the hopes and expectations of the people.

VII. Findings and Observations

Legal Framework

Tunisia's electoral framework is elaborated in the newly adopted constitution, laws to establish independent electoral and regulatory bodies, and decisions issued by those bodies throughout the electoral process. Tunisia's new constitution, adopted on January 26, 2014 by the NCA, creates a semi-presidential system where decision-making is spread across branches of government, notably the legislature or ARP, the prime minister and his/her cabinet, and the presidency. The constitution also required that legislative and presidential elections be conducted before the end of 2014.

In October 2013, eight civil society organizations submitted joint recommendations for the NCA to take into consideration while drafting the electoral law.¹ The new law, passed in May 2014, featured improvements in comparison to the 2011 law, many of which corresponded to the proposals from civil society. The law reaffirmed the principle of transparency in the electoral process and undertook several measures to ensure the release of public information at different stages of the process, such as the release of the results. The law also established a clearer set of rules around campaign finance and fixed steeper penalties for finance-related violations such as spending beyond limits and failure to report expenses.²

The NCA also debated but ultimately did not adopt several potential modifications to the 2011 electoral system. Instead lawmakers retained a proportional representation system for the legislative vote with elections in each of 33 districts, of which six represent citizens living abroad. The president, in contrast, would be elected by a simple majority in a single nationwide district. In the event that one candidate did not achieve a simple majority in the first round, the law provided for a run-off election between the two leading candidates.

Several provisions in the law contributed to more inclusive elections. Citizens living abroad were able to participate in out-of-country voting. After much debate in the NCA, former officials from the Ben Ali era were permitted to stand as candidates. Measures to guarantee the representation of women and youth on candidate lists in the legislative elections were also maintained from the 2011 law. Lawmakers upheld a gender parity clause from 2011 whereby candidate names on legislative lists must alternate by gender.

The NCA considered but did not adopt a measure to require political parties to ensure that women occupy the first position of their total submitted candidate lists. Lawmakers also voted down a provision that would have fixed electoral thresholds for party representation in the legislature. The absence of a threshold for candidate lists to win seats encourages inclusion by benefiting smaller parties, including some running in only a few districts, and independent lists. This decision also has the potential, however, to produce a fragmented legislature where a number of parties or independent lists hold a small number of seats, which can inhibit effective coalition-building and organization of legislative business.

1 These organizations include the Tunisian Association for Constitutional Law (ATDC), the Tunisian Association for the Integrity of Democratic Elections (ATIDE), iWatch, Youth Without Borders (JSF), the League of Tunisian Women Voters (LET), the Chahed Observatory for Election Observation and Support to Democratic Transitions, Mourakiboun, and the Ofiya Coalition for the Observation of the Integrity of Elections.

2 http://democracy-reporting.org/files/dri-tn-eu-report-election_law-2015-05-21.pdf

Lack of clarity in some areas of the law resulted in varying interpretations by electoral authorities, political contestants, and civil society alike. The law, for instance, does not explicitly forbid campaign activities in the pre-campaign period and does not clearly delineate which campaign activities are authorized, yielding uncertainty within the election administration about how to approach this issue. Civil society groups demanded more stringent measures for the ISIE to monitor and punish electoral offenses, such as fraudulent activity and vote-buying.

Once the electoral law was adopted, political parties reconvened through the National Dialogue to agree on the dates and sequencing of the legislative and presidential elections. Unable to reach consensus, parties voted in favor of holding legislative elections before presidential. The NCA subsequently voted to approve the election dates proposed by the ISIE: a legislative vote on October 26 and a first-round presidential vote on November 23. The date of a potential run-off election was not voted on within the NCA, although there was broad understanding that to comply with the constitution a run-off election would have to take place before December 31.

Election Administration



The IRIE in Kasserine.

The ISIE that organized the 2011 NCA elections was subsequently disbanded. Although the NCA passed legislation to create a permanent ISIE in December 2012, the nomination of its members was delayed by more than a year due to an administrative court decision that invalidated the process used by the NCA to screen and vote on prospective members' candidacies. As part of the roadmap resulting from the National Dialogue, nine members of the ISIE—now a permanent institution with a five-year mandate—were elected by the NCA on January 8. Led by President Chafik Sarsar, in accordance

with the 2012 law the commission includes two judges, a lawyer, a notary, a university professor, an engineer, and communications and public finance specialists. Three members are women and three, including Sarsar, served in the 2011 ISIE administration. At the district level, the ISIE oversaw Regional Independent Election Authorities (IRIEs) that were responsible for implementing many aspects of the electoral process in accordance with ISIE decisions. The newly formed ISIE began its task of preparing for the 2014 elections, while politicians negotiated the dates and sequencing of the votes.

The ISIE faced the dual challenge of building a permanent independent institution in the long-term while also facing the immediate pressure of organizing up to three rounds of elections in as many months. Nevertheless, the commission succeeded in working in a largely neutral and transparent manner while displaying an impressive organizational ability.

The conduct and decision-making of the ISIE at the national level was professional and politically neutral, and most political actors commended the ISIE for its objectivity. While there were some charges of political partiality within the election administration, NDI did not observe instances to corroborate such accusations. The ISIE undertook tremendous effort to address concerns of partisanship among members and staff of IRIEs as well as polling station staff. Lists of recruited pollworkers were publicly posted for

review. After each election, the ISIE reviewed polling station officials' performance and dismissed those who failed to meet standards of professionalism and impartiality.

Given the circumstances, the elections were a remarkable organizational achievement, earning the confidence of citizens, political contestants, and civil society. Within the electoral period, the ISIE successfully registered nearly one million new voters, approved tens of thousands of candidates, hired over 50,000 pollworkers, prepared and distributed election material for nearly 11,000 polling stations across three election days, and oversaw the casting, counting, and tabulation of more than ten million ballots. One key to successful organization was the ISIE's decision to hold evaluation sessions with IRIE members after each election to identify shortcomings and address areas of confusion. Pollworkers then received updated training between elections. As a result, the minor organizational shortcomings that characterized the October legislative elections were markedly reduced by the December run-off vote. The ISIE also attempted to respond to concerns raised by observer groups, such as by allowing voters with valid registration receipts who could not find their names on voters lists during the legislative elections to add themselves to the voters register before the presidential election.



The Bizerte IRIE holds a refresher training on November 16.

The elections were generally marked by transparency, although there is room for significant improvement in terms of information-sharing. Access for Tunisian and international observers, as well as candidate representatives, conformed to international standards. The ISIE made efforts to release detailed information about the electoral process, primarily through its website. Civil society groups regularly sought access to additional information, particularly detailed statistics about the election in electronic formats where data could be easily extracted and analyzed for trends. For example, the ISIE released data for turnout by polling station, with gross figures for numbers of male and female voters, but was not able to respond to observer groups' demand for turnout data disaggregated by gender and age as a percentage of registered voters.

Civil society groups and political contestants regularly requested clearer and more regular communication from the election administration about the process. For example, by the beginning of the legislative campaign period, the ISIE had not yet released election day procedures and protocols for citizen observers and candidate representatives, limiting the ability of civil society to educate citizens about voting procedures and delaying the planning efforts of Tunisian observers. Political contestants showed significant gaps in their understanding of campaign regulations, such as which types of expenses were eligible. In the presidential election, campaigns expressed confusion over the regulations on campaign activities and financing, and reported that they could have benefited from more regular and thorough communication and explanation from the ISIE.

Regional election authorities also had difficulty receiving sufficient communication from the ISIE in Tunis, restricting their ability to respond to requests for information from political contestants and civil society. IRIEs reported receiving late information from the ISIE, requiring them to make quick adjustments and deliver instructions to contestants on short notice. These communication issues led to inconsistent decision-making across districts and confusion among political contestants regarding regulations.



Publicity for presidential candidate Slim Riahi in Gafsa.

IRIEs differed in their approaches to reviewing legislative candidate lists, posting and reviewing lists of recruited pollworkers, overseeing campaign activities, and granting observers access to the tabulation of ballots, among others. The post-election evaluation sessions were a valuable step in reducing these internal communications deficits. After the legislative elections, several procedural adjustments were made by the ISIE to increase efficiency on election day; these changes were sometimes not communicated by the ISIE to IRIEs in a consistent and detailed manner.

The lack of clarity in the legal framework exacerbated these operational challenges. For example, during the legislative campaign, candidate lists were uncertain about what constituted authorized campaign activities, such as the “political publicity” forbidden in the electoral law. One question revolved around whether campaign material could be displayed during automobile processions. The IRIE in Tozeur maintained that only candidates could have vehicles with campaign material on them, while the IRIE in Gabès approved logos on all vehicles in the procession.

Contestants were also confused over when they had to give IRIEs advance notice of activities. For example, many parties were uncertain if they had to inform the IRIE in advance of door-to-door visits and brochure distribution. Mid-way through the legislative campaign period, the ISIE issued a memo to IRIEs to clarify many of these points, though NDI found that IRIEs continued to communicate this information to political contestants in an uneven manner.

These communications challenges also impacted IRIEs’ ability to adhere to tight and overlapping deadlines of various responsibilities, such as reviewing and publishing the voters list, reviewing candidate lists, and recruiting polling station staff. Although IRIEs largely operated in a professional and cooperative manner, they faced continued resource shortages and organizational difficulties, including lack of staff, financial resources, office space, and vehicles. Prior to the legislative elections, some IRIEs were attempting to recruit as many as eight administrative staff, while others borrowed vehicles from the governorate office and sought to rent additional office space. In turn, the ISIE’s



Vehicles in Bizerte advertize presidential candidate Larbi Nasra.

campaign monitors and local logistical coordinators reported that they were not provided sufficient resources or guidance by IRIEs. The ISIE also noted challenges recruiting large volumes of staff within a short timeframe, and acknowledged that the criteria for hiring core staff were sometimes too restrictive. Most staff members were dismissed after the 2014 electoral process concluded, which may create challenges for information retention and organizational memory in the run-up to future elections.

Tunisia’s judicial branch also played an instrumental role in the administration of the elections. Throughout the electoral period, Courts of First Instance at the district level and the Tunis-based Administrative Court at the national level reviewed appeals on various steps of the electoral process including: voter registration,

candidate list registration for the legislative elections, candidate registration for the presidential elections, and election results. Appeals were handled in a transparent and timely manner, and the Administrative Court in Tunis earned support from political contestants.

Voter Registration

The 4.1 million Tunisians who actively registered as voters in advance of the 2011 NCA elections were automatically registered for the 2014 vote. An additional 547,674 citizens who took part in same-day registration in 2011 were not automatically registered for the 2014 elections and no data was kept relevant to these voters. Citizens seeking to newly register for the 2014 elections or to update their registration information—such as their assigned polling station—had the opportunity to do so during two specific time periods between June and August 2014. Unlike in 2011, voters were not able to same-day register in 2014. This elevated the importance of informing citizens of the need to actively register during the designated time periods. Some political parties and citizen observers found that potential voters believed that their same-day registration in 2011 would automatically register them in 2014, while other voters assumed that same-day registration would be offered again in 2014.

The first period of voter registration took place from June 23 to July 29 and was supplemented by a second period that ran from August 6 to 26. Citizens were able to register through multiple means: in-person at municipalities or via mobile teams operating in public areas, using a mobile phone-based SMS system, or through an online webpage. When registration figures during the first period failed to meet the ISIE's targets, political parties taking part in the National Dialogue voted in favor of adding the second August phase. Out of an estimated three million unregistered citizens eligible to vote, a total of 993,696 voters were newly registered through the process, more than half of whom registered by mobile phone. Members of political parties and civil society organizations voiced concern over what they perceived as a low total number of new registrants, suggesting that it could signal the public's dissatisfaction with politics and presage a lower voter turnout on election day.



Staff at an IRIE office in Nabeul.

Due to the limited timeframe for the elections, the decision to add a second registration period led to an overlap between two simultaneous processes: the finalization of the voter register through a public consultation and appeals process and the candidate registration period. As candidates were required to be registered voters, and the additions to the voter registry from the second period were not finalized before the conclusion of the candidate registration period, voters who registered in the second period were unable to stand as candidates in the legislative elections. The ISIE announced this decision to the public on July 1, but it was not easily comprehended by political contestants and IRIEs, resulting in inconsistent interpretation and a small number of issues during candidate registration.

Figure 1: Voter Registration

Number of actively registered voters in 2011, automatically registered for 2014	4,437,603
Number of newly registered voters in June 23 to July 29 phase	759,424
Number of newly registered voters in August 6 to 26 phase	233,869
Total number of registered voters (2014)	5,306,324 ³
Eligible electorate (approx.)	+/- 7,500,000

*IRIE staff register citizens in Kébili.*

The process succeeded in providing sufficient opportunities to Tunisians to register. Although marked by minor administrative shortcomings, voter registration was generally considered to be effective and impartial by political contestants and civil society groups. Registration was transparent, open to observation by Tunisian citizen election monitors, political party agents, and international observers, and free from undue influence or campaigning by political contestants. In some circumstances the poor visibility or accessibility of registration centers and administrative challenges in conducting registration may have impacted the ability of citizens to register.

Although the conduct of the registration process was generally sound, in many instances citizens faced minor impediments when seeking to register. NDI found that these obstacles were largely attributable to administrative challenges and/or under-trained officials, not intentional efforts to disenfranchise citizens. The most common issue impacting the registration process was an unreliable Internet connection that rendered the computer-based registration system unusable. The aspects of the

process that were most confusing for officials to implement concerned documentation requirements, registration for family relatives, and processing changes of designated polling stations.

Political contestants did not have significant objections to the accuracy of the voters register, instead focusing on the relatively low rate of participation by citizens and, in some cases, criticizing the ISIE for not undertaking sufficient efforts to raise citizen awareness. While preliminary voter lists were made available for consultation at IRIEs and a minimal number of appeals were lodged by voters, the ISIE failed to publish a final list. Although voters could confirm registration online, the lack of a complete final list prevented elected officials, political contestants, and citizens from having an important tool to ensure proper enfranchisement and efficient administration.

During the legislative elections, some voters who had registered in 2011 and 2014, particularly in overseas districts, did not find their names on the voters registry. In response, the ISIE announced that from November 2 to 8 registered voters with receipts from their original registration could change their polling stations or add themselves to the voters list at their IRIEs. The commission received 9,452 total requests, most of which were filed by unregistered voters who were ineligible to participate. Only 1,618 requests

³ This figure does not represent a total of the above rows as approximately 130,000 voters were unregistered after 2011, and hundreds of adjustments were made during 2014.

were accepted—most of them in overseas districts—with just 489 new additions to the registry. While the added names were published by the ISIE, they were not subject to the public review and complaints process that was conducted at the end of the formal registration periods.

In the wake of the presidential run-off election, allegations surfaced, particularly among the campaign of interim president Mohamed Moncef Marzouki and supporters, that votes were attributed to deceased voters. Following the Marzouki campaign's request for clarification, the ISIE denied any such occurrence and explained that the voter register naturally contained the names of citizens who had died between the time of registration and the run-off election. The ISIE called on the Marzouki campaign to substantiate these claims with concrete evidence through the judicial process. During NDI's post-election qualitative research, participants in the South often raised this phenomenon as a concern.

Candidate Registration

Legislative Elections

From August 22 to 29, political parties, coalitions, and independents registered lists of legislative candidates in the 33 electoral constituencies within Tunisia and overseas. Lists were filed and reviewed at the IRIEs in each electoral district. Each list had to include the same number of candidates as the number of seats available in the district. Within each list, candidates were required to alternate by gender in accordance with Article 46 of Tunisia's constitution, which calls on the state to work “to achieve equal representation for women and men in elected institutions based on the principle of parity.” Lists in districts containing more than three seats had to include a candidate younger than 35 years of age within the first four names, a positive and symbolic step toward creating pathways for increased youth involvement. In addition to their primary list, contestants were also asked to submit a list of reserve candidates in the event that primary candidates were deemed invalid.

The nomination process created significant challenges for several parties that struggled to cope with the fierce internal competition for positions on lists. Dissent over the candidate nomination process threatened some parties' internal cohesion, with sizeable numbers of resignations at the local level. Political parties approached the candidate selection process in various ways. Some parties' national headquarters managed the entire selection process, informing regional branches of their decisions. Other parties adopted a collaborative approach where district-level offices presented their nominations to national headquarters for review. A small number of parties achieved greater transparency by holding internal primaries to select candidates based on established criteria.



UPT holds a press conference to announce its candidate lists for the legislative elections.

The volume of lists submitted reflected the vibrancy and diversity of the Tunisian political landscape. A total of 1,500 lists were submitted—both within Tunisia and in overseas constituencies—including 890 political party lists, 459 independent lists, and 151 coalition lists. Six parties were able to propose lists in all 33 districts: Congress for the Republic (CPR), Ennahdha, Jabha Chaabia (Popular Front), Al

Joumhourî, Nidaa Tounes, and Free Patriotic Union (UPL); not all of these lists were ultimately accepted. With the exception of Nidaa Tounes, all of these parties had competed in the 2011 elections.

In reviewing the submissions, certain IRIEs noted that parties and independent lists lacked sufficient understanding of the legal requirements to submit valid lists. For their part, political contestants commonly expressed confusion over the requirements and frustration over difficulty receiving clear instructions from IRIEs. The number of legislative candidate lists refused by the ISIE varied significantly across districts—for example only three lists were dismissed in Sidi Bouzid (four percent of the total lists in the district) compared to 11 in Sousse (23 percent of the total). The most common characteristics of rejected lists were: an insufficient number of candidates; a lack of signatures by candidates themselves; failure to comply with the gender parity requirement; candidates younger than the minimum 23 years of age; and, candidates who were not registered as voters prior to the opening of the second phase of voter registration in August 2014.

Figure 2: Candidate Registration, Legislative Elections

	Original Submission	Final Approved Number
Total number of candidate lists (in-country and overseas districts)	1,504 (1,393 in Tunisia and 111 overseas)	1,327 (1,230 in Tunisia and 97 overseas)
Number of lists submitted by political parties (in-country districts only)	812	737
Number of lists submitted by independents (in-country districts only)	414	334
Number of lists submitted by coalitions (in-country districts only)	167	159

There was an average of 40 lists per district. The highest number of lists per district was Kasserine with 69; the southern district of Kébili had the fewest with 27.

Political contestants described their difficulties in identifying women candidates to fulfill the gender requirement, particularly in southern and interior regions, as well as in overseas districts. No political party submitted an equal number of lists headed by men and by women, including parties who had advocated for including in the electoral law a horizontal parity requirement, or alternation of the heads of candidate lists by gender. Parties attributed this outcome to the difficulty that women face in balancing traditional family roles and careers with political engagements, as well as the general political apathy encountered among Tunisians. Candidate lists submitted by the Union for Tunisia (UPT) coalition featured the highest number of women heads of lists with 10 out of 26. Other leading parties trailed behind the UPT.

Figure 3: Women as Heads of Political Party Candidate Lists, Legislative Elections

Party/Coalition	Total # of lists submitted	# of women heads of lists	Percentage of women heads of lists
Union for Tunisia (UPT)	26	10	38%
Congress for the Republic (CPR)	33	7	21%
Democratic Current	28	6	21%
Ettakatol (The Front)	29	5	17%
Al Joumhouri (Republican Party)	29	5	17%
Jabha Chaabia (Popular Front)	32	5	15%
Free Patriotic Union (UPL)	33	5	15%
Al Moubadara (The Initiative)	28	4	14%
Afek Tounes (Tunisia's Horizons)	25	3	12%
Ennahdha (Renaissance Movement)	33	3	9%
Nidaa Tounes (Tunisia's Call)	33	3	9%
Democratic Alliance	28	2	7%

On September 6, the ISIE released a preliminary list of approved candidate lists. A high proportion of the 192 rejected lists submitted appeals to local Courts of First Instance. In addition, political contestants also filed appeals on the grounds that opponents' lists were invalid and should have been rejected. After the Courts of First Instance issued their decisions, the Administrative Court in Tunis reviewed 111 second-round appeals. The Court rejected 25 appeals on form and 53 on content, while 33 appeals were reviewed and ruled on by the Court. The ISIE announced on September 27 that 14 candidate lists would be reinstated, bringing the final number of valid candidate lists to 1,327 (1,230 within Tunisia and 97 in overseas districts). According to most political contestants, the appeals process for rejected candidate lists was carried out in an impartial and thorough manner. A small number of contestants who had filed appeals and closely followed the process alleged that the IRIEs had shown a lack of professionalism and consistency in reviewing their cases.

The review and appeals process revealed IRIEs' varying interpretations of candidate requirements, as well as the Administrative Court's tendency for looser interpretation of regulations in favor of greater inclusivity. The most notable example concerned the decision by several IRIEs to reject lists for containing candidates who had only registered as voters during the second period of voter registration in August 2014, in perceived violation of a July 30 ISIE



Citizens review lists of polling station staff at the Kairouan IRIE.

regulation.⁴ In response to the IRIEs' decision, some lists conceded and were disbanded altogether, while others moved candidates from their reserve list to their main list to replace invalid candidates. Other lists filed appeals without changing their candidate lists at all. For these appeals, so long as the lists did not contain any other flaws, the Administrative Court reinstated them on the grounds that the ISIE regulation was not legally binding. This effectively disadvantaged lists that had abided by the IRIEs' initial decision and ran with reserve candidates, while lists who appealed were able to maintain their original candidates.

Presidential Election

Presidential hopefuls submitted their candidacy applications to the ISIE from September 8 to 22. To be confirmed as eligible, the electoral law stipulated that each applicant be: over 35 years of age, a registered voter, a Tunisian national since birth, and a Muslim. As part of their application packages, aspiring presidential candidates were required to secure the signatures of either 10,000 registered voters from 10 or more electoral districts or 10 members of the NCA. Candidates were also required to submit a payment of 10,000 Tunisian dinars (5,650 USD) to the National Administration of the Treasury. In the end, 68 individuals submitted candidacies before the deadline, with 43 filing on the final day of the registration period. While some candidates were supported by political parties or coalitions, others ran as independents.

Figure 4: Candidate Registration, Presidential Election

	Candidacies submitted	Candidacies accepted
Political parties	20	9
Independents	46	16
Coalitions	2	2
TOTAL	68	27

The ISIE rejected 41 of the 68 applications for candidacy, primarily for failing to meet signature or payment requirements. Twenty-three candidates filed appeals, all of which argued that signature requirements were successfully fulfilled. All of these appeals were refused by the Administrative Court: 15 on content, six on formal grounds, one for not being introduced by a candidate, and one withdrawn by the candidate--leaving 27 valid candidates.

While reviewing the application files, the ISIE announced that it had evidence to suggest that some candidates submitted signatures on behalf of citizens without the knowledge or approval of those individuals. The ISIE asserted that the electoral law only authorized the commission to confirm that the submitted signatures met legal requirements, for example, that signatories are registered voters and that the same voters do not sign for multiple applicants. The law, however, did not empower the commission to review the authenticity of signatures. At the commission's request, the public prosecutor initiated an investigation into the falsification of signatures.

⁴ When leading political parties taking part in the National Dialogue framework called for an additional period of voter registration to take place in August 2014, the ISIE issued a regulation stating that voters who registered in this second period would be ineligible to run as legislative candidates, as the time period to confirm the additions to the voters registry would overlap with the candidate registration period.

NDI heard directly from citizens across the country that their names were used without their knowledge. The ISIE created an SMS-based system for citizens to confirm whether their names were included in support of a presidential candidate and encouraged citizens to file complaints through their local courts, which were then investigated by the local police who collected statements from both the citizen and the candidate. The claims were then transferred to courts in the accused candidate's area of residence, most commonly Tunis. None of these cases were prosecuted in advance of the presidential election and remain subject to review for several years. In the Ariana district, NDI found that prosecutors differed among each other on how to proceed, with one prosecutor in the district estimating that, with appeals, it could take up to three years to arrive at final rulings.

The controversy damaged the public's trust in the field of candidates. Citizens regularly expressed to NDI's long-term observers their disillusion over potential fraud. Beyond this issue, citizen observer groups such as Chahed, ATIDE, and Mourakiboun found further shortcomings in the lists of signatures, such as duplicate names, names of deceased citizens, and names of underage citizens.

Voter Education

In advance of the elections, many Tunisians feared that the elections would be marked by low voter turnout. Across the country, political parties, civil society, and IRIEs alike describe the public's disillusionment with politics. Dissatisfaction with the three political parties that comprised the former governing coalition was seen as particularly acute. Many referred to citizens' confusion about the upcoming electoral process, in particular the type and sequencing of the three election days and the high number of legislative lists and presidential candidates. Concerns about participation abated after the legislative elections, when the turnout exceeded most expectations.



A taxi in La Marsa publicizes the October 26 vote.

At the start of the process, the potential gaps in voter awareness indicated that significant efforts would be required during the election period to educate voters about election day procedures. Beginning with the voter registration period, the election administration, civil society, and media led initiatives to raise citizens' awareness of the electoral process and improve their understanding of voting procedures. Throughout the electoral period, the scope and availability of voter education content was minimal and merits expansion for future elections. Given only one prior experience participating in competitive elections, Tunisian voters could have benefited from more widespread voter education and awareness-raising initiatives. The lack of a wider voter education initiative in effect prevented Tunisians from accessing information. Participants in focus groups conducted by NDI after the elections expressed a desire for more information on the elections, especially in rural areas.

The ISIE conducted the bulk of its voter education efforts during the voter registration period, the campaign period for the legislative elections, and the campaign period for the first-round of the presidential election. As a result, there were times during the electoral period where no ISIE-led voter education was taking place, the most notable being between the conclusion of voter registration on August 26 and

the opening of the legislative campaign period on October 4. The ISIE's voter education initiative was designed at the national level and communicated outward to IRIEs, which were largely responsible for the actual implementation of education activities. The initiatives consisted primarily of television and web-based video spots, billboards, and distribution of leaflets and other promotional materials. NDI observers found that face-to-face outreach to citizens was often ineffective due to the lack of interaction with voters. With the exception of updated web videos, no additional ISIE-sponsored education activities were conducted between the first-round presidential vote and the run-off presidential election. Members of IRIEs indicated that the ISIE's voter education budget had been fully expensed by December.



The civil society organization Aswaat Nisaa leads a voter education activity targeting mothers.

Prior to the legislative elections, there was a lack of partnerships between the ISIE and civil society organizations on voter education campaigns. Such partnerships could have amplified the reach of voter education efforts. There were some indications of the ISIE's concern that civil society would conduct voter education in a partisan manner. A conference for civil society hosted by the ISIE in September revealed underlying tension between the two groups, with civil society organizations arguing that the outreach effort came too late and that the ISIE was not genuinely interested in their recommendations. Collaboration between the ISIE and civil society

improved in advance of the November vote, with the ISIE engaging civil society to assist with the distribution of official voter education material.

Civil society groups and media outlets across the country conducted limited voter education initiatives at the local level independently of the ISIE. Several civil society organizations that had the capacity to conduct nationwide voter education devoted their limited resources to election observation. Information presented by both public and private media outlets was generally accurate and helpful. Regional public radio outlets, in particular, organized regular programming to raise citizen awareness.

Across the country, IRIEs and civil society groups mentioned to observers the challenge of engaging citizens in rural areas, particularly women, to participate in the electoral process. According to some estimates, up to 300,000 rural women do not possess the national identity cards required to vote. The ISIE launched an initiative to provide identity cards for free to women in rural areas. Illiterate voters, who were estimated to represent up to 20 percent of the population and 40 percent of citizens in certain governorates, did not benefit from special voter education initiatives and were most affected by the ISIE's decision not to allow assisted voting. The large number of legislative lists led to complex ballots that may have been difficult for illiterate, elderly, and more rural voters to decipher. Political contestants, however, often attempted to reach illiterate voters by, for example, publicizing legislative candidate list numbers and logos rather than names, and distributing small cards mimicking ballots with the list number, name, and logo.

Election Campaigns

Each election was preceded by an official campaign period and one day of electoral silence. As in 2011, the electoral law and ISIE regulations sought to create equal opportunities for candidate lists to

compete, primarily by imposing strict limits on campaign activities. The electoral law did not, however, clearly delineate between permitted and banned campaign activities, which led to varied interpretations by political contestants and electoral authorities across districts. The law also did not explicitly forbid campaign activities during the pre-campaign period (prior to the opening of the official campaign period). Campaigns had varying interpretations of what activities were legal during this period, resulting in some campaigns effectively initiating their activities while others waited for the official period.

Candidate lists expressed frustration with regulations to limit permitted campaign activities, restrict the posting of campaign paraphernalia to selected sites, and require notification of election officials two days in advance of events. Along with a relatively brief official campaign period, parties argued that these regulations constrained their ability to lead visible and responsive campaigns and limited voters' opportunities to learn about their choices. Most campaign events were modest in scope. Restrictions that had been imposed on candidate lists in the legislative elections were loosened for the presidential contest, during which candidates were permitted to purchase advertising space for billboards and posters.



A Siliiana resident examines candidate posters in designated areas outside a polling station.

Most leading political parties signed codes of conduct to commit to follow the law and refrain from violence. The most common campaign infractions observed by NDI and confirmed by the election administration were small-scale in nature and did not have significant impact. They largely involved vandalism of campaign posters and hanging posters and other visual materials in unauthorized locations. Another common violation was failure to provide IRIEs with 48-hours advance notice of upcoming campaign events. Candidate lists in the legislative campaign followed this requirement more diligently than did presidential campaigns. Many of the latter viewed their campaign plans as fluid and referred to security constraints that required them to change or cancel events at short notice.

In contrast, political contestants and civil society groups alleged that more serious misconduct took place. Each election witnessed accusations of vote-buying, largely directed at the better-resourced and more established candidates or political parties. Political contestants were also accused of violating restrictions on campaigning in mosques and public institutions, and of continuing campaigns on the silence day and election day itself. NDI observers did not witness this behavior first-hand and were unable to obtain concrete evidence to substantiate these allegations. In post-election focus groups conducted by NDI, vote-buying emerged as a primary concern among participants, with many saying they had witnessed vote-buying first-hand.

In a significant effort to encourage adherence to the law, the election administration trained and deployed 1,200 campaign monitors, most of whom had served previously as voter registration agents. Many struggled, however, to understand the nuances of the electoral law and voiced concern about its lack of clarity. Campaign monitors also had difficulty ensuring adequate coverage of campaign activities, particularly during the legislative race given the large volume of competing lists. Additional campaign monitors were deployed for the presidential election. However, without advance notice from campaigns of scheduled events as required in the law, monitors' abilities to oversee activities were further hindered.



An IRIE-led training for polling station workers in Jendouba.

In the days before each election, campaign monitors were often drawn into logistical preparations for balloting, leaving campaign events uncovered. Over 9,000 reports were filed by campaign monitors; however, due to their inconsistency and in some cases insufficient quality, it appeared unlikely that they would be used by the ISIE or the courts to sanction political contestants. The lack of quality reporting was one factor in the Administrative Court's ruling that overturned the ISIE's decision to annul one of Nidaa Tounes's seats in the Kasserine district in the legislative elections (see Appeals section below).

The campaigns revealed stark differences between large parties in comparison to small parties and independents. In general, small parties and independents struggled to understand the complexities of the legal framework regarding the requirements for contestants and the restrictions on campaigns. They tended to take more strict interpretations of campaign regulations to avoid penalties, while larger parties adhered more loosely to the framework. Small parties and independents were particularly hampered by a lack of sufficient resources to mount active campaigns, often holding activities only during the final few days of the campaign period. Unlike in 2011, public venues for campaigning were not provided free-of-cost to contestants in 2014, which may have further hindered small parties and independents. Some candidate lists did not organize any activities.

In focus groups held by NDI after the elections, participants across the country described how they closely followed campaigns in order to make informed decisions on election day. They voiced a desire to see campaign promises focused on a small number of clear, realistic objectives, and to avoid negative rhetoric. Many participants wished that they had received more direct outreach from political contestants, including prior to the campaign period.

Legislative Elections

The legislative campaign period opened on October 4, during the Eid al-Adha religious holiday, and concluded on October 24, with a one-day campaign silence period on the day before voting. Given the large number of candidate lists, the legislative campaign was the most active of the three campaign periods, attracting wide participation by citizens as campaign volunteers, with particularly strong representation by women and young people. Nevertheless, at the opening of the campaign the pace of activities was slow, gaining momentum over time. The most common types of campaign activities included door-to-door outreach and distribution of pamphlets, most commonly in markets. Only larger parties were able to organize regular rallies.



An Ennahdha event in Kef with party leader Rached Ghannouchi.

Campaign messages focused predominantly on economic and public security. Messages also tended to highlight issues within a target district, such as local economic development and security concerns, and in some cases linked these issues to a broader national party platform. Some campaign promises were so specific in nature that they more likely constituted the prerogatives of a municipal council than those of a national legislature. Some parties' legislative campaigns were used to raise the visibility of the party's candidates in November's presidential election. For example, presidential candidates made campaign appearances with legislative candidates, or had their images included on legislative campaign posters. The election administration considered this to be acceptable as long as the presidential candidate in question was the official leader of the party.

The legislative campaign was characterized by the polarization of the political spectrum between the Ennahdha and Nidaa Tounes political parties, which emerged as the clear front-runners. Nidaa Tounes, contesting national elections for the first time since its formation in 2012, focused its campaign messages on the poor track record of the Ennahdha-led coalition government. The party adopted the slogan of the *"vote utile,"* ("useful vote"), calling on voters dissatisfied with Ennahdha to concentrate their support behind Nidaa Tounes instead of spreading votes across a group of parties. The party vowed that any vote not cast for Nidaa Tounes was a vote for Ennahdha. Ennahdha defended its performance in government and, while acknowledging certain challenges, highlighted its effort to prioritize the national interest and the success of the democratic transition.

NDI did not directly witness any instances of violence during the legislative campaign, although several cases of political violence and intimidation were reported to long-term observers and covered by the media. These included physical violence against campaign supporters as they affixed posters and attacks on political party offices. In some of these cases, political parties filed official complaints with authorities.

First-Round Presidential Campaign

The official campaign period for the presidential election ran from November 1 to 21, with a one-day silence period preceding voting. After a quiet beginning that saw only a few candidates campaigning in the first week, the campaign gained limited momentum toward its conclusion, though never reaching the intensity of the legislative campaign. At stops on nationwide tours, candidates visited markets, held small rallies and meetings, and conducted interviews with local media. When candidates were absent, their supporters continued to conduct door-to-door outreach, distribute flyers, and erect campaign tents to speak with citizens in city centers. Campaigns also affixed posters and billboards. Campaign rallies were generally calm and orderly within a festive atmosphere.

Well-resourced candidates, some of whom also benefited from the support and infrastructure of political parties, were better able to mount nationwide campaigns and to hold larger rallies, some of which were attended by tens of thousands of citizens. In contrast, the campaigns of independent candidates criticized the process for failing to offer an equal chance to all competitors. Campaign staff, who tended to be supporters without political experience or legal knowledge, demonstrated some difficulty understanding the details



A Hamma Hammami presidential campaign rally in Gafsa.



Presidential candidate Slim Riahi addresses supporters on Avenue Bourguiba on the last day of the campaign.

of the law. For example, there was confusion among candidates over whether party-backed candidates were able to use party resources in their campaigns.

Most candidates campaigned on similar, broad platforms, focusing on: security and the fight against terrorism; the economy and unemployment; regional development and infrastructure; and foreign relations. Few candidates explained the president's limited prerogatives under the new constitution or offered details on specific policies that they would pursue as president. Numerous campaigns addressed issues not directly in the president's purview, which

may have confused voters on the powers of the president.

The political debate during the presidential elections was impacted by the results of the legislative election. After winning the most seats in the legislature, Nidaa Tounes opted not to form a majority governing coalition until after the presidential election. This stance evoked criticism from some politicians, including interim President Marzouki, who believed that the constitution required the winning party to propose a coalition regardless of the presidential election. Furthermore, Ennahdha's decision not to field a presidential candidate attracted much attention and speculation, with many of Ennahdha's opponents alleging that the party was covertly supporting Marzouki.

ISIE campaign monitors recorded a significantly higher number of campaign violations committed by front-runners Marzouki (CPR) (360), Hama Hammami (Jabha Chaabia) (346), and Béji Caïd Essebsi (Nidaa Tounes) (287), compared to the rest of the field. Civil society groups and some candidates noted increasingly negative and inflammatory campaign rhetoric. In certain cases, candidates claimed that they were threatened with violence and hate speech.

Presidential Run-Off Election

No single candidate surpassed the 50 percent threshold needed to secure a victory in the first round election, prompting a run-off contest between the two leading candidates, Essebsi and Marzouki. As with the legislative elections and first-round presidential election, the two campaigns organized campaign-like events prior to the opening of the official campaign period. After the announcement of preliminary results from the first round, both candidates began meeting with voters and laying the groundwork for their run-off campaigns. The official campaign ran from December 9 to 19 with an electoral silence day on December 20. Both campaigns used the first few days of the official period to coordinate strategies with regional offices and members of allied political parties. Fewer large events were organized in the run-off campaign, with a greater focus on door-to-door activities, campaign tents, and direct interaction with voters. Both candidates held large campaign rallies in Tunis on the final day of the campaign period, December 19.



Supporters in Gabès display Moncef Marzouki's campaign poster.

The Marzouki campaign shifted its geographical focus in the run-off, focusing on the Northwest region that had voted heavily for Essebsi in the first round. His events in the region were often met with protests and chants of “*dégage*” (“get out”). Campaign events in the cities of Kef and Siliana, for example, were interrupted by protests. In Siliana, during a visit to a market, protesters started throwing stones at him, one of which hit an IRIE observer. At a public meeting, a group of individuals injured during the revolution shouted at Marzouki and he ultimately left the conference hall through a back door.



The ballot for the presidential run-off.

Compared to Marzouki, Essebsi held fewer large rallies, focusing instead on smaller gatherings, short photo-op meetings, and televised and radio interviews. The Essebsi campaign engendered significant resentment in southern Tunisia—a Marzouki stronghold—after Essebsi characterized Marzouki’s supporters as Islamists, Salafists, and radicals prone to violence. Nidaa Tounes opened a number of offices in the region for the run-off campaign, but aside from a pre-campaign visit to Tozeur, Essebsi did not personally visit southern districts.

Both candidates focused their messages on employment and regional development. Essebsi also emphasized the issue of security and political stability, suggesting that the country was on the brink of chaos and in need of a strong leader. He portrayed himself as a statesman with the skills, experience, and credibility necessary to reassure investors and implement reforms, highlighting his experience leading the transitional government in 2011. His supporters emphasized his intent to enforce the rule of law and respect the ideals of the 2011 revolution. Marzouki defended his work as interim president and presented a seven-point political program focused on foreign policy, development of interior regions, national security, human rights, and cultural development. Marzouki’s campaign also stressed his commitment to preserving democracy and human rights.

The candidates regularly used negative rhetoric to describe their opponents and incite fear about how they would govern if elected. Marzouki warned voters about the concentration of both legislative and executive power in the hands of Nidaa Tounes, while Essebsi criticized Marzouki’s presidential track record and the coalition government’s performance over the previous three years, suggesting that Marzouki’s election would lead to more of the same. Civil society groups raised concerns about the negative tone employed by candidates, which some organizations qualified as violent or inflammatory speech. Some civil society groups launched a joint initiative to advocate for a peaceful campaign. The election administration warned Marzouki and his



A campaign volunteer at a Béji Caïd Essebsi rally in Tunis on November 15.

campaign over comments suggesting he would only lose the election if fraud was committed.

Marzouki regularly challenged Essebsi to participate in a televised debate, emphasizing the candidates' obligation to the electorate to partake in a civil discussion of their platforms. Representatives from the Nidaa Tounes campaign told observers that the heated political rhetoric meant that any such debate would become argumentative and therefore counterproductive.

Campaign Finance



A voter casts her ballot.

Following the 2011 NCA elections, alleged violations of campaign finance regulations were not rigorously investigated or litigated. The 2014 legal framework established clearer and harsher penalties for campaign finance violations and well-defined limits on public and private spending. Within a fixed ceiling, campaigns were permitted to expense public and private funds, or self-finance with funds belonging to candidates themselves.

Total spending limits for political contestants in each election, as well as limits on spending from private donations, were determined in proportion to the amount of public financing awarded. For the legislative elections, the 2014 electoral law raised these ceilings slightly in smaller districts in comparison to the 2011 elections. The law did not include requirements for campaigns to disclose sources of donations. The ISIE worked to establish a credible system to monitor campaign finance and oversee the awarding of public financing.

Campaigns were eligible to benefit from public financing awarded in two installments: the first prior to the launch of the campaign and the second after the election, contingent on performance. The amount of public funding in the legislative campaign was determined as a function of the number of registered voters in each electoral district as well as the district's population density (with lists in more sparse districts receiving more funds). For example, in Tozeur (61,044 registered voters), each list received 4,595 TND (2,530 USD) while in Tunis 1 (244,599 voters), lists received 10,300 TND (5,680 USD) each.

In the presidential election, public funding was calculated based on the total number of registered voters. The first-round allotments were equivalent to 15 TND (8.10 USD) per 1,000 voters, or 75,000 TND (41,000 USD) total. In the run-off the amount was 10 TND (5.40 USD) per 1,000 voters, or 50,000 TND (27,000 USD) total.

Figure 5: Process for Determining Public Financing Amounts and Spending Limits

	October 26, 2014 legislative elections	Sample District: Tozeur	November 23, 2014 first-round presidential election	Amounts	December 21, 2014 presidential run-off election	Amounts
Amount of public campaign financing	Determined in proportion to number of registered voters and population density of district	4,595 TND (2,530 USD)	Determined in proportion to total number of registered voters	75,000 TND (41,000 USD)	Determined in proportion to total number of registered voters	50,000 TND (27,000 USD)
Total spending limit	Up to five times the amount of public campaign financing	22,975 TND (12,650 USD)	Up to ten times the amount of public campaign financing	750,000 TND (410,000 USD)	Up to ten times the amount of public campaign financing	500,000 TND (270,000 USD)
Limit on total spending from private donations ⁵	Cannot exceed two-fifths of total spending limit	9,190 TND (5,060 USD)	Cannot exceed four-fifths of total spending limit	600,000 TND (328,000 USD)	Cannot exceed four-fifths of total spending limit	400,000 TND (216,000 USD)

For campaign lists or candidates to keep their first allotment of public funding and be eligible to receive the second, they had to obtain at least three percent of the vote. For legislative candidate lists the threshold was measured within the district-level results; lists could also fulfill the condition by winning a seat, even if they did not surpass the three percent vote threshold. In the presidential election a candidate's overall performance nationwide was used as the metric for eligibility.



Ennahdha campaign headquarters in Bizerte.

Concerns and confusion about campaign finance, and the role of money in the elections more broadly, were prevalent among all political contestants. During the electoral period, political contestants regularly accused their opponents of exceeding the campaign spending limits and taking part in vote-buying, through distribution of gifts or money. Three parties—Ennahdha, Nidaa Tounes, and UPL—were often accused of overspending. Some alleged that political parties were working through non-partisan civil society groups to distribute largesse. While some parties maintained that they understood the law, there were often significant gaps in their understanding,

⁵ Private spending is defined as contributions received from individuals other than the candidate(s) themselves. Limits on individual private contributions were defined in proportion to the minimum wage: for the legislative elections the maximum individual contribution was 20 times the minimum wage, whereas for the presidential elections it was a maximum of 30 times the minimum wage.

especially concerning what constituted eligible versus ineligible expenses. Parties blamed IRIEs for the lack of timely information.

Political parties also expressed doubts about the election administration's ability to monitor and penalize misconduct during the campaign. For their part, official campaign monitors voiced concern about the lack of clarity in the electoral law and the difficulty of tracking contestants' adherence to campaign finance regulations. IRIEs reported to NDI observers that it was challenging for them to track all of the minor campaign infractions that were reported. Although a large number of reports were filed by campaign monitors, it was not apparent that these would be used by the election administration or the courts to punish violators.

Several parties and candidate lists did not receive their public funding until after the legislative campaign period began. This may have been a result of insufficient coordination between the ISIE and the Central Bank and Ministry of Finance. Smaller lists expressed particular frustration with the lack of clarity on finances and problems accessing funds. One independent list noted that the public funding was too limited to make a real difference in campaigning and that large parties spent more on one event than some smaller parties and lists spent during the entire campaign period.



A Nidaa Tounes campaign rally in Kef.

The local group iWatch focused its observation efforts on campaign finance, targeting four districts across the country: Gafsa, Sfax, Tunis 1, and Tunis 2. For the legislative elections, iWatch found that Ennahdha and Nidaa Tounes were the only parties that consistently broke the campaign finance limits. In Sousse, Ennahdha exceeded the limit by 119 percent and Nidaa Tounes by 79 percent, which, according to the electoral law, should result in the parties losing all of their seats in Sousse, five seats for Nidaa Tounes and three for Ennahdha. As iWatch's reports are based on estimates, the expenditures must

be verified by the Accounts Court within six months of the announcement of final results.

Presidential campaigns for both the first round and the run-off were eligible to receive public funding and to spend from private donations and personal assets within a fixed ceiling. Public funding for the first round was not delivered until two weeks into the campaign period—a 21-day delay. Many candidates strongly criticized this delay, particularly independents who tended to have fewer resources and were thus disproportionately affected. They further believed that high campaign spending ceilings allowed parties to drown out independents' voices. Some presidential candidates who dropped out of the race accused their opponents of exceeding spending limits. Only three presidential candidates—Essebsi, Marzouki, and Slim Riahi (UPL)—received more than three percent of the vote in the first round, and thus were able to receive the second tranche of public funds. The first tranches of funds were also awarded late for the run-off. The run-off campaign featured comparatively fewer allegations of excessive spending.

Contestants who failed to reach the minimum threshold to keep public funding were required to return funds within ten days of the announcement of final results, a process overseen by the Ministry of Finance and regional revenue offices. NDI found anecdotally that many independent lists were not aware of the potential need to return funds. In March 2015, a representative of the Ministry of Finance confirmed

that 1,151 legislative lists and nine presidential candidates had not yet returned funds. In issuing its final report on the elections in March 2015, the ISIE called on the Ministry of Finance to produce a definitive list of the candidates who were required to return public funding. The Ministry estimated that political contestants collectively owed more than 5 million TND (2.5 million USD) and vowed to take legal action against contestants who failed to comply in reimbursing funds.

The success of a more stringent campaign finance framework would depend on the capacity of the ISIE and the Court of Accounts to document infractions and adjudicate them in the post-election period through appropriate scrutiny of spending records. In the wake of the elections, these institutions anticipated that it would be difficult to retrieve funds from all of the concerned legislative lists and presidential candidates. The Court of Accounts in particular noted the challenge of reviewing large volumes of financial reports within narrow deadlines.

Media

During Tunisia's transition, the media became more diverse and pluralistic, providing citizens with access to a range of voices and sources of information. In 2013, the NCA established the High Independent Authority for Audiovisual Communication (HAICA), an independent regulatory body whose mandate includes monitoring media during elections and enforcing the electoral law. The 2014 electoral law and a joint ISIE-HAICA decision required national media to provide impartial and balanced coverage of the electoral campaign and to refrain from airing publicity in favor of any candidate.

The HAICA was responsible for monitoring TV and radio outlets, while the ISIE was tasked with overseeing the written press and online media. The HAICA issued regular reports on its findings during the campaign period, in contrast to the ISIE. In collaboration with the ISIE, at the start of the voter registration period the HAICA began monitoring television channels and radio stations; each program was recorded and archived.

The media was free to cover the electoral process without restrictions. Media outlets were required to provide balanced coverage; however, according to the HAICA's findings, certain parties and candidates received disproportionately more coverage than others. Smaller parties and independents regularly criticized media outlets for concentrating on larger political actors. Some maintained that the media's focus on Ennahdha and Nidaa Tounes prevented adequate coverage of issues affecting citizens at the local level. Political contestants also complained that private channels exhibited political bias. In the run-off election, Marzouki supporters expressed frustration over perceived media bias in favor of Essebsi. Focus group participants after the election expressed strong distrust in the media for perceived partisan bias.

During the electoral period, the HAICA suspended and fined media outlets for a variety of violations, the most common of which related to the broadcasting of publicity in favor of candidates or rhetoric deemed to be hate speech. Penalties were served for media outlets' violations of a clause in the electoral law forbidding the publishing of public opinion surveys during the electoral period. Television channels received HAICA warnings to ensure equal coverage of all candidates, in accordance with the law. The HAICA issued statements calling on political contestants to avoid personal attacks and negative rhetoric, particularly during the run-off presidential campaign. Political contestants and civil society groups regularly criticized the HAICA for not having the capacity to enforce regulations or sanction channels for

biased coverage. The HAICA noted that it was unable to impose a credible threat and that legal penalties should be increased.



The lottery to determine the order for candidate lists to record video messages.

The national television channel Al Wataniya broadcasted short video messages recorded by legislative candidate lists and presidential candidates. The ISIE held a lottery in the presence of political contestants to determine the order in which political contestants would film their messages. Legislative candidate lists commended the ISIE's transparent approach. They were generally satisfied with the process for recording and airing their messages, although they acknowledged the difficulty in condensing their platforms into the three minutes of allotted time.

The nine regional branches of the national public radio played an important role in raising citizen awareness of the elections and shedding light on candidates' platforms. Throughout the electoral period, the stations aired voter education spots provided by the ISIE. The stations held debates among legislative candidates during the campaign period; the timing of candidates' appearances was determined by a public lottery. Each debate participant (normally the head of the list or his/her replacement) had two minutes to respond to the moderator's question on each of four themes: the economy, national security, public policy, and social issues. Political contestants commended the debates initiative but wished that more time was granted to explain their positions. The stations also hosted presidential candidates for similar appearances.

A state-run national TV channel and at least one private TV channel considered organizing candidate debates. Ahead of the presidential run-off, Essebsi declined an invitation from Marzouki to take part in a national televised debate. A televised debate between the two candidates would have provided a unique opportunity for citizens to hear the candidates discuss their campaign platforms in a structured setting.

Election Day

Voting for each election—legislative, first-round presidential, and presidential run-off—took place during a one-day period for districts within Tunisia and over three days in the six out-of-country districts. Within Tunisia, each election was preceded by a silence day during which all campaigning was forbidden.

Figure 6: Election Dates

Type of election	Election dates (overseas districts)	Silence day (Tunisian districts)	Election day (Tunisian districts)
Legislative	October 24 – 26	October 25	October 26
First-round presidential	November 21 – 23	November 22	November 23
Presidential run-off	December 19 – 21	December 20	December 21

Schools were used as polling centers inside Tunisian territory; out-of-country districts voted in designated locations including embassies, consulates, hotels, libraries, and city halls. During the voter registration process, voters selected a desired polling center. Depending on the number of registered voters assigned to each polling center, the center comprised as few as one and as many as ten polling stations, or classrooms within the school. Voting took place in 4,864 polling centers divided into 10,972 polling stations. In a positive step to limit the long lines and crowding witnessed during the 2011 vote, more polling centers were added and the number of voters assigned to each polling station was reduced in 2014. Each station accommodated 1,000 voters in 2011, while the number was reduced to a more manageable 600 in 2014.



Voters queue in a school courtyard.

Voting in districts within the Tunisian territory took place on Sundays. During the legislative elections, polling stations opened at 7 AM and closed at 6 PM. These hours were slightly curtailed for the presidential elections, with polling stations opening one hour later at 8 AM. This change was part of an effort to provide added time for the delivery of election materials and set-up of polling stations, particularly in areas facing greater security risks, and did not appear to restrict the ability of voters to participate.

Each polling center was assigned a fixed number of staff that had been recruited by IRIEs in September and received regular training throughout the electoral period. The polling center president held responsibility for the entire center and its polling stations, and would typically be based in the courtyard of the school. Within the centers, each polling station was assigned four staff. A polling station president oversaw the general voting process and managed the three other staff: one at the door of the polling station handling the queue of voters and preparing them for voting; one seated at a desk to verify voters' identities and assist them in signing the voters registry; and, another seated at an adjacent desk to stamp and distribute ballots.

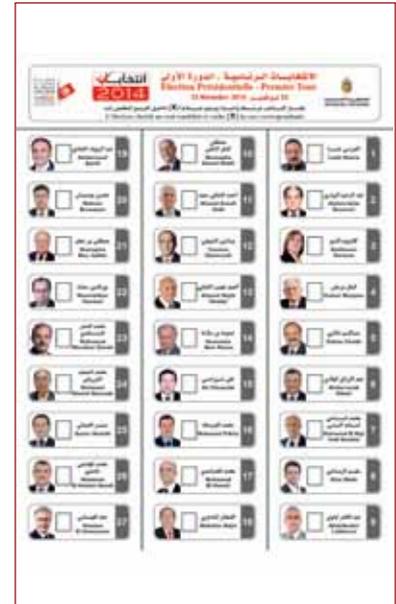


A voting booth.

Each polling station also featured three voting booths—cardboard screens placed on school desks that shielded voters' lower torso from view to guarantee privacy. The screens were reduced in height in comparison to 2011 elections, when they concealed the entire torso and head of the voter. This change was intended to allow polling staff to better ensure that voters were not undertaking any unauthorized activity behind the screens, while still maintaining voters' privacy in marking their ballots. In particular, this design served to assuage concerns about the potential for vote-buying and carousel voting, as the lower height of the screen would likely prevent voters from being able to photograph their ballot or remove paper from their pockets without detection. A row of chairs on one side of the polling station was dedicated to observers and candidate agents.

Ballots for the legislative elections were customized to each of the 33 districts and included each candidate list's name and logo. The lists were ordered according to numbers randomly assigned to each list

during a lottery-style drawing in each district. The ballot for the legislative elections featured several improvements to the ballot used in 2011. The design of the 2011 ballot featured candidate lists in narrow columns, with checkboxes at the end of each candidate list's row. This provoked concerns that voters could misread the ballot and inadvertently vote for the candidate list adjacent to their desired list. The 2011 ballot was also printed in black-and-white, though contestants had advertised their logos in color. The ballot for the 2014 legislative elections was expanded in size, allowing for increased space between columns of candidate lists. The checkbox was moved from the end of the row to between the candidate list's name and logo. A suggestion from the Mourakiboun organization to stagger the vertical alignment of each column of lists to further create a distinction between the respective choices was not adopted. Given the number of candidates in the presidential elections, those ballots were simpler in comparison and featured candidates' photos to facilitate voters' choices.



Ballot for the first-round presidential election.

The voting process on each election day unfolded in an orderly and smooth manner. The conduct of the process improved from the first election to the third, as voters grew increasingly confident about their duties and election officials became more familiar with procedures and better capable of handling unforeseen challenges. Generally, wait times were reduced as polling officials processed voters more efficiently. These improvements can also be attributed to the ISIE's efforts to dismiss underperforming poll workers and reorganize training. By the December 21 presidential run-off, voting was fluid and efficient, with a marked decrease in the number of irregularities.

Voter Turnout

Significant numbers of Tunisians participated in the election as voters, candidates, campaigners, observers, and election administrators. Prior to the legislative elections, however, many Tunisians expressed concerns that the elections would be adversely marked by low voter turnout. These predictions were commonly founded on the view that Tunisians were dissatisfied with the state of the country, apathetic about their choices at the ballot box, and unconvinced that voting would make a difference. The lower-than-anticipated turnout of new registrants was also cited as an indicator to predict election day participation.



Voters queue for polling station opening.

Turnout in the October 26 legislative elections—officially cited as 67.7 percent of registered voters—helped to ease some of these concerns. At 63 percent, the rate of participation in the subsequent November 23 presidential election, though a slight decrease from October, demonstrated the continued

confidence held by voters in the integrity of the electoral process. The turnout for the presidential run-off again fell by a few points to 60 percent, possibly suggesting election fatigue among voters. NDI and other international and citizen observers consistently noted a relatively low turnout among young voters.

This stood in contrast to the significant roles that young people played within citizen observer groups and as pollworkers. For the run-off, polling staff began using forms to track the number of male and female voters, as well as voters with disabilities.

Figure 7: Official Turnout Rates by Election

Election	Total # of registered voters	Total # of voters ⁶	Turnout as % of registered voters	Turnout as % of eligible voters
October 26, 2014 legislative elections	5,285,136	3,579,257	67.7%	47.7%
November 23, 2014 presidential first-round election	5,306,324	3,339,666	62.9%	44.5%
December 21, 2014 presidential run-off election	5,306,324	3,189,382	60.1%	42.5%

Most observed polling stations opened on time, and there was often a sizeable volume of voters at the opening of polling centers. The legislative elections in particular featured long queues of voters prior to the opening, reminiscent of the 2011 elections. After the opening of the outer gate at some polling centers, voters were seen running across courtyards to form queues outside of polling stations. NDI observed that voters in the mornings were disproportionately older and male. The pace of participation would typically ebb around mid-day and in the early afternoon, to increase again in the few hours before close. While some voters approached the process in a dutiful and business-like manner, others expressed genuine excitement in participating in the polls.

Voters' polling station assignments were determined according to their national identification card (known by the French acronym as a CIN) number. Those with the lowest CIN numbers—predominantly older Tunisians due to the process of assigning these numbers—would be assigned to the first polling station in the center. This resulted in crowding in the lines for polling stations featuring older voters, who appeared to turn out in higher numbers, particularly in the morning. In contrast, polling stations assigned to younger people with higher CIN numbers often had no line at all.



A polling center president assists Sidi Bouzid voters in finding their assigned polling station.

In the lead-up to election day and on the day itself, voters were able to use SMS messages to confirm the location and number of their assigned polling station. There were some issues with voters finding their names on the registry, though in most instances voters were able to find solutions with assistance from polling staff, who often resorted to the SMS system to confirm registration information. In the legislative elections, NDI witnessed some cases of citizens believing they could vote because they had

⁶ Statistics taken from « Décision de l'Instance supérieure indépendante pour les élections relatives à la proclamation des résultats définitifs » for each election, published on the ISIE website.



A pollworker assists a voter in Bizerte.

done same-day registration in 2011, even though voters who did same-day registration in 2011 were not automatically registered for the 2014 elections. Citizen observers and media reports indicated that these problems were particularly pronounced in overseas polling centers.

The electoral law forbade any form of campaigning on the silence day preceding the elections as well as on election day itself. Breaches of the electoral silence were common, particularly on social media networks during the presidential election. In each

election, Tunisian observer groups and political contestants reported that campaigning on the silence day and election day itself was widespread. Supporters of Marzouki and Essebsi equally alleged that polling staff demonstrated partisanship and attempted to influence voters.

Polling stations observed by NDI delegates were generally free of campaigning or other attempts to influence voters during election days. NDI found that in some cases campaign posters and other materials remained affixed near and outside polling centers. Observers witnessed a small number of cases of individuals speaking about certain candidates with voters waiting in line inside polling centers. Polling staff were able to effectively remove these individuals from the premises, with the support of security forces when necessary.

Polling staff demonstrated a genuine will to carry out procedures correctly, sometimes bordering on a rigid interpretation of the rules. NDI observed or heard about isolated cases of irregularities, misconduct, administrative problems, and delays. The irregularities witnessed by NDI observers during the voting process were minor in scope and not significant enough to materially affect the outcome of the process, for either races in legislative districts or the presidential contest. They were also isolated in nature and not indicative of broader, systemic trends.



A pollworker assists a voter in finding his name on the registry.

The most common challenges for polling officials stemmed from confusion over procedures and varying interpretations for how to deal with abnormal or challenging situations. Polling officials' decisions often erred on the side of greater inclusion. Some of these misunderstandings may have been the result of deficiencies in the trainings given to polling staff, where occasional discrepancies and mistakes were detected by NDI long-term observers. Poll workers became more confident in handling these issues as the process unfolded.

During each election, NDI also witnessed cases where polling station officials did not follow official procedures. These discrepancies did not appear to be intentional attempts to violate procedures. The two most frequent examples were polling officials neglecting to verify that voters' fingers were not already inked or to hold voters' phones and identification cards while they cast their ballots.



A voter casts her ballot in Monastir.

Polling officials occasionally struggled to deal with requests for assistance from illiterate and elderly voters, particularly during the first election day. According to the law, these voters are ineligible to receive outside assistance. In some cases, these voters asked officials for whom they should vote. NDI observed that officials went to great lengths when addressing these situations to avoid appearing to influence voters by strictly adhering to the rules.

The election administration made attempts to facilitate the participation of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in the electoral process, and also consulted with civil society groups working on this issue on the selection of accessible polling stations. The ISIE's voter education plan did not specifically target PWDs, however. A total of 46 polling centers across 12 districts were specifically designated for disabled voters. Observers found that some polling stations were inaccessible to persons with disabilities due to their location in older buildings or on the second floor of schools. NDI found that these issues decreased in scope across the three elections due to efforts undertaken by the ISIE and IRIEs, such as the construction of ramps to cover steps to allow for wheelchair accessibility.

For both presidential votes, the ISIE distributed sleeves with Braille text into which ballots could be inserted to assist voters with visual impairments. According to civil society groups, awareness of the ballot sleeve among these voters, as well as polling officials, was low; they were not available in all polling stations; and, some blind voters did not know Braille. The electoral law allows PWDs to receive assistance from a family member in completing the voting process. An individual was only permitted to assist one person during electoral day and was required to ink their little finger. The law requires that PWDs present a government-issued disabilities card. These procedures provoked confusion among some polling station officials, particularly during the legislative elections.

Despite fears that the elections could be disrupted by violence, voting largely proceeded in a peaceful manner and security forces were widespread and professional. During each election, there were reports of minor altercations within polling centers among candidate agents, citizen observers, and voters. In the run-off, concern from both candidates' campaigns about the potential for fraud led to a higher degree of tension among candidate agents and some voters. Several polling stations in Kasserine governorate opened hours late during the legislative elections, as concerns over security led authorities to deliver voting material the morning of election day rather than the day before. In both rounds of the presidential elections, the operating hours of a limited number of polling stations along the western border with Algeria were reduced due to security concerns.

Closing and Results Tabulation

Voters queuing within polling centers at the time polls closed at 6 PM were permitted to vote, although in most observed cases this was not



Braille sleeves were developed to help blind voters mark ballots.

necessary. The sorting and counting of ballots was to be initiated immediately after the last voter cast his/her ballot; only in a small number of observed cases did officials take a break in between. Ballots were counted in the presence of candidate agents and observers, both Tunisian and international. Due to the high number of legislative candidate lists in each district, and officials' relative unfamiliarity with the counting process, NDI found that counting for the legislative elections was thorough and lengthy. Counting was markedly more efficient during the two presidential votes. There was an emphasis on accuracy that in some cases led to drawn-out counts, particularly in the legislative elections. Some observers also reported that polling station officials lacked a sufficient understanding of counting procedures, resulting in some minor deviations from the prescribed process. With each election, polling station officials appeared to grow more comfortable with administering the counting process.



Polling station staff pose with NDI observers before the count during the presidential run-off.

When the counting process was completed, copies of the official minutes of voting and counting were affixed in front of all polling stations, and scans of these documents were later published by the ISIE on its website. This allowed candidates and observers to verify the results of a specific polling station. Voting materials were securely transported by the army to tabulation centers, which were most often located in the district's administrative capital.



A tabulation center in Sfax 2.

In some polling stations after the legislative elections, some sensitive documents such as the original minutes of voting and counting were mistakenly sealed in the ballot boxes instead of being kept separate. For the presidential election, the ISIE made several changes to how electoral materials were handled and stored, in part to allow for the reuse of ballot boxes in the event that a run-off election would occur. This change saved financial and human resources while simplifying procedures. The process for transporting ballot boxes and minutes from polling stations to tabulation centers became more efficient across the elections, falling from 13 total hours in the legislative elections to six hours in the presidential run-off.

Election results were tabulated at 27 centers across the country by IRIE staff and volunteers. The official tally was conducted manually, though a parallel electronic tally was also used. The tabulation process for the legislative elections was the most lengthy and complex, in some cases lasting several days. To ward against these delays for the presidential votes, the ISIE offered tabulation centers more staff, equipment, and training. The ISIE also worked with security forces to streamline the process of retrieving electoral material from polling centers after the vote count. As a result, and thanks to the reduced number of candidates, the tabulation process ran more smoothly for the presidential first round, where all centers finalized their results within 24 hours. The run-off was even more efficient, allowing the ISIE to release preliminary results the day after the election.

While the ISIE had indicated that observers or candidate agents would not be able to access the tabulation centers' floor to closely observe the process, IRIEs interpreted this rule differently. Some IRIEs allowed only international observers on the floor, while others allowed no access by observers but, once the tally was completed, moved tally boards closer to the bleachers where observers were seated.

Citizen Observation

Tunisian citizen observers played a visible and constructive role in monitoring and reporting on the electoral process. The ISIE reported accrediting 50,000 election observers, including Tunisian citizen observers, partisan pollwatchers, media, as well as international observers and media. The 2014 electoral law guarantees access for accredited non-partisan citizen observers, in addition to partisan candidate representatives, to polling stations on election day. Additional decisions released by the ISIE outlined the steps of the observer accreditation process, including conditions for observer eligibility, required accreditation documents, the timeline for processing accreditation, observer rights, and conditions for revoking accreditation.

Many of the observer groups had monitored the 2011 NCA elections and demonstrated a commitment to improving on this experience to mount a more thorough and comprehensive observation effort in 2014. These groups remained active after the 2011 elections and made significant contributions to the NCA's drafting of the revised electoral law. A coalition of civil society groups issued recommendations on: delineation of districts; election administration; electoral dispute management; voter participation; candidacy requirements; the election campaign; election day; and, results processing and release. This work set a positive precedent for civil society's participation in the drafting of election-related legislation.



ATIDE recruits citizen observers in Kairouan.

Each of the three election days featured a robust effort by citizen observer groups. Though the number of groups observing the 2014 elections fell in comparison to 2011, the number of observers more than doubled from 13,392 in 2011 to 28,676 in 2014. Nonpartisan citizen observers were strongly represented in polling stations observed by NDI. The most active observer groups were national platforms that existed either as single organizations or coalitions of national and/or local groups. The scope of observer groups' efforts depended on a variety of factors, most importantly human and financial resources. In some cases, organizations conducting observation focused exclusively on this role, while other observer groups led parallel initiatives in other areas, such as voter education and conflict resolution. Some groups conducted comprehensive long-term observation of the entire electoral process, beginning with voter registration, while others focused exclusively on election day. Several organizations conducted observation from a gender-based perspective. Only one organization, Mourakiboun, drew conclusions based on a statistically valid sample of polling stations.

Recruitment was a key challenge for some observer groups, who struggled to meet their recruitment targets due primarily to shortages of financial and human resources. Groups with insufficient financial resources to remunerate observers found it difficult to compete with the ISIE's hiring of paid campaign monitors

and polling station workers. As a result, several observer groups significantly lowered their recruitment targets in the run-up to the elections. This raised the importance of coordination among observer groups to ensure broad coverage of polling centers. Despite these obstacles, many groups were able to maintain or even increase their ranks of observers across the three elections. The pressure to recruit enough observers, however, may have prevented thorough screening of observers to ensure non-partisanship. NDI encountered several members of observer groups who were active members of political parties and campaigns.

At the national and local levels, observer groups regularly sought more engagement and clear communication from the election commission. Prior to the legislative elections, both citizen observers and candidate agents had difficulty receiving accreditation badges from the election administration in a timely manner, producing frustration on the eve of election day. These issues were largely addressed by the time polls opened, with local election authorities in some districts issuing letters in the place of badges to facilitate observers' access.



Mourakiboun volunteers support observers from a Tunis-based operations center.

The Mourakiboun observer network led a statistically-based observation effort for each election, deploying over 4,000 observers to a random sample of polling stations and drawing statistically valid conclusions about the process on election day. The network released data on the quality of the election process as voting proceeded, as well as cumulative findings after polls closed. For the first time in the history of Tunisian elections, and in the Middle East and North Africa region, a parallel vote tabulation (PVT) was conducted for the presidential elections. For both votes, the network released results information that mirrored the preliminary results released by the

ISIE. In the case of the run-off election, the network was able to release this information in advance of the ISIE's announcement. Mourakiboun's efforts contributed to enhancing the confidence of political contestants and the public in the integrity of the election process and the accuracy of its results.

In an effort to prevent overcrowding and potential tension among candidate agents during the run-off election, the ISIE decided to allow only one agent per candidate in each polling station and to prevent candidate agents and observers from occupying the polling center courtyard. Certain non-partisan observer groups criticized this decision for impinging on transparency and regretted that it was not communicated earlier and more clearly. On election day, the restriction caused confusion or tension in a few instances, but did not result in significant issues.

While some observer groups' preliminary statements included detailed lists of isolated issues, others succeeded in drawing broader conclusions about the integrity and transparency of the process. The most common remarks from Tunisian observer groups focused on: polling station officials' training and conduct, including failure to follow proper procedure and suspected partisanship; confusion among elderly and illiterate voters; campaigning by political contestants on silence and election days; vote-buying by political contestants and other finance-related infractions; and, access restrictions for observers to tabulation centers and, in the run-off, polling center courtyards.

The election commission also welcomed the presence of international observers throughout the entirety of the electoral period. The ISIE reported that it accredited more than 1,000 international observers representing a range of non-governmental and inter-governmental organizations, as well as embassies.⁷ The accreditation process for international observers was generally handled effectively with the ISIE providing additional opportunities for observers to receive accreditation for each subsequent election. International observers were largely satisfied with the degree of access granted by the ISIE; NDI observers reported that they were warmly welcomed at polling and tabulation centers, campaign events, and ISIE and IRIE offices.



NDI observers with Tunisian counterparts in Medenine.

After the elections, participants in NDI-led focus groups described how the widespread presence of citizen election observers helped to enhance their confidence in the integrity of the process and its results. Some participants sought greater information about observer groups' sources of funding. In the months following the election, observer groups began to issue final reports detailing their findings.

Results

For each election, results were first tabulated within each of the 33 electoral districts before being processed and released by the ISIE at the national level. The ISIE released partial, district-level results in gradual fashion beginning the day after election day, based on when results were received in the capital. Once all district-level results were received, the ISIE released a preliminary result. A final result was released in the weeks following election day after the courts had processed any appeals from political contestants.



A pollworker with ballots during the legislative elections.

Results were further corroborated by Mourakiboun, the Tunisian observer network that deployed its observers to a statistical sample of polling stations and was able to conduct a parallel count of election results with a high degree of accuracy. These findings were most pertinent for the presidential elections, where the entire electorate effectively voted in one single district that matched the boundaries of Mourakiboun's sampling. Mourakiboun was therefore able to estimate the election results hours after polling stations closed. For the run-off, the network released this information prior to the ISIE's announcement of preliminary results, within a margin of error of less than two percent.

⁷ Among the larger international observer missions were the the African Union (AU), European Union (EU), The Carter Center, the International Republican Institute (IRI), and NDI.

Exit polls conducted by Tunisian public opinion firms, a new phenomenon in Tunisian elections, fueled conjecture about election results prior to their release by the ISIE, engendering significant controversy. The electoral law prohibited the publication of public opinion surveys during the entire electoral period, running from July 2014 to January 2015. Further, the exit polls were released while voting was still underway in some overseas constituencies, notably in the United States and Canada. Media outlets that published these exit poll results were fined by the HAICA.

Political parties were permitted to conduct polling during the campaign period, as long as the results were not publicized. Leading parties also relied on results information at the polling station level—communicated by candidate agents deployed to polling stations across the country—to anticipate the results.

Legislative Elections

After polling stations closed on October 26, the two leading political parties—Ennahdha and Nidaa Tounes—delivered initial statements to the press anticipating their results and commenting on the quality of the electoral process. Then-President of Nidaa Tounes Essebsi and Secretary General Taieb Baccouche declared that the party believed it had won the most seats in the legislature and that although it observed significant fraud, it would refrain from immediately providing evidence to back this claim. Ennahdha political bureau member Abdelhamid Jelassi did not attempt to predict the election's result, asking citizens not to speculate on the results before their official release but expressing support for the integrity of the process.



The ISIE releases preliminary results for the legislative elections.

On October 30, the ISIE released preliminary results that confirmed that Nidaa Tounes had secured a plurality of 85 seats in the legislature (later increased to 86 seats), followed by Ennahdha with 69, UPL with 16, Jabha Chaabia with 15, and Afek Tounes with eight. The remaining seats were divided among smaller parties and independent candidates.

Political contestants alone were eligible to file appeals, but the appeals process did not significantly alter the results of the legislative elections. First-round appeals were filed with Courts of First Instance in the districts themselves. The Administrative Court

in Tunis then received 44 second-round appeals, upholding all decisions but one. Due to significant violations of the electoral law in several polling stations in Kasserine—including distribution of flyers, aggression against an IRIE observer, and posters inside the polling center—the Kasserine IRIE decided to annul one seat won by Nidaa Tounes and assign it to the Ettakatol party, which was 110 votes behind Nidaa Tounes for the district's eighth seat. Nidaa Tounes appealed, alleging partisanship of polling station and IRIE staff and asserting that the aggressor was not affiliated with their party. Ennahdha entered an appeal requesting that the entire Nidaa Tounes list be cancelled, citing article 143 of the electoral law, which provides for the entire, not partial, annulment of a candidate list in a given district if misconduct is proven. The Administrative Court ruled in Nidaa Tounes' favor, returning the seat to the party. One key factor in the decision was the insufficient quality of the ISIE's campaign monitoring reports detailing the violations.

Nineteen final appeals were registered and heard by the plenary assembly of the Administrative Court; no decisions were overturned. The final results, as announced by the ISIE on November 21, were as follows:

Figure 8: Legislative Elections Results

Candidate list	# of votes	% of overall votes	# of seats	% of seats
Nidaa Tounes (Tunisia's Call)	1,279,941	37.56 %	86	39 %
Ennahdha (Renaissance Movement)	947,034	27.79 %	69	31 %
Free Patriotic Union (UPL)	137,110	4.02 %	16	7 %
Jabha Chaabia (Popular Front)	124,654	3.66 %	15	6 %
Afek Tounes (Tunisia's Horizons)	102,916	3.02 %	8	3 %
Congress for the Republic (CPR)	72,942	2.14 %	4	1 %
Democratic Current	65,792	1.93 %	3	1 %
Al Joumhour (Republican Party)	49,965	1.47 %	1	0.4 %
People's Movement	45,799	1.34 %	3	1 %
Al Moubadara (The Initiative) / National Destourian Initiative	45,086	1.32 %	3	1 %
Democratic Alliance	43,371	1.27 %	1	0.4 %
Current of Love	40,924	1.20 %	2	0.9 %
Union for Tunisia (UPT)	27,802	0.82 %	0	0 %
Ettakatol (The Front)	24,592	0.72 %	0	0 %
Wafa (Loyalty Movement)	23,768	0.70 %	0	0 %
Al Amen (Safety Party)	7,926	0.23 %	0	0 %
Party of the Voice of the Tunisian People	7,849	0.23 %	0	0 %
National Salvation Front	5,977	0.18%	1	0.4 %
Movement of Socialist Democrats (MDS)	5,792	0.17 %	1	0.4 %
List of the Rehabilitation	5,236	-	1	0.4 %
List for the Glory of the Djerid	5,111	-	1	0.4 %
Farmers' Voice Party	3,515	0.10 %	1	0.4 %
List of the Call of Tunisians Abroad	1,814	0.05 %	1	0.4 %
Other lists	103,408	3.05 %	0	0 %

The election results confirmed the emerging polarization of the political landscape between two leading tendencies, with Nidaa Tounes and Ennahdha together earning 70 percent of the seats in the legislature. The top five parties collectively secured 88 percent of seats. Nidaa Tounes' victory was often attributed to citizen dissatisfaction with the performance of the incumbent ruling parties (CPR, Ennahdha, and Ettakatol, commonly referred to as the "troika") while in government from 2011 to 2014. Parties that had won significant numbers of seats in the 2011 elections, such as CPR, Ettakatol, and Al Joumhour,

suffered major losses. The results were also noteworthy in the geographic cleavages they revealed, with Nidaa Tounes performing well in northern districts while Ennahdha was more successful in the South. Some activists worried that these geographic divisions could intensify during the presidential election. The results also provoked speculation over how Nidaa Tounes would form a legislative majority, though the party ultimately opted not to nominate a prime minister until after the presidential election.

First-Round Presidential Election

When polls closed on November 23, early estimates indicated a clear first-place finish for Essebsi (39.46 percent), though without achieving the simple majority of the vote needed to pre-empt a run-off election. With 33.43 percent of the vote, Marzouki easily secured second place and a position to challenge Essebsi in the run-off. The ISIE's official release of preliminary results took place on November 25:

Figure 9: First-Round Presidential Election Results

Candidates (Affiliation)	# of votes	% of votes
Béji Caïd Essebsi (Nidaa Tounes)	1,289,384	39.46 %
Moncef Marzouki (CPR)	1,092,418	33.43 %
Hamma Hammami (Jabha Chaabia)	255,529	7.82 %
Hachmi Hamdi (Current of Love)	187,923	5.75 %
Slim Riahi (UPL)	181,407	5.55 %
Kamel Morjane (Al Moubadara)	41,614	1.27 %
Ahmed Néjib Chebbi (Al Joumhour)	34,025	1.04 %
Other candidates	185,269	5.68 %

Despite having proceeded to the next round, the Marzouki campaign filed eight appeals with the Administrative Court. (One private citizen also filed an appeal, which was categorically rejected as only candidates are entitled to appeal the results per the electoral law.) Marzouki's appeals centered on allegations of: ballot papers found outside the ballot box; carousel voting; campaigning during the silence period and election day; partiality among polling staff; vote-buying; voter impersonation; and, attempts to prevent Marzouki himself from voting.

The Administrative Court deemed all but one of the appeals inadmissible, declaring that Marzouki did not have sufficient "interest" to present an appeal given that he had already advanced to the second round and that his appeals would not alter the run-off. The one appeal accepted for review—which accused Essebsi supporters of improper campaigning and polling staff of partiality—was ultimately rejected on the basis of its content. Marzouki appealed all eight rulings, leading to a further hearing before the Court's plenary session. A panel of 17 judges and three state commissioners heard the appeals in the presence of

representatives from Marzouki and Essebsi’s legal teams and the ISIE’s legal department.⁸ The Court ruled that Marzouki’s appeals that asked for partial annulment were inadmissible. The ISIE released the final results on December 8.

Presidential Run-Off Election

Estimates quickly suggested that Essebsi won after the closing of polls on December 21, and the Essebsi campaign promptly declared victory. This provoked criticism from the Marzouki campaign, which declared its intent to wait for the release of official results. Supporters from both camps celebrated what they believed to be victories, generating some fear that clashes could arise. The ISIE released its preliminary result at 3 PM on December 22, confirming Essebsi’s win by more than 350,000 votes. The result again confirmed a strong concentration of votes for Marzouki in southern districts, with Essebsi benefiting from high support in more populous northern and coastal areas.



NDI observer Ken Dryden attends the ISIE press conference announcing preliminary results of the presidential run-off election.

Figure 10: Presidential Run-Off Election Results

Candidates (Affiliation)	# of votes	% of votes
Béji Caïd Essebsi (Nidaa Tounes)	1,731,529	55.68%
Moncef Marzouki (CPR)	1,378,513	44.32%

Two private citizens subsequently filed appeals with the Administrative Court, calling for the election result to be annulled. The Court rejected both appeals on the formal grounds that only candidates can enter appeals. No second round appeals were introduced, and the final result was upheld and confirmed on December 29.

⁸ The second stage of appeals limits review to assessing the procedural handling of the first appeal process, limiting the likelihood of the court overturning a prior verdict. The discussion of Marzouki’s appeals centered around Articles 142, 143, and 145 of the electoral law, specifically concerning partial and total annulments of votes. As a single “seat” is contested during the presidential elections, the Court viewed Tunisia and its overseas districts as a single district. Any appeal must therefore request that the election results be annulled in their entirety and demonstrate that the overall election results were impacted by irregularities that may have been observed at a limited number of polling centers or stations. The Court provided this interpretation to justify the appeals as inadmissible. This precedent may make it difficult for candidates to appeal future presidential election results based on the level of evidence they must provide.

Figure 11: Proportion of Invalid and Blank Ballots Cast

	2011 NCA elections	2014 legislative elections	2014 first-round presidential election	2014 presidential run-off election
Total ballots cast	4,308,888	3,579,257	3,339,666	3,189,382
Valid ballots	4,053,148	3,408,170	3,267,569	3,110,042
Invalid ballots	155,911	106,010	50,088	50,585
Invalid votes as % of total votes cast	3.8%	3.0%	1.5%	1.6%
Blank ballots	99,829	65,069	22,009	28,755
Blank ballots as % of total votes cast	2.5%	1.8%	0.66%	0.9%

The proportion of invalid and blank ballots cast decreased steadily from the 2011 NCA elections through the 2014 first-round presidential election, suggesting that voters overall became increasingly knowledgeable about how to cast a valid ballot. There was a slight increase in the proportion of invalid and blank ballots cast in the run-off election, which may suggest that a part of the electorate was unable or unwilling to choose either of the two candidates. Due to the simplicity of the ballot paper and the instruction to polling officials to accept ballots that reflected the clear will of the voter, it is possible that a share of voters were making a political statement by casting null or blank ballots.

Security

The potential for violence to disrupt the electoral process was a primary concern among Tunisians in the lead-up to the elections. These fears were particularly pronounced given the political assassinations that occurred during the political transition and the rise in attacks targeting Tunisian security forces during the preceding year, particularly in western regions of the country. Political contestants noted that they constantly had to adapt their campaign planning due to concerns about potential targeting by violent extremists. Tunisians also worried that fierce political competition or dissatisfaction with election results could degenerate into violence among campaign supporters.

On September 17, Prime Minister Mehdi Jomaa elevated the country's security alert level, particularly at the borders, in preparation for the elections. The Ministry of Interior (MOI) established four committees to work with the ISIE to ensure the security of polling and tabulation centers, IRIE offices, and supply routes of electoral materials to and from polling places. The committees also oversaw logistical support and responded to requests for information on election security. Throughout the electoral cycle, the government and ISIE regularly communicated to the public about the efforts underway to secure the elections.

The security situation remained volatile in western regions of the country and became increasingly unstable along the Libyan border. Attacks on Tunisian security forces did occur during the electoral period—most tragically on November 5 when terrorists attacked a convoy of soldiers between Kef and Jendouba, killing four and wounding 11. Several presidential candidates cancelled planned events in Kef after the attack,

believing that citizens would be less willing to attend public meetings in the area. The most direct attempt to disrupt the electoral process came on December 20, the eve of the presidential run-off, when armed men shot and wounded a soldier guarding a polling station west of Kairouan.⁹ Complaints were also filed with authorities regarding several cases of political violence and intimidation targeting certain political party offices and campaign supporters.



NDI observers with security forces in Bizerte.

Several presidential candidates indicated that the MOI had relayed information about assassination plots targeting them, which some said led them to alter their campaign strategies and prevented them from notifying IRIEs about campaign activities in advance. They also asserted that security concerns prevented them from campaigning in certain areas of the country. Some presidential campaigns made use of security details offered by the government. Better-funded campaigns relied on private security firms.

Although isolated incidents did take place, very few of these fears materialized and the electoral process was generally peaceful. On each election day, the voting process was secured through the deployment of some 80,000 members of the security forces. Security forces contributed to a peaceful atmosphere and efforts to ensure security did not interfere with election day proceedings. Members of the police and army were present outside of all observed polling centers, and in certain cases entered the polling center, though this did not appear to intimidate or disrupt voters. Observers did not witness inappropriate interventions into the voting process by either the police or the military. There were isolated instances of tension or conflict among candidate agents in polling centers, but these were handled swiftly and professionally by security forces. During the run-off, worries that candidate representatives could clash at polling stations drove the ISIE to restrict each campaign to one representative per polling station and to inhibit loitering in polling center courtyards.

Heightened concerns about vulnerabilities in western regions led authorities to make decisions that impacted the voting process on election day. During the legislative elections in Kasserine, the army opted to deliver materials to polling stations on the morning of election day instead of the day before, leading to delayed openings. One polling center visited by NDI observers did not open until 11 AM due to missing materials, creating significant frustration among voters, some of whom left without voting.

Citing security concerns, the government and election authorities decided to limit the hours of operation in Kasserine, Kef, and Jendouba during the presidential elections. For the first round this affected 50 polling stations, which was expanded to 124 polling stations for the run-off. Observers noted a heightened security presence at one of these polling stations.

Following the announcement of preliminary results for the run-off election, isolated unrest occurred in southern regions and areas surrounding Tunis where protesters clashed with security forces. It could not be confirmed that the protests were related to the results of the elections. These incidents continued for several days and represented the most significant disturbances encountered throughout the electoral process.

⁹ In spite of this attack, voting proceeded normally under an enhanced security presence at this polling station.

Women's Political Participation



NDI observers with women voters in Sfax.

Tunisian women enjoy relatively progressive rights compared to their counterparts in neighboring countries. Tunisian women, many of whom led efforts to oppose the Ben Ali regime and occupied the front lines of the 2011 uprising, continued their advocacy efforts during the ensuing transition. Women members of the NCA played a key role in drafting the new constitution, which consequently evoked international praise for its progressive posture on women, particularly its guarantee for gender parity for women in elected office. However, while they represent 50.5 percent of the population,

women remain poorly represented within political party structures and decision-making levels of the country's administration.

Legislative Candidates

In debating the 2014 electoral law, members of the NCA agreed to maintain a requirement for vertical gender parity on candidate lists. Under this system, which was first used in Tunisia for the 2011 NCA elections, the placement of candidates on a list is required to alternate by gender. There is no requirement to place women candidates in the first position on lists. In both the 2011 and 2014 elections, the vast majority of candidate lists were led by men. For the vertical parity system to succeed in electing a greater number of women to the legislature, therefore, candidate lists have to perform well enough to have their second candidate—most often a woman—elected. Most women members of the NCA in 2011 were elected from second or fourth positions on lists. Other important factors in women's election include the number of available seats, the number of competing lists in a district, and the system for allocating seats. Tunisia's proportional representation system with the largest remainder method, which tends to favor smaller parties, can further spread out the available seats in a district across lists, leaving fewer opportunities for women to be elected.

The placement of women candidates at the heads of lists, therefore, constitutes an additional step toward greater representation in the legislature. In addition to the vertical parity clause, NCA members debated whether to add a horizontal parity requirement to the electoral law, wherein political contestants competing in multiple districts would be required to place women candidates at the head of a certain number of lists. The Assembly considered requiring that one-third of the overall lists submitted by a single political entity be led by women candidates. The debate split the assembly's main political parties, while civil society groups firmly advocated for horizontal parity. Ultimately, the Assembly voted down a measure to adopt this system.

The resulting composition of candidate lists submitted by political contestants for the 2014 legislative elections was similar to those that ran in 2011. A slightly higher proportion of lists were led by women in 2014 than in 2011, at 11 percent compared to seven percent. Women represented 47 percent of candidates in total. Unlike in 2011, when one political contestant succeeded in fielding an equal number of candidate lists led by women as led by men, no lists achieved this parity in 2014. The Union for Tunisia (UPT) came the closest, with 38 percent of its lists headed by women. Among the ten parties

who submitted the most lists nationwide, approximately 17 percent of the submitted lists were led by women. Parties that had advocated for the horizontal parity requirement during the drafting of the electoral law fell far short of achieving this benchmark, suggesting that while parties may support the principle of horizontal parity, they are unwilling to attempt it alone unless all political contestants are legally bound to do so.

While some political parties expressed satisfaction with their ability to recruit women candidates, others encountered significant difficulty, particularly in more rural districts in the interior of the country. Of the 31 lists submitted in the district of Tataouine in far southern Tunisia, for example, none were led by women. Conversely, of the 148 lists headed by women, most were in Tunis and coastal areas. The highest representation of women heads of lists within a district was in Tunis 2, with 12 of 45 lists headed by women (27 percent). Political parties spoke of the difficulties that women face in balancing traditional family roles and careers with political engagements, as well as the general political apathy that they encountered among Tunisians. Some activists also explained that women themselves were reluctant to pursue the head of list position due to the harassment and insults that women heads of list encountered in 2011.



Headshots of women candidates from Afek Tounes taken during a multi-party training training.

Women candidates themselves shared various motivations for running for the legislature. Some had been active party members who played key roles in establishing party operations after the revolution, and were eager to participate in the campaigns and hopeful about their chances of being elected. Such women were often disappointed to be placed second on lists, or to be overlooked entirely as candidates. Other women candidates who occupied lower positions on lists described how they did not expect to win seats but were eager to use their campaigns to draw attention to specific issues.

Women candidates noted that they are treated differently from men within party structures, are denied positions of power, and are not included in decision-making meetings. Many women heads of list described how they encountered significant resentment within their parties or lists as a result of their placement. In some cases, women candidates had support for their placement from the party's headquarters or nationwide base, but within their district offices found that male party members were reluctant to support their candidacies. On the other hand, one woman head of list had support from the other members of the list but described the jealousy she encountered among local party members and friends. Some women noted that their candidacies made them vulnerable to gender-based electoral violence, usually in the form of verbal abuse or disparaging commentary on social media. NDI long-term observers also reported that women candidates generally believed that they received less media coverage than their male counterparts.

Legislative Campaign

During the legislative election campaign, long-term observers reported that women were generally well-represented as campaign workers but did play a less visible role as candidates. This finding was confirmed by several civil society organizations conducting programs to increase women's role in politics. NDI found that some official candidate posters, particularly in the northwest and southwest interior regions,



Women voters in Kairouan display their inked fingers.

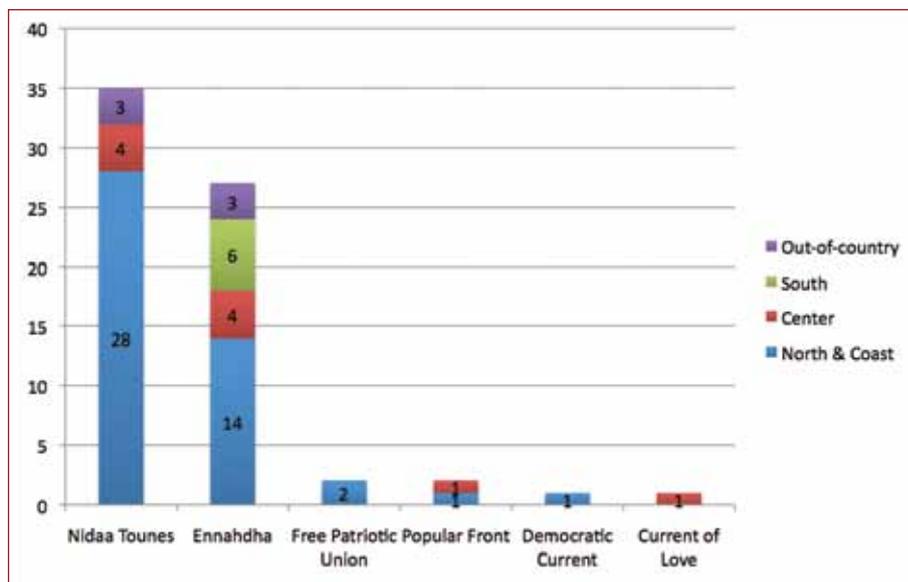
did not feature photos of women candidates, instead using symbols or placeholders. Political contestants and civil society activists in Tunisia’s more rural areas attributed this phenomenon to the prevalence of traditional attitudes towards the role of women. Nevertheless, several women candidates in interior regions—including Mbarka Aouinia Brahmi, Jabha Chaabia representative from Sidi Bouzid—headed their lists.

Several international and Tunisian organizations, including NDI, conducted efforts to train women candidates, to observe the elections from a gender standpoint, and to educate women voters. However, issues of primary concern to women were largely absent from candidates’ platforms. Most candidates interviewed noted that women benefited from equal status in society in Tunisia, both *de jure* and *de facto*, and that no special measures or laws should be taken to improve their situation.

Legislative Election Results

Article 46 of Tunisia’s constitution calls on the state to work “to achieve equal representation for women and men in elected institutions based on the principle of parity.” This goal was not achieved in the 2014 legislative elections, although the vote did result in a slight increase in the number of women in the legislature. The 2011 NCA elections saw 59 women elected out of 217 available seats (27 percent), a number that rose to 67 by the end of the NCA’s mandate, as male MPs who died, resigned, or became ministers were replaced by the female candidates succeeding them on their lists. In 2014, 68 women were elected to the legislature, or 31 percent. After several MPs vacated their seats to become ministers, this number increased to 72 women, or 33 percent. Twelve of these elected women were heads of their list. Tunisia is therefore over the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action’s minimum target of 30 percent women’s representation and above regional and global averages of 18 percent representation.

Figure 12: Female MPs per Region per Party



When women candidates do not represent many heads of lists, the vertical party system tends to see women elected from the best-performing parties. The system therefore produced different results depending on the scale of political parties' victories in each election. In 2011, 42 of the 59 women elected to the NCA were members of the Ennahdha party due to the party's consistently strong performance across districts. In 2014, in contrast, both Nidaa Tounes and Ennahdha performed well, winning 86 and 69 seats, respectively. Both parties won an average of more than two seats in each district. Of the 68 women elected to the legislature, 36 are from Nidaa Tounes and 26 represent Ennahdha. The campaign for a "useful vote"—the argument that anti-Ennahdha voters should concentrate their support behind Nidaa Tounes instead of dispersing it among multiple, ideologically similar parties— may therefore have indirectly contributed to augmenting the number of elected women, especially in constituencies with greater district magnitude. The remaining women MPs include two from Jabha Chaabia, one from UPL, one from the Democratic Current, and one from the Current of Love. Of the 27 cabinet-level positions in the government that was subsequently appointed, three ministers and five secretaries of state are women.

Presidential Election

The presidential election witnessed the first female presidential candidacy in Tunisia's history. Kalthoum Kannou, a career judge, was the only woman to run in the election among 27 total candidates. (70 presidential aspirants, including four other women, filed candidacies but did not meet the eligibility requirements.) While Kannou was lauded by political actors and civil society groups active in the field of gender equality, none of them officially endorsed her. She ultimately placed eleventh out of the 27 candidates—five of whom had withdrawn their candidacies—and won 0.56 percent of the vote, more than several male contenders who benefited from higher visibility and public recognition.



Presidential candidate Kalthoum Kannou speaks with voters in Kef.



A voter displays her inked finger.

Voters

Voter education initiatives targeting women tended to benefit the capital and coastal areas more than the country's interior. Civil society groups described the disproportionate difficulty they faced in encouraging women to register as voters, particularly in rural areas. In one significant barrier to women's participation, figures indicated that 400,000 women in rural areas lacked the national identification card needed to register to vote. Civil society groups called on the ISIE to adapt its communication plan to better target this population, to partner with civic groups to extend the reach of voter education, and to extend the registration period to allow more time for rural women and other prospective voters to register. Despite these obstacles, registration statistics indicated that 50.5 percent of the approximately one million newly registered voters in 2014 were women.

Civil society organizations reported that on election day, women voters in rural areas sometimes struggled to cast their votes, often because they had difficulty identifying their desired candidate list or candidate on the ballot. There were also reported cases of women allowing their husbands to vote in their place, particularly if the polling station staff were members of the woman's extended family.



Tally sheet of voter gender used by pollworkers in the presidential run-off
Source: Gender Concerns International

The ISIE did not release overall turnout data disaggregated by gender; the election minutes did not include space for this information and the organization of voters lists did not permit a tally of men and women assigned to each polling station. Based on feedback from NDI and other observer groups, the ISIE did adopt a form used by polling station workers to record participation by gender, as well as by PWDs, for the presidential run-off election. As the election minutes were not revised, this information was not tallied and released. The ISIE has stated that this disaggregated data will be available following its internal audit, though this is likely to be a lengthy process. The ISIE also did not

collect or release disaggregated data on gender for other steps of the electoral process, though it shared some information with observers upon request.

Election Administration

The ISIE shared figures that indicated that women comprised about half of the overall electoral administration but were underrepresented in high-ranking positions. Although the total number of women in the administration is equal to men, in all categories but one—voter registration agents—there are more men than women. The difference is even more stark for positions of greater seniority, such as ISIE commissioners (six men, three women), IRIE members (77 men, 13 women), and logistical coordinators (22 men, 5 women). According to data released by the ISIE, women represented 46 percent of all polling staff recruited. Indeed, NDI election observers found that women were well-represented among polling station officials. In the majority of polling stations visited by NDI during the presidential run-off election, for example, at least two of the four polling staff present were women. ISIE figures for that election showed that the proportion of women polling staff in districts ranged from 38 percent in Kairouan to 64 percent in Kef. On the whole, men disproportionately held the position of polling station or polling center president. During the first-round presidential election, for instance, only 24 percent of presiding officers were women.



A presiding officer in the first-round presidential election.

Figure 13: ISIE Staff by Role and Gender

	Women	Men	Total
ISIE members	3	6	9
IRIE members	13	77	90
Coordinators	5	22	27
Administrative-Finance	9	18	27
ISIE agents	64	102	166
IRIE agents	20	41	61
Temporary agents	56	128	184
Enrollment agents	1,422	1,196	2,618
Total	1,592	1,590	3,182
Percentage of women	50.31%		
Percentage of men	49.69%		

Figure 14: Women's Participation as Polling Staff and Pollwatchers, First-Round Presidential Election

	# of voting centers	# of polling stations	Women as polling staff	Total # of polling staff	Women's participation rate as staff	Women as presiding officers	% of women as presiding officers	Women as poll watchers	Total # of poll watchers	% of women as poll watchers
Ariana	93	456	961	1,793	53.6%	193	42.3%	342	1,172	29.2%
Béja	151	301	740	1,207	61.3%	147	48.8%	106	792	13.4%
Ben Arous	151	562								
Bizerte	207	520	782	1,780	43.9%	188	36.2%	1,162	2,072	56.1%
Gabès	166	388		1,480					981	
Gafsa	186	380	799	1,509	52.9%	75	19.7%	183	1,036	17.7%
Jendouba	231	388	761	1,542	49.4%	50	12.9%	144	760	18.9%
Kairouan	310	517	732	2,067	35.4%	73	14.1%	216	1,523	14.2%
Kasserine	301	478	791	1,814	43.6%	114	23.8%	102	1,077	9.5%
Kébili	81	182	365	722	50.6%	38	20.9%	100	334	29.9%
Kef	192	309	752	1,186	63.4%	150	48.5%	189	951	19.9%
Mahdia	189	361	503	1,035	48.6%	65	18.0%	133	753	17.7%
Manouba	94	326	540	1,302	41.5%	116	35.6%	230	914	25.2%
Medenine	247	457	963	1,798	53.6%	75	16.4%	275	1,179	23.3%
Monastir	155	500	1,120	2,114	53.0%	297	59.4%	278	1,315	21.1%

Nabeul 1	156	409	786	1,580	49.7%	162	39.6%	329	1,203	27.3%
Nabeul 2	114	333	655	1,316	49.8%	107	32.1%	213	1,031	20.7%
Sfax 1	207	428	771	1,957	39.4%	69	16.1%	162	1,094	14.8%
Sfax 2	159	499	855	1,947	43.9%	129	25.9%	284	1,420	20.0%
Sidi Bouzid	316	489								
Siliana	192	272	382	1,037	36.8%	75	27.6%	56	473	11.8%
Sousse	178	585								
Tataouine	111	165	273	583	46.8%	13	7.9%	114	382	29.8%
Tozeur	48	123	233	492	47.4%	17	13.8%	97	357	27.2%
Tunis 1	104	456	794	1,819	43.7%	173	37.9%	814	1,110	73.3%
Tunis 2	87	498	1,035	1,911	54.2%	221	44.4%	410	1,163	35.3%
Zaghouan	109	185	312	731	42.7%	24	13.0%	73	544	13.4%
Total	4,535	10,567	15,905	34,722	45.8%	2,571	24.3%	6,012	23,636	25.4%

Youth Political Participation

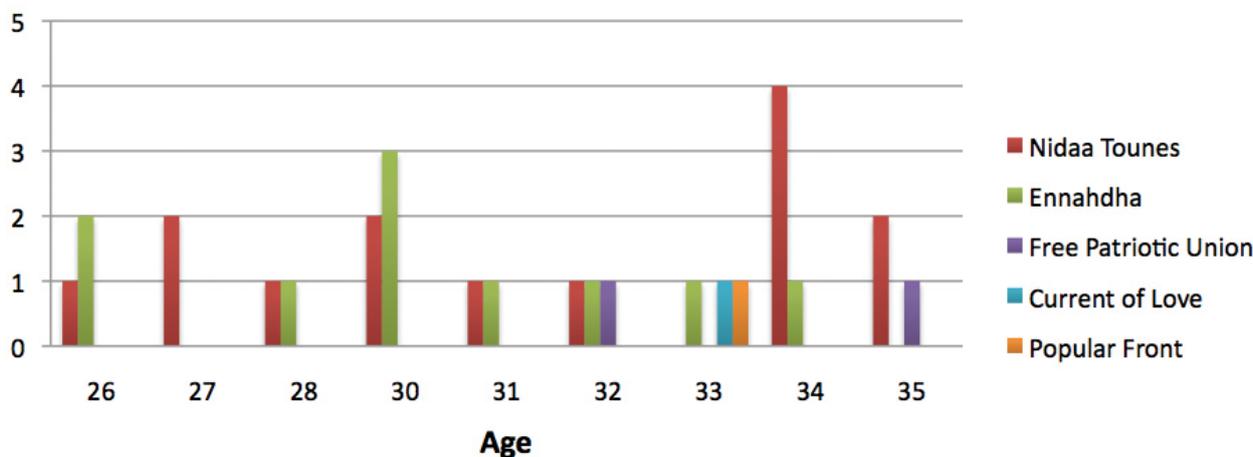


*Afek Tounes youth campaign door-to-door.
Source: Photo from Afek Tounes Facebook page.*

People under 35 represent 60 percent of the Tunisian population, and youth unemployment, which hovers around 30 percent, exceeds the 17 percent national average. Findings from the 2011 elections pointed to a high abstention rate among youth, making them a priority target for political contestants in 2014. Campaigns attempted to engage this demographic with messages about improving employment opportunities and with festive events featuring music groups. Still, youth activists described how younger voters continue to maintain high levels of mistrust in politicians and express disillusionment over the lack of change in their daily lives since the revolution.

In addition to the gender parity provision in the electoral law, the NCA also demonstrated its will to encourage youth representation as candidates. The NCA included in the electoral law a measure wherein political contestants were required to include a candidate 35 years or younger within the first four places on candidate lists in districts containing more than three seats. This therefore applied to all of the in-country districts and two of the six overseas districts. If political contestants failed to meet the requirement, they were to automatically lose the right to one half of their public campaign financing.

Figure 15: Number of Youth MPs by Party



Source: Al Bawsala



CPR youth run a political tent in Medenine.

A small number of parties—particularly Afek Tounes, UPT, and Wafa—placed young people in high positions on candidate lists, sometimes beyond the legal requirement. Some politically active youth reported to NDI, however, that they were disappointed that so few young people were selected to lead candidate lists or to play substantial roles within party structures during the campaign. Ultimately, the candidate list requirement contributed to the election of 28 members of parliament 35 years old or younger, 23 of whom are women. Fourteen of the youth MPs belong to Nidaa Tounes, ten to

Ennahdha, two to UPL, one to the Current of Love, and one to the Popular Front.

Young people were the engines behind most electoral campaigns. Youth played visible roles staffing campaign venues, replacing destroyed posters, interacting with potential voters, participating in rallies and automobile processions, and distributing flyers. Civil society activists described, however, how youth were unable to access positions of responsibility or decision-making authority within political parties, one of many factors hindering their engagement in politics.

There were no specific voter education campaigns targeting youth voters. The ISIE did make all of its documents and voter education videos available online, a medium of communication primarily used by youth.¹⁰ Several civil society groups organized activities to register youth voters and held debates among youth.

The ISIE did not release turnout data as a percentage of registered voters that is disaggregated by age. Each NDI election day delegation noted that turnout by young voters was visibly low. NDI observers did find that youth were well-represented and actively engaged as observers, pollwatchers, and polling station officials.

¹⁰ <http://www.wamda.com/2013/04/12-key-statistics-on-how-tunisians-use-social-media-infographic>

VIII. Recommendations

Based on observations drawn by its delegations throughout the electoral process and in the spirit of international cooperation, NDI offers the following recommendations to enhance future elections and Tunisia's democratic process as a whole:

To the legislature:

1. The legislature should **evaluate the shortcomings of the 2014 electoral law** when drafting future legislation for both local and national elections. In particular, lawmakers should examine areas in the law—based in part on input from citizen observer groups—where lack of clarity resulted in differing interpretations by local election authorities and confusion among political contestants. For example, the types of political activities permitted during the pre-campaign period should be clearly defined, as should the ability of presidential candidates to use party resources to campaign. Such clarifications would help to ensure that competitors share the same understanding of the rules. At the same time, the legislature may consider **reducing restrictions on the types of activities permitted during formal campaign periods** to foster greater opportunities for citizens to learn about political contestants and their programs. There is room for these regulations to be reduced without resulting in a system that is unfair or driven by financial resources. This change could be coupled with stronger sanctions for misconduct to adequately deter wrongdoing. The legislature should also explore additional mechanisms for **increasing the representation of women, youth, and under-represented groups in the legislature and government**.
2. With regard to future legislative elections, the legislature may also **reconsider the decision not to adopt a threshold for candidate list representation in the legislature**. While the absence of a threshold favored greater inclusion in the legislative elections, it can produce a fragmented legislature. Lawmakers may consider a minimum threshold for representation that will help to find a balance between representation in and effectiveness of the legislature.
3. The out-of-country constituency system creates an added logistical and financial burden on the election commission. Although an admirable attempt to include Tunisians residing abroad as voters, **the out-of-country voting system merits examination and debate**. Decision-makers could consider, for example, removing overseas constituencies in favor of an absentee balloting system.
4. As the legislature considers legislation around political decentralization, it may **weigh measures to decentralize the court system relative to election-related decisions**. Such a step could increase the efficiency of the judicial system's review of complaints and appeals. Based on the model of the



NDI president Ken Wollack enters a polling center in Tunis.

financial court, which operates in four different regions, lawmakers could consider establishing branches of the Administrative Court outside of Tunis. This would be particularly valuable for presidential elections, for which all appeals were heard in Tunis regardless of the nature of the complaint.

5. The deadline adopted by the NCA to hold the elections by the end of 2014 placed the election



Leadership of NDI's delegation to the legislative elections.

administration under considerable pressure to organize three polls in a three-month timespan. The legislature should **reconsider the timing and sequencing of future national elections** to avoid potential voter fatigue and reduce undue strain on the election administration, which can impact the quality of the electoral process and the confidence of participants. Since the constitution requires that both the legislature and president be elected during the last 60 days of their mandates, the legislature should consider how to organize these contests with sufficient space to allow for a more reasonably paced process.

6. The legislature should **dedicate sufficient resources to empower the ISIE to develop its long-term institutional capacity** beyond meeting the core demands of the electoral cycle. Key aspects of the ISIE's institutional development that will require financial backing include establishing its organizational structure, managing and tracking human resources, improving internal communication, organizing and publicizing election-related information and statistics, and contributing to on-going public outreach and voter education initiatives.
7. The new legislature and its members should **strive to fulfill the body's constitutional responsibilities** as a key institution within Tunisia's emerging democratic political system. Having been selected by Tunisian citizens, elected representatives should assume their legislative duties by seeking to **govern on behalf of the interests of their constituents**. Further, representatives and the legislative institution more broadly should identify channels to communicate regularly and transparently with citizens in order to build the public's trust in the ability of this new class of politicians. Given the historic predominance of the executive branch under Tunisia's former regimes, the legislature also has a vital role to play in **conducting thorough oversight of the executive**, thereby demonstrating a viable separation of powers in accordance with the new constitution.

To the ISIE:

8. The ISIE should **consider new approaches to voter registration** that engage the approximately one-third of eligible voters who are not registered. Election authorities may **explore the value of a passive registration system, based on an updated national identification database**. If an active registration system is again utilized, citizens would benefit from more sustained and widespread initiatives to raise public awareness of the process. A strategy should be adopted to ensure that all citizens have a means to obtain national ID cards, a significant obstacle to registration of rural voters. Decision-makers may also consider extending the right to vote to members of the security forces to maximize enfranchisement.

9. Greater attention and resources should be invested to **ensure civic and voter education take place well in advance of future elections**. The ISIE should consider launching voter education campaigns in conjunction with the opening of the electoral period, months in advance of the official campaign period, and these initiatives should be sustained throughout the entire process. Partnerships with civil society groups, which can significantly expand the reach and effectiveness of voter education, should be examined in the inter-election period so that they can be launched sufficiently in advance of voting. In addition to the practices adopted in 2014, the ISIE may also consider organizing public voter education events that gather larger groups of voters. These efforts must **prioritize youth, illiterate citizens, and voters from rural areas**—three groups that could have been better engaged in the 2014 elections.



An NDI staff member signs the voters registry before casting his ballot.

10. The ISIE should **continue the positive trend established throughout the 2014 electoral cycle of developing new practices for transparency and information-sharing**. The ISIE could consider granting access to commissioner meetings, fully disclosing financial information, inviting civil society to participate in its audit process, and improving observer access to tabulation. **The commission's website should serve as a platform for all documentation related to the 2014 electoral process**, including disaggregated data on women and youth participation in the elections. With input from civil society, the ISIE can identify areas where information was lacking in 2014, and consider how to record this information in the future and release data in accessible and analyzable formats in line with principles for “open” election data.¹¹

11. The election administration should endeavor to **improve communication between the ISIE and IRIEs**. Building on the valuable precedent of the post-election evaluation sessions held with IRIEs, the ISIE could consider a framework for more regular meetings throughout the inter-election period as part of its broader institutional development. The commission should consider **dedicating additional time in the lead-up to the elections to ensure that IRIEs are sufficiently staffed, resourced, and trained**. During the elections, the ISIE should devote additional staff at the national level to handle communications with IRIEs. Such measures could help to significantly reduce confusion among IRIEs and minimize differing interpretations of election



The entrance to a Tunis polling station.

regulations. These measures would also contribute to clearer external communication at the district level.

11 Refer to <http://openelectiondata.net> for more information about the principles of “open” election data.

12. Improved and expanded communication from the ISIE to political contestants and civil society will be important for reducing confusion in future elections. Early in the electoral process, the ISIE should **convene political contestants and civil society groups for in-depth overviews of electoral procedures, particularly concerning candidate registration, campaign regulations, and campaign finance requirements**. The ISIE should endeavor to **release voting, counting, and tabulation procedures as early as possible**, and to highlight any differences in comparison to the 2014 rules. The ISIE may also consider allocating additional staff in IRIEs responsible for liaising with political contestants and citizen observers.
13. The ISIE should continue to **strengthen its ability to monitor electoral violations**, particularly during the campaign period, and ensure that documentation of violations is adequately prepared for review by the judiciary. To this end, the ISIE should **consider recruiting a larger number of campaign monitors** to ensure wider coverage. These campaign monitors should receive thorough training on what constitutes an electoral violation and what information is required to create consistent and thorough reports.

To political parties and candidates:

14. With the likelihood that local elections will present the next electoral opportunity, political leaders should give serious consideration to how those **polls can serve as an avenue for meaningful public engagement**. Political parties should consider using local elections as an opportunity to identify and empower a new generation of leaders by prioritizing youth on candidate lists. Local elections can offer a pathway for Tunisian youth to access positions of political responsibility. Parties should also endeavor to **find opportunities for youth and women members** to access leadership positions within party structures.
15. In future elections, political parties and candidates should continue to endeavor to **differentiate themselves based on concrete, policy-based platforms and to avoid negative campaigning**



Women voters display their inked fingers after casting their ballots.

tactics. Such campaigns would help to reverse the trend of citizen disillusionment with politics. Prior to subsequent national elections, political parties should leverage their experience in government and opposition to **elaborate concrete policy platforms**. These platforms should articulate clear solutions to the problems that citizens face in their daily lives, and should be **based on information collected through parties' outreach efforts**, particularly at the grassroots level. During the campaign period, political contestants' participation in moderated public debates would be a significant step forward in showing voters the substantive policy differences among candidates.

16. Political contestants' commitment to abide by the rules of the election and refrain from improper conduct represents an important step in bolstering public confidence in the electoral process and the broader political class. To that end, political contestants should **comply with measures established to enforce the legal framework around elections**. In particular, political parties should publicly **demonstrate their commitment to transparency in Tunisian public life by abiding by campaign**

finance regulations by submitting all necessary documentation of campaign expenditures and, if necessary, returning public campaign funding in a timely manner. Political contestants may also consider holding inclusive discussions to agree on a **code of conduct for political contestants and candidates**.

To civil society:

17. Civil society organizations should continue to **foster a spirit of collaboration** as they work to achieve their goals between elections and in preparation for municipal elections. Observer groups should work together in presenting their final reports on the 2014 elections to the election commission and political contestants. They should also consider the value of coalitions and common platforms to **provide input into the drafting of legislation for municipal elections and decentralization**.
18. Where possible, civil society should **continue to organize civic education activities between elections**, particularly targeting underserved citizens such as youth, women, and residents of rural areas. For the municipal elections, these campaigns should **help citizens understand the different roles and responsibilities of local governance bodies in comparison to the national legislature**. Civil society should constructively and proactively engage the ISIE in advance of the electoral period to **examine avenues for collaboration on voter education**.
19. Civil society organizations should **better coordinate their efforts to observe the next national elections to reduce overlap**. Depending on their experience and available resources, organizations may consider focusing their efforts on either electoral observation or voter education programs. While certain observer groups may lead a comprehensive observation of each stage of the electoral process, others may be better suited to focusing on a specific aspect, such as voter and candidate registration, campaign finance, or the appeals process.



Voters present and future in Bab Souika.

To the media:

20. To improve citizens' awareness of their choices at the ballot box and enhance confidence in the elections, media outlets should **devote more attention to ensuring accurate and balanced coverage of the electoral process**. Media outlets should thoroughly examine the HAICA's findings and conduct reviews of their strategies to cover the 2014 elections. Members of media outlets may benefit from training programs on accurate and professional reporting practices. Media outlets should also ensure coverage of women and youth candidates during the campaign period. Beyond elections, media outlets should consider how to endeavor for **more professional and objective reporting** in order to establish credibility and trust among the public.

IX. Appendices

Appendix 1: List of Observers

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- Nadim Abillama**²
NDI-Lebanon
Lebanon
- Fatmeh Ali Dheif Allah Abu Abta**³
Member of Parliament
Jordan
- Mohamed Abulahoum**³
Head
Justice and Building Party
Yemen
- Raed Al Adwan**²
Governor
Ministry of Interior
Jordan
- Youssef Ajnah**¹
NDI-Morocco
Morocco
- Mohammed Amer**^{1,2}
NDI-Libya
United States
- Faris Al-Aquar**²
NDI-Yemen
Yemen
- Alexis Arieff**¹
Analyst in African Affairs
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Lebanon
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- Dalia Bseiso**^{1,3}
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Former Mayor of Cleveland, Ohio
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 Former Legislative Assembly Member
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² Delegate to November 23 first-round presidential election

³ Delegate to December 21 presidential run-off election

Appendix 2: Map of Tunisia’s Administrative Districts

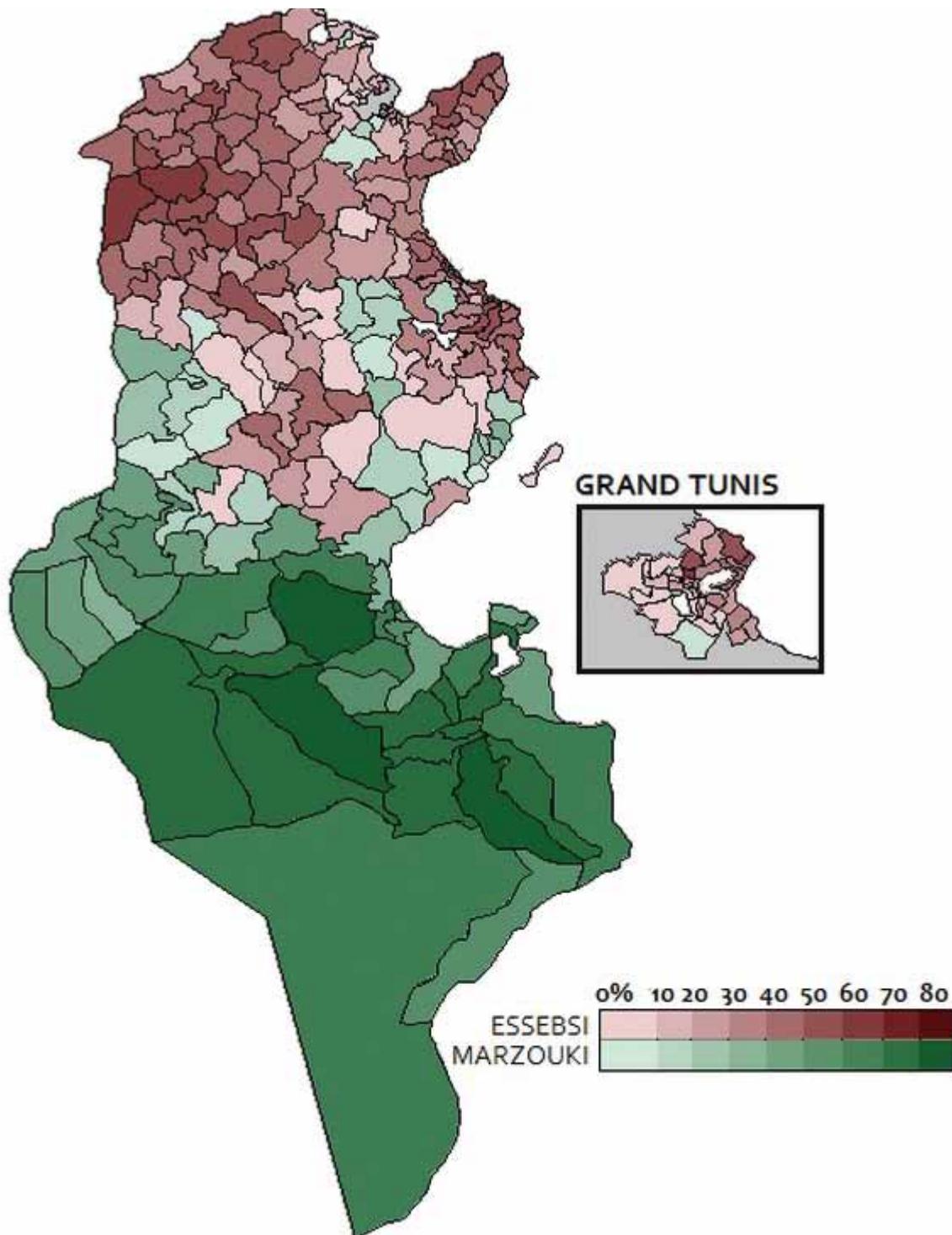


Appendix 3: Chart of Legislative Elections Results by District

District	Seats	Valid Votes		Votes for parties with seats		Votes for parties without seats		General Voter Information	Nidaa Tounes	Ennahdha	UPL		Popular Front		Afek Tounes		CPR		Democratic Current		People's Movement		National Destourian Initiative		Current of Love		Other Lists		
		Votes	Seats	Votes	Seats	Votes	Seats				Votes	Seats	Votes	Seats	Votes	Seats	Votes	Seats	Votes	Seats	Votes	Seats	Votes	Seats	Votes	Seats	Votes	Seats	Votes
TUNISIA																													
Tunis 1	9	168,077	138,077	30,000	3	53,343	3	60,295	3	53,343	3	13,714	1	5,321	1	5,016	1	2,014	1	5,404	1	621	1	1,285	1	865	1	21,484	
Tunis 2	8	209,428	166,414	43,014	5	42,250	2	115,045	5	6,224	2	6,592		6,224		9,119	1	2,744		5,878		505		1,285		687		19,099	
Ariana	8	176,054	140,638	35,416	4	42,459	4	82,769	4	4,186	1	9,144	1	4,186	1	6,266	1	2,424		4,336		960		1,235		671		21,604	
Ben Arous	10	216,231	175,474	40,757	4	61,420	3	84,359	4	9,534	1	12,935	1	9,534	1	6,777		3,198		7,226	1	863		1,742		945		27,232	
Manouba	7	112,912	83,514	29,398	3	33,064	2	38,009	3	2,981	1	9,460	1	2,981	1	2,927		1,515		2,825		1,279		1,302		735		18,815	
Jendouba	8	96,656	72,381	24,275	3	19,829	2	34,484	3	6,386	1	4,084	1	6,386	1	1,118		1,041		747		1,552		475		545		26,395	1
Kef	6	72,421	55,646	16,775	3	12,672	1	34,885	3	5,020	1	3,069	1	5,020	1	586		949		692		835		617		565		12,531	
Siliana	6	56,758	40,752	16,006	2	10,057	1	16,618	2	6,562	1	3,362	1	6,562	1	352		673		544		1,013		770		588		16,219	1
Bizerte	9	154,388	117,227	37,161	4	43,437	3	56,968	4	3,614	1	8,055	1	3,614	1	3,975		2,352		3,958		668		1,373		1,005		28,983	1
Béja	6	79,446	59,313	20,133	3	16,874	1	30,457	3	2,582	1	4,411	1	2,582	1	874		1,193		1,023		7,598	1	1,502		466		12,466	
Nabeul 1	7	147,680	110,242	37,438	4	29,368	2	73,739	4	6,048	2	7,045	2	6,048	2	7,135	1	1,479		2,989		996		1,371		830		16,680	
Nabeul 2	6	117,207	93,642	23,565	3	23,478	1	60,247	3	4,000	1	5,917	1	4,000	1	3,031		1,639		1,824		359		856		1,105		14,751	
Zaghwan	5	51,766	35,109	16,657	2	11,720	1	18,216	2	1,391	1	3,564	1	1,391	1	1,200		685		426				1,609	1	771		12,184	
Kairouan	9	123,267	86,668	36,599	3	39,300	3	33,513	3	4,830	1	5,900	1	4,830	1	2,353		1,430		1,854		702		1,924		3,125	1	28,336	
Kasserine	8	104,193	65,162	39,031	3	23,650	2	28,362	3	4,591	1	3,441	1	4,591	1	1,108		2,938	1	890		1,737		1,390		1,771		34,315	
Sidi Bouzid	8	110,902	71,680	39,222	2	18,990	2	27,399	2	7,918	1	2,250		7,918	1	938		1,820		803		1,618		1,074		11,806	1	36,286	2
Gafsa	7	104,056	65,609	38,447	2	28,265	2	21,821	2	5,664	1	2,945		5,664	1	743		1,402		890		2,410		4,623	1	1,387		33,906	1
Tozeur	4	37,232	21,849	15,383	1	10,164	1	4,845	1	1,729	1	1,729	1	1,729	1	209		826		273		400				190		18,085	1
Kébili	5	55,610	45,179	10,431	1	21,944	2	5,793	1	1,618	1	2,066		1,618	1			8,953	1	553		8,489	1	889		681		4,624	
Sousse	10	209,984	174,410	35,574	5	50,820	3	102,604	5	5,502	3	4,848	3	5,502	3	12,360	1	2,887		2,237		787		8,626	1	2,131		17,182	
Mahdia	8	110,757	89,443	21,314	4	24,865	2	50,448	4	3,215	1	2,747	1	3,215	1	10,915	1	1,342		1,259				1,620		1,118		13,228	
Monastir	9	183,345	153,401	29,944	5	37,815	2	104,221	5	5,073	1	3,164	1	5,073	1	6,292	1	1,444		2,353				5,007		1,606		16,370	
Sfax 1	7	136,987	103,543	33,444	2	49,609	3	42,864	2	6,413	1	3,285	1	6,413	1	4,340		2,709		4,657	1	1,292		1,414		1,740		18,664	
Sfax 2	9	184,997	140,808	44,189	4	57,994	3	70,081	4	5,991	1	3,589	1	5,991	1	6,742	1	3,704		5,954		1,773		1,308		2,104		25,757	
Gabès	7	116,008	89,531	26,477	1	58,152	4	19,821	1	1,432	1	6,269	1	1,432	1	1,052		5,289	1	2,412		2,555		588		18,438			
Medenine	9	125,007	98,512	26,495	1	68,795	5	14,334	1	2,788	1	4,392	1	2,788	1	3,066		6,305	1	1,617		4,686	1	1,736		1,224		16,064	
Tataouine	4	34,810	25,442	9,368	1	22,770	3	2,672	1	220	1	1,284		220	1			1,270		334		280		389		236		5,355	

		OUT-OF-COUNTRY DISTRICTS																								
France 1	5	39,021	29,185	9,836	15,406	2	11,533	2	375		1,691	2,246	1	2,166	790	312	280	121	4,101							
France 2	5	30,852	22,935	7,917	12,987	2	8,134	2	518	1,206	812			1,271	527	382	344	235	4,436							
Germany	1	7,358	3,013	4,345	3,013	1	2,643		143	407				498			111	48	495							
Italy	3	7,115	5,122	1,993	2,147	1	2,975	2	179	337				210				132	1,135							
EU and US	2	15,623	11,404	4,219	7,068	1	4,336	1	174	783				801	558		137	58	849							
Arab World	2	12,022	8,784	3,238	4,451	1	4,333	1	223			504		723	563			73	1,152							
TOTAL TUNISIA	199	3,296,179	2,519,666	776,513	1,234,869	78	913,104	61	1,392,61	16	119,615	15	98,494	8	64,225	4	63,958	3	43,978	3	44,725	3	38,897	2	535,053	7
TOTAL	217	3,408,170	2,600,109	808,061	1,279,941	86	947,058	69	140,873	16	124,039	15	102,915	9	69,894	4	66,396	3	44,672	3	45,597	3	39,564	2	547,221	8

Appendix 4: Map of Presidential Run-Off Election Results by District



Source: World Elections blog, <https://welections.wordpress.com/2015/01/17/guest-post-tunisia-2014/>



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