

Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission
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**Seminar on Empowerment of Youth Organizations and Youth led
civil society initiatives in the South-Mediterranean framework**

Youth and Arab Spring : Quick Observations

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I. Some characteristic and insights of the Arab Spring:

2 main remarks

- **The first:** the revolutions and uprisings in the Arab region are the first of their kinds in the history of the Arab societies, especially because of: 1) their main revendications and slogans are mainly for freedoms and democracy, as well as dignity and social justice. 2) The important role of the information and communication technologies in reinforcing the events dynamics and protecting the rebellions. 3) The fastest in quitting the former regimes. 4) The fastest outspreading on the Arab level with common slogans and revendicatives.

The second note is the youthful leadership characteristic of these revolutions and uprisings:

- * **Enflamed** the first spark and leaded all its stations.
- * **Spontaneous**, not directed or framed by any political party, or movements although some politicians could in some advanced stages to direct it in some cases, as for Libya, and Syria.
- * **Peaceful** in most of the countries that witnessed such revolutions, like Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, and even in other cases the protesters had to carry the weapons in advanced stages only to defend and to confront the government enhancing violence
- * **Women significant participation**, even in Yemen where the illiteracy is among the 2/3 of women, their presence was wide all along a year of events and protests. Many leaders were admired by the international community such as the Yemeni: Tawakol Kerman the winner of the Nobel Prize for peace.

I. The main reasons for the uprisings and the effective role of youth in that:

- * The excessive late in practicing freedom even in its basic forms in most of the Arab countries, which take the region to the lowest indicators for the freedoms in the global reports including UN reports.
- * Youth Uprisings especially is due to the heated paradox between the potentials and the earnings of basic rights from one side,

(Arab youth attain their highest in numbers and percentage -youth bulge- the most educated, the most interactive with the new technologies, the less family responsibilities, and more ability to participate comparing with the previous generations) and the available of opportunities and choices, (youth unemployment is the highest nationally compared to other social categories and internationally compared to other regions, and it increased with among educated youth. The weakness of their participations and NGOs, the patriarchy and the elder's monopoly for all power, including the youth leadership organizations).

I. Notes on the current scène in general and youth especially: the opportunities and challenges:

A- Opportunities for freedoms and democracy is enhancing, and youth are reinforced and pressuring power:

- The end for the fear complex of any oppressive or repressive authority among people in the region and especially youth.
- The continuity of protestations and actions for change, even if in some cases takes a chiastic forms.
- Wide and reinforced interest in the public and the political affairs especially by youth, reflected by several indicators and surveys results. For example: the Tunisian youth interest in the political affairs has been more than doubled, and the percentage of the national TV viewers has been increased from 12% to 80%.
- The reinforcement of the youth organized work: hundreds organizations and coalitions has been established, and there is a trend for networking and unifying and merging among them, (such as: the newly establishment of “ The revolutions council” that gathered the majority of the Egyptian Youth Coalition).
- Important achievements on the level of regulations and laws in term of democratic path: many resolutions, regulations, and rules supporting the individual and the public freedoms in Tunisia, Egypt, and Morocco, as well as witnessing the first free and transparent elections in these countries during 2011.
- The youth movement successes with bringing all categories of people to the act of change, including the Ultras and the youth of the political conservative parties.
- Freedoms and changes trends are enhanced in most of the Arab countries, including those avoiding revolutions and uprisings.

I. Strong and complex challenges:

- The aggravation of the social and security crisis: In addition to the residues of previous regimes in cases such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, from poverty, unemployment, and regional and social disparities; the unemployment rates has been increased recently as implications of the revolutions as well as several other factors. Moreover, the deterioration of security conditions as result of state weakness and interventions of other factors and parties
- The weakness of the NGOs parties and other organizations, besides the continued rejection from a wide range of youth to integrate in the existing organizations, and to participate in the elections. Many expressed their caution of political and civil parties especially “old” ones.
- Security challenges increased, in some of the Arab countries, where the state institutions and the civil society organizations have been diminished widely as in the case of Libya.
- Another challenge lies in the emergence of a gap between the intellectuals and the elite on the one hand, and a large groups of people, reflected in many of the events and the election results. This may apply to the situation of young people as well, although less severe degrees.
- The emergence of religious conservatism powers, with ideological tiraillement that limits in some cases the interactive dialogue and focus on key challenges and tasks related to democratic transition.
- As far as the clarity of some of the dimensions of the youth and political general scene, summarized previously, to an extent of non-accurate understanding of the content and dimensions of others, including the difficulty of understanding the dimensions of many of the positions and attitudes of young people such as those related to their reluctance to participate in a number of political opportunities, and their rejections of some political organizational forms of and other civil society organizations, besides the lack of clarity for the observers of youth alternatives.
- This raises important questions about the required and possible critic revisions enabling better understanding for the needs and attitudes and choices of Arab spring’s youth, and to be able to

identify the appropriate concepts, methods tools, program and projects' priorities

- Finally the Lack of awareness of the nature of the phase of democratic transition and that they usually require many years. Hurried youth wants to achieve rapid ambitions, which could result depressions and pessimism.

Taking into consideration the significant structure of this meeting of youth leaders, specialized experts, and regional organizations experts, I am convinced that our debates and discussions during these two days will contribute intensively to clarify many of the posed problematic's dimensions, and to crystallize significant ideas, suggestions and recommendation to enhance youth participation.