



## **THE ARAB SPRING AND DEMOCRATISATION LESSONS TO BE LEARNT**

Decades of authoritarian rule quickly came to an end in only a few months during events that began in December 2010. The Southern Mediterranean region now has an unprecedented opportunity to develop into an area of democracy where individual freedoms and rights are not only respected, but also protected and promoted.

However, such a development cannot be taken for granted and it has only just begun. Many obstacles and challenges remain, and the risk of “Spring” turning into “Winter” always lurks around the corner.

Governments need to become legitimate and accountable, democratic and transparent elections need to be held, constitutions should be revised, political parties and NGOs need support and laws need to be passed that favour their growth and freedom of expression and of assembly. Media freedom must be upheld and a plurality of views be respected and encouraged.

Construction of democracy and its procedures can only be achieved through gradual process which also implies a cultural change where one of the central main issues is tolerance and respect for citizens' rights.

In this sense respect for participation of minorities, political rights of dissidents and diffusion of new ideas must be guaranteed. Also, and above all, construction of a new rule of law and safeguard of rights by an independent judiciary.

We must understand that democracy will assume concrete shape depending on historical conditions and current circumstances of each country. Lebanon is a clarifying example. Bases of changes are principles, values and individual freedoms of expression, religion and association.

The Arab Spring has yet to reach other countries in the region, such as Syria and Yemen.

So far, elections in Tunisia and Egypt have shown the islamist parties to be the dominating political forces. It is important that the international community accepts the outcome of democratic elections, but also to closely follow the developments notably in consideration

of these parties' action once in power regarding democracy and fundamental rights and freedoms. In Egypt, a further concern is the continuing dominant role of the military and the utterly unjustified actions recently taken by the authorities against foreign NGOs supporting civil society and promoting human rights, democracy and rule of law.

In this sense, we must support the electoral results as long as they emerge from democratic legitimacy and respect to democratic rules, and new governments guarantee civil and political freedoms, as well as human rights

International support will be needed for the short, medium and long term but should be offered on terms defined by, and in close cooperation with, the national governments of the concerned countries.

These events have consequences far beyond the borders of the countries directly implicated, there are political, economic and security concerns and aspects that have to be taken into consideration in the re-evaluation and re-thinking of our policies vis-à-vis the region.

### **The Arab Spring and its aftermath**

For the CDI and its member parties, the values that unite us give us a responsibility to support the Arab Spring countries in the ongoing reshaping of their societies, and to monitor and promote democracy-building and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

There is an urgent need to increase and broaden current relations and strengthen them, to ensure that all stakeholders are part of the efforts to reshape societies. For the CDI and its member parties, this may mean direct talks with parties and NGOs, but also support to such dialogue through the European Union, the African Union, the Arab League, the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA), etc. Such a dialogue should also seek to address potential conflicts based on religion or ethnicity. Other possible means of support are exchanges, joint seminars but also scholarship and internship programmes for young politicians. In this sense, the foundation of the European People's Party, the Centre for European Studies (CES), has already initiated an exchange program for Young Arab Leaders in cooperation with the EPP Group in the European Parliament. Selected young Arab leaders of cooperating parties would

thereby have an opportunity to visit the European institutions and work as interns for a limited period of time.

We need to rethink our policies in order to better respond to urgent humanitarian needs, to react in a quicker and stronger way to any authoritarian tendencies, to improve "early warnings" of risks of new crises or conflicts and to take action to prevent them, to address short- and long-term migratory crises, and to build markets, in order to promote growth and competitiveness.

### **Algeria in the avant-garde of Arab Springs**

In the tumult of the successive Arab Springs and the libertarian surges of the Arabic people, Algeria seems to live an inexplicable situation of insularity with regard to this historic excitement which changes the face of the Arab world. Would it be that Algeria is really in a situation of political insularity which subtracts it from common Arabic destiny? Would it be that the Algerian people are not mature enough, contrary to their oriental brothers, to carry in a determining way their revolutionary and democratic aspirations? To ask the questions in this way is already to move forward in the sense of a better understanding of this particular context which made that Algeria is subtracted or is not concerned by none of the Arab Spring (s).

Recent revolutionary past of Algeria and the Algerians and the dimension of the Algerian revolution whose heavy toll was the sacrifice of one million and a half million martyrs do not let doubt on the capacity and the will of this nation to take its fate in hand when it magisterially turns out to be necessary.

It is not true that the Algerians emitted a very strong will, an active will of change on October, 1988? The democratic opening which had followed was not of the happiest, because in this early moose of democratic construction, it had escaped from the minds of the main actors of these changes that it missed some more elements indispensable to a peaceful structuring of the democracy, namely a solid economic basis which can face the expectations of a population in very strong increase in a context of over-indebtedness and vertiginous fall of oil prices, main source of wealth of the country.

This fragmented, incomplete approach of the democracy had for consequence a dive of the country in the unknown a lasting decade, with its lots of deaths, destruction and sadness.

Trying to give an answer, without prerequisites, by the democracy, to the popular expectations, the country, which refused then to fall into the hands of the fundamentalist obscurantism, sank into an incredible terrorist violence, which the world ignored for a long time repercussions and international sources.

At the end of this crisis which almost annihilated the Republican state, If there were not once again sacrifices granted by the children of this country, Algeria went out, certainly fatigued and bruised by the event, but also matured and consolidated in its perception of the process of democratic construction, a process which must be complete, accommodating the needs of freedom and justice which are the essence, with the imperatives of economic and social coverage of the populations, while favoring a representative structuring of a political class knowing how to take in charge the aspirations of the social categories in the common frame( of the republican project.

Armed with such a panoptic vision of the democratic building, the President of the Republic, Mister Abdelaziz Bouteflika, elected in 1999, got down to the implementation of numerous construction sites which complement each other, while working to concretize, through various national stages, the reconciliation and the cohesion, the core of this company and indispensable condition for its success, helped in it by a providential upturn of oil prices convenient to a financial voluntarism of the State.

Everything is questioned by a battery of reforms never committed before by the country, affecting justice, education, tax system, social net, economic system, local governance, etc. All this accompanied by successive programs of infrastructural, economic and social development, concerning hundreds of kilometers of highways, million new housing, the creation of tens of thousands companies and million jobs, not forgetting efforts of sectorial development the end of which is the erection of a strong, diversified and creative of wealth economy, less dependent on the export of hydrocarbons and on the import of capital and consumption goods.

Today, a quinquennial development program is in progress (on 2010 - 2014), endowed with 286 billion dollars.

From then on, the voluntarist and constructive anticipation which proceeds of the democratic building in Algeria introduced in 1989, then renewed from 1999, does not justify the utility of an Arab Spring in our country and explains the absence of mobilization of popular masses in Algeria, at the height of the Tunisian, Egyptian and Libyan tumults.

While young Arabs, weapons in the hand, were claiming the most elementary of their rights scoffed of lasting decades, Algeria managed, not farther than this last May, to override indisputably transparent elections, but also and make elected, within the Parliament, not less than 144 women. Our formation, the RND, which supported the emancipating initiative of President Bouteflika which forced the door of the anti-feminine conservatism in the electoral code, intends to contribute to the repetition of this exploit for the next municipal elections.

Actually, the democracy which does not give its place to the women in the political life is only an appearance of democracy.

We speak about a democracy which integrate the majority and also all the differences of ethnic, racial or sexual basis. A democracy which favors an active participation of all in the political life through a just partisan representation or an associative action revitalized and promoted in its missions and its purposes.

It is moreover the absence of any way, any space of expression that carries expectations, complaints as well as frustrations of the citizens, which favored the popular explosions which we attended through Arab Springs, having fed, for a long time, the resentment, the hatred and the envy for vengeance.

Arabic World whose community of fate is irrefragable today, sheltered, lasting decades, populations frustrated not to have been able to contribute to impose, since the independences, the Arabic way in the regulation of the conflicts involving the Arabic nation.

The successive failures, the obvious impotence of the Arabic governments, even sometimes the popular perception about dishonest compromise of certain regimes with the Occident eventually fed the certainty, at these people, that they have to begin, to restore their dignity by taking their fate in hand.

Risking to appear hiding the promising future on which the Arab Spring opens for its architects, it is necessary to recognize that the new situations which built up themselves in Arab countries after the revolutions arouse a lot of questioning and make dread new episodes of violence and new disorders.

If it's maybe about only natural retorts consecutive to the revolutionary shock, we should, nevertheless, recognize that the democratic opening and the freedom of expression are historically the natural girls of the prosperity, a condition which needs two indispensable elements in order to happen : time and means.

Far from trying, in this space, to making the apology of the authoritarianism, we just try hard to demonstrate, in the light of the Algerian experience, that the best of the democratic constructions is the one which happens by the peaceful transition by putting all the assets which could be reduced or even annihilated in a context of violence.

Algeria is in the avant-garde of the democratic construction in the Arab World ; it lived this process in the pain and goy strong thanks to a unique experience which feeds, henceforth, a wisdom of the people who refuse to speak language of violence and who show a big jealousy for the sovereignty and the national constants, satisfied to see that the Algerian state is giving echo to his libertarian aspirations in all human activity fields.

### **Defending Democracy and Human Rights**

The CDI is strongly committed to defend our common values wherever they are violated.

For instance, the CDI follows the developments in the totalitarian regimes of Latin America with a great attention. Authoritarian regimes are spreading through the continent limiting civil liberties, freedom and democracy. The recent developments in Nicaragua are worrying where the planned roadmap to settle down is supported by undemocratic regimes regimes (Cuba) or with important lack of Human Rights (Venezuela and Bolivia).

Recent attitudes of intercontinental networking, with the aim to destabilize the international community, must keep us alert from further developments to threaten stable and peaceful democracies.

It is unacceptable what happens in some Latin-American countries regarding connections between high policy and the drug trafficking and organized crime.

The CDI will always condemn and denounce the violation of civil rights.

With regard to Cuba, the CDI repeats its commitment to democracy in Cuba and their people. We will continue to support the Cuban society to find the way to democracy, the respect of human rights and the rule of law. The recent death of political dissident, Wilmar Villar, who died in prison following a 50-day hunger strike, shows once again the profound moral and political responsibility of the current oppressive regime of Raul Castro. As a consequence, recent developments to open the country have to be considered just political propaganda. The struggle must not end.

Neo-populism in the Venezuelan political authoritarian regime is dropping in deeper and deeper in the democratic levels, which is limiting democratic values. The internationalization of this process is regarded as a provocation with a common goal to threaten the international community.

Radical-indigenism is settling more and more within the Bolivian society. Unfortunately, this is often also linked to the big drug cartels which are covered up by the "petro-tyranny" of neighbors trapping the weakest and poorest.

We firmly believe that the wealth of human capital and natural reserves in many Latin American countries could help raise the continent and fight against the extreme poverty of these countries, if managed properly. We urge to protect civil society, to defend the fundamental rights and to fight for democracy in order to achieve these goals for the sake of freedom and progress.

### **External policies in favour of democratisation**

The "Arab Spring" has clearly demonstrated the limitations of the international community's focus on solely security and stability. On the contrary, they must be a wake-up call in order to better combine democracy-building, security and economic growth issues in the future. 'Security versus democracy' is a false dilemma since there can be no human security in a society without a democratic and

accountable government. This is true to say about the entire world, the greatest guarantor of lasting stability, is democracy: governments that are responsive and responsible to their people, and respectful of their inherent dignity and human rights. Europe's history contains a universal lesson in this regard: as nations have consolidated democratic practices and institutions, it has deepened the peace and security of the continent. In the case of the Middle East, more often than not economic and security interests of the Western countries have required cooperation with undemocratic or authoritarian leaders, without consistently challenging those leaders to take concrete steps towards a more democratic future. This would also be in line with the long-term interests of our nations, both within the Mediterranean basin and beyond.

In the light of this, the CDI:

- calls on actors such as the EU to prioritise in-depth dialogue on democratic values and norms with actors engaged in all democracy-strengthening processes; emphasises that building and strengthening democratic institutions can help to enhance economic development and reduce poverty.
- stresses the importance of a political support process which does not simply focus on the period immediately before and after elections, but is based on continuity; in this connection, it applauds the valuable work carried out by political foundations, such as the Centre for European Studies (CES) or the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS);
- emphasises that governments must be held accountable for human rights violations, inefficient governance, corruption and misappropriation of national resources intended to be used for the benefit of the whole of society; in this context, calls on its Member Parties to continue to make efforts to promote good governance. encourages aid donors to treat democracy-building as a political and moral imperative, rather than simply as a technical exercise, and to develop their local knowledge of the recipient countries so that aid can be targeted effectively to suit local circumstances.
- recognises the important role played by women in the democratisation process and calls on the Member States and the EU, in cooperation with the wider international community, to support women in their struggle for equal



rights, gender equality and empowerment.

- Condemns all persecution and discrimination of minorities, specially religious groups, wherever they occur as violations of the most basic human rights.
- Calls on the Egyptian authorities to reaffirm full freedom of worship for all citizens in Egypt, including the Christian communities, and that Coptic Christian communities do not fall victim to violent attacks but can live in peace and freely express their beliefs throughout the country.

Urges the Egyptian authorities to end the discrimination of Coptic Christians, who represent around 10% of the country's population, and to ensure equal dignity and equal opportunities for all citizens in Egypt to have access to all public and political posts, including representation in Parliament, in Government and in the Armed Forces.

- Is deeply concerned about the situation of the Christian minorities in Syria, in particular due to recent assaults on Christian communities and villages which seriously affected their safety and wellbeing; thus, condemns actions aimed at inciting inter-confessional conflict and religious discrimination and urges the current and future Syrian authorities to provide reliable and efficient protection for all the Christian communities as officially stated in the Syrian Constitution.
- To promote initiatives addressed to disseminate democratic values and a humanistic culture of tolerance and respect for human rights. Rising democratic processes will only consolidate if a cultural change is achieved, this gradual process will not be out of regressions.
- To promote intercultural dialogue respectful with each identity but able to identify humanist and universal values, as well as to hold reforms which encourage the adoption of

democratic procedures and creation of governments committed with importance of human being.

- To promote an effective separation of powers in the new democracies to achieve a counterbalance which guarantee respect of rights, safeguard of abuses and redefinition of army role, subordinated to civil authorities.
  
- To encourage instauration of a new rule of law in rising democracies guarantee by a fair independent judiciary. This new rule of law is the basic guarantee to hold democratic freedoms and respect for human dignity.