

SOMMAIRE

Tunisia: At this moment in time when the country tries to take control of its destiny

Forum réfugiés :
La nuit d'après.

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A deep thought for our three colleagues and friends missing in Yemen since Saturday May 28th, and from whom we have no news at the time we publish this letter.

Tunisia: At this moment in time when the country tries to take control of its destiny, the new challenges ahead of us.

By Xavier Bourgois

Undoubtedly, the extreme abundance of international news in recent months will turn 2011 into the year of revolutions. Some of them have drawn worldwide attention, while some others, less exposed, less violent or more subtle have been totally forgotten by the media.

But of all the Arab revolutions, it is the one that took place in Tunisia that will be remembered in History books of future generations as the one that opened the way for new realms of possibility. This great and sudden popular movement was able to vibrate throughout the region, dragging in its wake a gush of mixed hope, uncertainty, joy and fear. A revolution needs to be read in history, and for the time being, no one knows to what extent a real democratic transition will take place.

With the downfall of Ben Ali, difficult economic and social realities, under-estimated so far, also unfolded in front of the eyes of international solidarity actors such as Triangle G.H. In the field, Olivier Routeau carried-out an exploration mission revealing in fact the numerous challenges that the country will have to face within a political context remaining difficult.

A democratic victory not quite achieved.

« The time of euphoria seems now to give way to that of relative concern about the future of Tunisia -explains Olivier Routeau- notably regarding the increased popularity of forces some would not hesitate to consider as « extremist ». A vast majority of Tunisians feel an immense pride for what they have been able to accomplish peacefully, but they are at the same time very lucid regarding limits, in terms of democratic maturity of a people that has known nothing but authoritarian regimes (...) Fears about the future are numerous, and the country's capacity to overcome them will really determine if the revolution will give birth to demographic transition or if Tunisia will encounter a new dark period ».

It is above all the difficulty of civil society to structure itself that appeared at the aftermath of the revolution, considering institutions and their participation in the new political debates, in which everyone wishes to take part. At the time of the visit of Olivier Routeau on the field, 49 official parties had already emerged: « Rally calls have little echo, when no one can curb his desire to enter the debate, to express his opinion, and to participate in the country's reconstruction », a division still strongly prone to favor the sole organized political groups: those inherited from « Benalism » and so-called extremist parties.

In this context of mixed hope and uncertainty, new international solidarity actions emerge. In fact, the days following the Tunisian revolution were also marked by the massive influx of humanitarian actors wishing to be ready to welcome the flood of refugees fleeing the neighboring revolution in Libya.



Tunisian-Libyan border –
Refugees coming from Libya –
Photo : Patrick Verbruggen / Triangle G.H

In times when, from uprisings to revolts, priorities have accumulated for NGOs, at least 79 different organizations crossed the Tunisian-Libyan border to handle the flow of refugees fleeing fighting in the neighboring country. At the same time, the real economic and social situation of Tunisia started to unfold in front of the eyes of NGOs, especially that of the countryside. A crisis situation which had hitherto

escaped everyone's notice, including that of certain Tunisians coming from more favored areas, too long deluded with the propaganda prevailing until then, and having always praised the agricultural wealth of less touristic areas in the country.

An economy to rebuild: Tunisian countryside in sight.

Travelling through Tunisia today is moving from one world to another, in a country split in two, with on one side rich coastal tourism and industries, and on the other side the center of the country and its countryside, ignored by the economic policy prevailing until today. In concrete terms, difficulties are numerous, and vary according to the region. « The major problem however probably remains the access to employment. Some areas are indeed significantly affected by unemployment, from 60 to 75% in some cities, according to estimates of the population itself, in the absence of any official statistics on the question » explains Olivier Routeau insisting in his status report on the other issue apparently affecting the region: water.

Scarcity of the resource itself and lack of means favoring access to the latter add to a widely criticized water resource management. Tunisians in fact denounce its illegal use by the Algerian neighbor, via a certain number of water reservoirs (dams in particular). In addition, the succession of bad seasons in recent years really killed off the numerous seasonal workers of agricultural areas.

The economic withdrawal from the countryside such as the Center and the North West of the country, nevertheless rich in resources, has also been the result of a severe lack of product processing facilities. This is the case in the governorate of Sidi Bouzid, where an important part of the milk production is doomed to be discarded for lack of adequate storing capacities and of any processing facility nearby.

« Another problem, related to agriculture, is the lack of structuring of the sector with regard to small producers and the resulting vulnerability of the latter », says Olivier Routeau making a statement of a corrupted system that has always favored, in defiance of the law, a minority being in favor with the power, in order to develop large farms to its greater benefit. « The impossibility for small producers to merge and/or associate, under the former regime, prevented any questioning of the system in general and of reported infringements they could be the victims of ». Fortified by this knowledge, Triangle wished to make its stance, beyond emergency, in a field neglected until then.

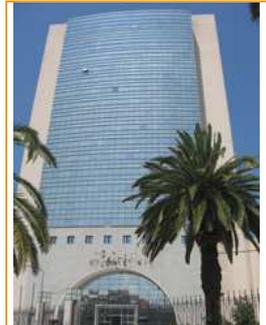


Threshing – Seneel - Governorate of Gafsa –
Photo : Hichem Boussetta

Observe and understand in order to act more efficiently: Triangle is making its stance.

« It is obvious that power will not be able to do everything » –Explains Patrick Verbruggen, co-founder of TGH, for whom the future work in partnership with the Tunisians is above all a matter of solidarity with « those Mediterranean countries which are so close geographically, historically and culturally ». Triangle wants to position its action as a support process, not as assistance. For the NGO, as pointed out by the exploratory mission, « The skills and projects are most of the time already existing, most of the work in terms of development consisting in supporting these initiatives, hence the relevance to focus part of the project on the structuring of producers cooperatives and on the supporting of local initiatives ».

Given the lack of infrastructures identified by this observation mission, the NGO's future projects should be able to identify two pilot initiatives at this level with a view to modelize approaches that are generating local employment, to reevaluate products' added value to the benefit of producers, but also to better use resources in some cases.



Headquarters of the DCR (Democratic
Constitutional Rally) in Tunis.
Tunisian political party founded in 1988
by Ben Ali and dissolved in March 2011
Photo : Olivier Routeau / Triangle G.H



Former irrigation canal –
Governorate of Sidi Bouzid –
Photo : Olivier Routeau / Triangle G.H

NEWSLETTER ISSUE N° 16
JULY 2011

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forum réfugiés fête les soixante ans de la convention de genève

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**prises de paroles
de demandeurs d'asile et de réfugiés,
de philippe leclerc, délégué en France
du haut commissariat aux réfugiés (UNHCR),
d'organisations amies.**

la nuit d'après est une soirée de fête et d'alerte en faveur des réfugiés dans le monde. Elle célébrera le soixantième anniversaire de la Convention de Genève, socle de la protection internationale des réfugiés. Ces soixante années témoignent des crises et des conflits qui jalonnent l'histoire contemporaine et des réponses apportées par les Etats, les Nations unies et la société civile pour assurer la protection des personnes qui fuient la persécution « *du fait de leur race, de leur religion, de leur nationalité, de leur appartenance à un certain groupe social ou de leurs opinions politiques* ». Elles montrent aussi que ces réponses n'ont pas été toujours à la hauteur des horreurs vécues, des besoins et des espérances. La protection des réfugiés ne saurait être considérée comme un acquis définitif ou comme une affaire appelée à ne concerner que les autres. Elle est régulièrement mise à mal par les replis identitaires et les égoïsmes nationaux. Elle dépend du soin mis par tous ceux qui ont conscience de sa précarité à la défendre et à la consolider. C'est ce à quoi les organisations participantes vous invitent ici.

ORGANISATIONS PARTENAIRES : AGIR ENSEMBLE POUR LES DROITS DE L'HOMME, ASSOCIATION VILLEURBANNAISE POUR LE DROIT AU LOGEMENT, MAISON DE L'EUROPE LYON, ESPACES LATINOS, MIGRATIONS SANTÉ RHÔNE-ALPES, CIMADE, ACAT, ECRIE, BAPREAU DE LYON, COSS - PROMOUVOIR ET DÉFENDRE LES DROITS, CULTURE POUR TOUS, ENTRAPPE PIERRE VALDO, ENTRAIDE PROTESTANTE, PASTORALE DES MIGRANTS, SECOURS CATHOLIQUE, TRIANGLE GÉNÉRATION HUMANAIRE, SOS EXCLUSION / GENEVE. **FINANÇEMENTS :** FONDS EUROPÉEN POUR LES RÉFUGIÉS, UN MONDE PAR TOUS, DÉPARTEMENT DU RHÔNE, VILLE DE LYON, GRAND LYON, RÉGION RHÔNE-ALPES, CASSIS D'ÉPARGNE, UNHCR, SACEM. **REMERCIEMENTS :** FORUM RÉFUGIÉS REMERCIERIE LES ARTISTES ET LES TECHNICIENS, LES BÉNÉVOLES JEAN-PHILIPPE AUBANEL ET NATHALIE NAVARRE (AFFICHE), FRANÇOIS DIOT / ORPHOS, OLIVIER SAINT PIERRE, JEAN-MARC GREFFERAT, MARC GIOUSE ET LES MARCHEURS, LES MACHINEURS, MÉDIATONE, SCENETEC, GL EVENT, LE MUSÉE GALLO-ROMAIN ET LES NUTTS DE FOURVIÈRE. 491. **AVIC** LES OUVRIERS QUALIFIÉS.

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