

Indicators Assessment- Unitary States

Tunisia

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This Indicators Assessment report offers a country assessment of 4 composite indicators: (1) state-religious institutions relations, (2) status of religious minority groups, (3) religious radicalisation level, and (4) radicalisation prevention measures. It is part of a series covering 23 countries (listed below) on four continents. This assessment report was produced by GREASE, an EU-funded research project investigating religious diversity, secularism and religiously inspired radicalisation.

Countries covered in this series:

Albania, Australia, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Malaysia, Morocco, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, Tunisia, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

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The EU-Funded GREASE project looks to Asia for insights on governing religious diversity and preventing radicalisation.

Involving researchers from Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Oceania, GREASE is investigating how religious diversity is governed in over 20 countries. Our work focuses on comparing norms, laws and practices that may (or may not) prove useful in preventing religious radicalisation. Our research also sheds light on how different societies cope with the challenge of integrating religious minorities and migrants. The aim is to deepen our understanding of how religious diversity can be governed successfully, with an emphasis on countering radicalisation trends.

While exploring religious governance models in other parts of the world, GREASE also attempts to unravel the European paradox of religious radicalisation despite growing secularisation. We consider the claim that migrant integration in Europe has failed because second generation youth have become marginalised and radicalised, with some turning to jihadist terrorism networks. The researchers aim to deliver innovative academic thinking on secularisation and radicalisation while offering insights for governance of religious diversity.

The project is being coordinated by Professor Anna Triandafyllidou from The European University Institute (EUI) in Italy. Other consortium members include Professor Tariq Modood from The University of Bristol (UK); Dr. H. A. Hellyer from the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) (UK); Dr. Mila Mancheva from The Centre for the Study of Democracy (Bulgaria); Dr. Egdunas Raciunas from Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania); Mr. Terry Martin from the research communications agency SPIA (Germany); Professor Mehdi Lahlou from Mohammed V University of Rabat (Morocco); Professor Haldun Gulalp of The Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (Turkey); Professor Pradana Boy of Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang (Indonesia); Professor Zawawi Ibrahim of The Strategic Information and Research Development Centre (Malaysia); Professor Gurpreet Mahajan of Jawaharlal Nehru University (India); and Professor Michele Grossman of Deakin University (Melbourne, Australia). GREASE is scheduled for completion in 2022.

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GREASE - Radicalisation, Secularism and the Governance of Religion: Bringing Together European and Asian Perspectives

Country Assessment Report

Name of Country Assessed: Tunisia

I. Composite Indicator 1: State-Religious Institutions Relations

Overall Assessment:

After the 2011, there was considerable debate between Islamic political groups, represented by Ennahda, and secular parties over the role of Sharia in the legislation process. The debate over this issue has raised the level of tension in society between secularists and Islamists. As polarization reached worrying levels, Rachid Ghannouchi, the president of Ennahda, interfered and persuaded members of his party that there is no need to explicitly refer to Islamic Sharia in the [Constitution](#) and that it would be enough to keep the pre-existing first clause of the old Constitution which states that 'Tunisia is a free, sovereign and independent state, whose religion is Islam' (article 1). The Tunisian constitution also declares the country to be a "civil state (article 2). The constitution designates the government as the "guardian of religion" and obligates the state to disseminate the values of "moderation and tolerance." It prohibits the use of mosques and other houses of worship to advance political agendas or objectives and guarantees freedom of belief, conscience, and exercise of religious practice (article 6).

In practice, the state is politically independent from religious influences. However, the religious sphere has been increasingly under the control of state institutions. After 2011, the security apparatus lost control over the religious sphere. Estimates point to approximately half of the mosques in the country having had their Imams expelled by the state during this period. Since 2013 successive ministers of religious endowments have been determined to extend the ministry's control over all mosques and imams and close all illegal mosques.

The Political Parties Law of 1988 prohibited the creation of parties on religious or ethnic grounds. After the 2011 uprising, the current 2011 law does not list religion as a prohibited basis for political parties, but prohibits political parties from using religion to call for violence or discrimination.

While the Tunisian constitution guarantees freedom of belief, conscience, and exercise of religious practice, local and international nongovernmental organizations reported that police used arrests, house searches, and travel restrictions to target Salafists and others, some of whom, according to the NGOs, were profiled as terrorists based on their appearance or religious beliefs. Christian citizens stated the government did not fully recognize their rights, particularly as they pertain to the establishment of a legal entity or association that would grant them the ability to establish an Arabic-language church or a cemetery ([Tunisia 2018 International Religious Freedom report](#)).

Majority and minority ethnic and religious groups have benefited from the new political environment after 2011 to express themselves and defend their interests as is the case for example with the establishment of Amazigh associations, as well as the lobbying to pass the "[Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination](#)" Act in October 2018.

A limited number of Catholic schools operate in Tunisia, but their affiliation with the Church is not publicized. As for the Jewish community, In accordance with government

permits, it operates private religious schools, and Jewish children were allowed to split their academic day between public schools and private religious schools or attend either type of school full-time. Islamic Religious schools in Tunisia were banned under the old regime. However, after 2011 Islamic religious schools have been spreading throughout the country.

The media in Tunisia has witnessed radical shift from restriction and censorship under the old regime to a free and diverse media sphere after 2011. Islamic activists have taken advantage of this new environment to establish new media outlets that reflect their ideological preferences as is the case with Zaitouna TV, the weekly newspaper al-Damir, and Ennahda's al-Fajr.

1. State autonomy from religion	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(1a) Legal dimension: The Constitution/Basic law defines the state as secular	High	2020
(1b) Practical Dimension: Actual level of state political autonomy/independence from religion	Medium	2020
2. Participation of religious institutions and religious groups in political decision-making and policy-making.	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(2a) Legal Dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant legislation forbids formal participation of religious institutions and religious groups in formal political decision-making.	Very high	2020
(2b) Practical Dimension: In practice, religious institutions and religious groups lack formal participation in political decision-making.	High	2020
3. Religiously-based political parties in political life.	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(3a) Legal Dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant legislation forbids participation of religiously-based political parties in political life.	Low	2020
(3b) Practical Dimension: In practice, religiously-based political parties lack participation in political life.	Low	2020
4. State non-interference in the regulation of religious matters of religious institutions and religious communities (including regulation of religious courts, councils, religious family laws, etc.).	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(4a) Legal Dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant legislation enforces state non-interference in the regulation of religious matters of religious institutions and religious communities.	Very low	2020
(4b) Practical Dimension: In practice, there is no state interference in the regulation of religious affairs of religious institutions and religious communities.	Very low	2020

5. State non-interference in the regulation of the administrative matters of religious institutions and religious communities (including personnel and funds).	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(5a) Legal dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant legislation enforces state non-interference in the regulation (e.g., personnel, financial matters) of the administrative matters of religious institutions and religious communities.	Low	2020
(5b) Practical Dimension: In practice, there is no state interference in the regulation of the administrative affairs (e.g., personnel, financial, etc.) of religious institutions and religious communities.	Low	2020
6. State recognition of freedom of religion.	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(6a) Legal Dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant legislation allows freedom of religion.	Low	2020
(6b) Practical Dimension: In practice, religious groups/communities enjoy freedom of religion.	Medium	2020
7. Freedom for religious groups/communities to set up and manage educational institutions.	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(7a) Legal dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant religious legislation allows religious groups/communities to set up and manage educational institutions.	Low	2020
(7b) Practical Dimension: Religious groups/communities set up and manage educational institutions.	Low	2020
8. Autonomy of religious media	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(8a) Legal dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant legislation recognises and allows religious media.	Medium	2020
(8b) Practical Dimension: In practice, religious media practice their activity.	Medium	2020

II. Composite Indicator 2: Status of Religious Minority Groups

Overall Assessment:

Tunisia is often regarded as a homogenous society with an overwhelmingly Arab Sunni population. However, Tunisia knows both religious and ethnic diversity. On the religious level, Tunisia has Sunni, Ibādī, Baha'i, Christian and Jewish communities. On the ethnic level, the country contains: Arab, Amazigh and black communities. As the Tunisian constitution (both of 1959 and 2014) states that Islam is the religion of the state, the only minorities currently recognized in Tunisia are the Christian and Jewish communities, as both considered by Islam as "people of the book". There are between 1,500 to 2,000 Jewish remaining in Tunisia. Estimates by NGOs suggest that the total Christian population does not exceed 5,000 (Silvia Quattrini, [Identity and Citizenship in Tunisia: The Situation of Minorities after the 2011 Revolution](#), Minority Rights Group, 2018). As for both Baha'i and Ibādī communities, their exact numbers in Tunisia are unknown. No official figures exist on the number of Amazigh and black communities either.

Discrimination on the basis of religion in the recruitment of public servants is banned by law. However, according to the 1959 as well as the current 2014 Constitution, non-Muslim citizens, are not allowed to become president of the Republic (Article 74).

According to the laws and the practice, Religious minority groups do not receive special social security benefits designated for them.

There is no reported formal or informal rules that prevent members of religious minority groups from accessing public spaces. There are signs that the Christian community is able to enjoy greater visibility since the 2010/11 revolution. For example, the Festa della Madonna was celebrated in La Goulette, near Tunis, after decades in which it was not possible. As for the Jewish community however, their annual pilgrimage to Africa's oldest synagogue in Djerba was cancelled in 2011, and in following years only a few hundred attended, fearing attacks by radical Islamists. In the last couple of years however more people have been participating.

A [1964 modus vivendi](#) with the Holy See grants official recognition to the Roman Catholic Church. The concordat allows the Church to function in Tunisia and provides state recognition of the Catholic Church. However, it restricts religious activities and services to the physical confines of authorized churches and prohibits construction of new churches and the ringing of church bells. As for the Jewish community, the responsibility for Jewish religious institutions is governed by a 1958 law regulating Jewish religious practices. This law places responsibility for regulating synagogues and administering their affairs, for administering burial sites, and for holding funerals, to the Israelite religious associations. Jewish groups stated they continued to worship freely, and the government continued to provide security for synagogues, and partially

subsidized restoration and maintenance costs ([Tunisia 2018 International Religious Freedom report](#))

Although the successive Tunisian governments prior to 2011 have defined Tunisia's national identity as Arab and Muslim, ethnic and religious minorities have benefited from the new political environment after 2011 to express themselves and defend their interests as is the case for example with the establishment of Amazigh associations. However, in spite of continued appeals from the Baha'i community, the government did not recognize the Baha'i faith or grant its association legal status. In August 2018 the Baha'i community received information that a court had denied the community's court case pertaining to its petition to be a registered association.

Religious groups may form and register associations under the law to establish a bank account and conduct financial activities such as charity work and receive favorable tax treatment, including tax-free donations from government-approved associations, provided the association does not purport to represent all believers of a religious group or use the name of a religious group ([Tunisia 2018 International Religious Freedom report](#)).

1. Legal status of religious minority groups.	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(1a) Legal dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant religious legislation recognises religious minority groups.	Low	2020
(1b) Practical Dimension: In practice, religious minority groups enjoy legal registration status recognised by the government.	Medium	2020
2. Religious minority group participation in political life.	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(2a) Legal Dimension: Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant religious legislation grants religious minority groups rights to participate in the political life of the state.	High	2020
(2b) Practical Dimension: Religious minority groups participate in political life.	High	2020
3. Special social security status of religious minority groups.	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(3a) Legal Dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant religious legislation grants religious minority groups rights to special social security benefits.	Insufficient information	2020
(3b) Practical Dimension: In practice, religious minority groups have special access to social security benefits.	Very low	2020
4. Access of religious minority groups to public spaces.	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(4a) Legal Dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant religious legislation grants religious minority groups right of access to public spaces.	Insufficient information	2020
(4b) Practical Dimension: Religious minority groups enjoy access to public spaces.	Very High	2020

5. Access to public funds for initiatives/activities of religious minority groups.	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(5a) Legal dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant religious legislation grants religious minority groups right of access to public funds for their own initiatives/activities.	Insufficient information	2020
(5b) Practical Dimension: Religious minority groups have access to public funds for their own initiatives/activities.	Low	2020
6. Public accommodation of cultural practices specific to religious minority groups.	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(6a) Legal Dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant religious legislation allows public accommodation of cultural practices specific to religious minority groups.	Insufficient information	2020
(6b) Practical Dimension: Religious minority groups express their cultural practices publicly.	Medium	2020
7. Ownership of houses of worship.	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(7a) Legal dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant religious legislation grants religious minority groups rights to own their houses of worship.	Low	2020
(7b) Practical Dimension: Religious minority groups own houses of worship.	Low	2020

III. **Composite Indicator 3: Radicalisation Levels**

Overall assessment:

Structural factors

Tunisia's level of freedom has improved (from not free to free) since 2011. Tunisia's Level of religious-related government restrictions has also improved from High Level in 2009 to Moderate in 2015 and its score from 5.1 (2009) to 4.1 (2015). The Level of protection of human rights has been improving from 7.5 (2010) to 7 (2015) and 5.6 (2020). These positive developments are connected to the 2011 popular uprising that brought down the authoritarian regime of Ben Ali, and has started Tunisia's so far successful democratic transition with two consecutive parliamentary and presidential elections in 2014 and 2019. However, Tunisia's level of state legitimacy worsened after the 2011 uprising, from 6.4 (2010) to 7 (2015). This is most likely due to the challenges that accompanied the political transition, such as political polarization between Islamists and secularists, as well as the wave of Islamist insurgency. Political polarization has led to multiple rounds of mass public demonstrations from both secularists and Islamists. However, the score has been improving in recent years to reach 6.7 in 2019, and 6.2 in 2020 which shows that confidence in state institutions has been improving. Level of Group Grievances scores have deteriorated after 2011 to go from 5.4 (2010) to 7.8 (2015). This is most likely due to the political divisions between secularists and Islamists during the constitutional writing process as well as the socio-economic mobilization particularly in the south. However, the score has been improving in recent years from 7.1 in 2019 to 6.8 in 2020.

Perception-based indicators

Distrust in political institutions has been increasing from 31.5% (government) in 2011, to 57.2% (government) and 63.8% (parliament) in 2013, to 64.3% (government) and 71.8% (parliament) in 2016. In 2018, distrust reached 74.1% (government) 78.5% (parliament). This is an indicator of lack of trust in political parties, both Islamists and secularists. This trend has been manifested in the 2019 presidential elections where the two candidates in the run off are "outsiders", while the candidates of the main secular and Islamist parties could not make it to the second round. On the other side, distrust in the armed forces has been generally very low: 9% (2018), 6.1% (2016), 16.1% (2013), and 7.1 % (2011). This is due to the army's important role in fighting terrorism and maintaining stability in Tunisia as well as its image as a protector of Tunisia's democratic process without interfering in it. Almost half of Tunisians (48%) think that the economic situation is the most serious problem in their country. Also 80% of Tunisians are concerned about extremism in their country. This high percentage makes sense given the Salafi-Jihadi challenge the country has been facing since 2011. This is evidenced by the number of deaths due to terrorism per year, which increased from four in 2011 to 81 in 2015. More than half of the population (55%) opposes diversity. 28.8% of Tunisians dislike a neighbor from a different religion.

Incidence-based indicators

Tunisia has been witnessing an Islamist insurgency since 2011. This insurgency reached its peak in 2015 and 2016. That explains the increase in the level of social hostilities involving religion after 2011. It went from 3.1 in 2009 to 3.8 in 2017.

However, since then the Tunisian security forces managed to limit these Jihadist attacks.

1. Structural factors/environment	Score/Level/Percentage	YEAR (Most Recent)
(1a) Level of Freedom	Level: Free Freedom score: 70	2019
(1b) Level of adherence to rule of law	Overall rank: 56 Overall score: 0.54	2020
(1c) Level of religious-related government restrictions	Score: 4.1 Level: Moderate	2015
(1d) Level of state legitimacy	Score: 6.2 Level: Moderate	2020
(1e) Level of protection of human rights	Score: 5.6 Level: Moderate	2020
(1f) Level of group grievances	Score: 6.8 Level: High	2020
(1g) Uneven economic development	Score: 4.6 Level: Moderate	2020
(1h) Wealth disparity (top 10% possessing above average percentage of the total income share)	Percentage: 40.7%	2017

2. Perception-based indicators (social grievances)	Percentage (%)	YEAR (Most Recent)
(2a) Distrust in national institutions	Parliament: 78.5% Government: 74.1 <i>Other</i> : Courts and legal system: 46% Armed forces: 9%	2018
(2b) Political discontent	Dissatisfaction with country direction: 5% Dissatisfaction with overall situation: no data Dissatisfaction with democracy/government performance: 47%	2018 2018
(2c) Economic discontent	Dissatisfaction own financial situation: no data Dissatisfaction national economy: Economic situation is the most serious problem: 48% Financial and administrative corruption: 12% Fighting terrorism/religious extremism: 13%	2018 2018
(2d) Discrimination	Opposing diversity: 55%	2018

Tunisia	Indicators Assessment	GREASE
	Dislike neighbors from minority groups: 28.8% (different religion)/10.2% (different race) Experienced discrimination: 58%	2018 2016
(2e) Views on violent extremism	VE is a serious problem/threat: 81% Concern about Islamic terrorism: 80% Endorsement of VE actions/ actors: 18%	2018 2013

3. Incidence-based indicators (religious violence and conflict)	Score/Level/Number	YEAR (Most Recent)
(3a) State-based armed conflict	Yes/No: Yes	2018
(3b) Level of social hostilities involving religion	Level: High Score: 3.8	2017
(3c) Incidence and impact of terrorism	Score: 4.088 Number of Incidents: 19	2018
(3d) Violent extremist incidents	Number: Insufficient information	
(3e) Significant violent extremist actors/networks	Level: Moderate	2020

IV. **Composite Indicator 4: Radicalisation Prevention Measures**

After the large scale attacks carried out by ISIS in 2015 and 2016 (the Bardo Museum in March 2015, Sousse Beach in June 2015, and Ben Gardane in March 2016), the Tunisian authorities understood the need to develop a strategy to effectively counter and prevent violent extremism.

Tunisia scores well on **the comprehensiveness of relevant legislation and strategic approach**.

In August 2015, Tunisia's assembly of representatives adopted the [Counter-Terrorism Law](#) to provide a framework for counter-terrorism efforts in the country. The law tries to strike a better balance between the protection of human rights and fighting terrorism than the 2003 anti-terrorism law issued under Ben Ali. Nonetheless, human rights organizations objected to the law for its vague definition of terrorism and the broad leeway it gives to judges to admit testimony by anonymous witnesses. In November 2016, Tunisia's national Security Council adopted a strategy to fight terrorism and extremism. This strategy is built around four points: prevention, protection, judicial proceedings, and retaliation. The Counter-Terrorism (CT) Law of 2015 led to the creation of the National Counter-Terrorism Committee (Commission nationale de lutte antiterroriste). Its main mission is to oversee the implementation of the national Counter-Terrorism strategy and coordinate all efforts across ministries in the field of counterterrorism and PVE. The National CT Committee works as a platform that aims at facilitating inter-agency coordination and intelligence sharing. The Committee involves a dozen ministries which are relevant to PVE activities. This includes the following ministries: Human rights, Youth and Sports, Women family and childhood, Education, Culture and Religious Affairs.

However the Tunisian counterterrorism strategy still lacks important elements. In dealing with returning fighters, the Tunisian authorities seem to hope that the problem will fix itself (Aaron Y. Zelin and Jacob Walles, Tunisia's Foreign Fighters, Washington Institute, December 17, 2018). The government is now able to recognize returnees at official border crossings, but it has no plan for what to do once they are identified, and its security forces lack the means to monitor them. The government offers no rehabilitation or reintegration initiatives for individuals who fought in Syria—returnees are either detained in prison or free to join general society.

On the **comprehensiveness of measures** Tunisia's scores are low with no programmes for support of victims of terrorism and violent extremism, Training for frontline practitioners, platforms for intra and interfaith dialogue between the state and religious leaders, or programs and measures to prevent radicalisation into violent extremism in prison and probation settings.

However, Tunisia has been working with international partners on reforming and improving the capability of its security sector. Also, civil society actors are seen as relevant actors in the field of PVE. Civil society has been taking part in a wide range of PVE relevant activities, including cultural activities, community work, capacity-building, art therapy.

1. Comprehensive strategic approach	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(1a) Legislative foundation for adoption of PVE action plan	Yes	2015

Tunisia	Indicators Assessment	GREASE
(1b) Existence of PVE strategy and a national action plan	Yes	2016
(1c) Presence of comprehensive monitoring mechanisms of strategy / action plan implementation	Insufficient information	
(1d) Presence of dedicated body tasked with PVE strategy development and coordination	Yes	2015
(1e) Compliance of strategy and action plan with human rights standards and the principles of rule of law	Yes	2015
(1f) Participation of a wide range of government actors in development and implementation of PVE strategy and action plan	Yes	2015
(1g) Participation of non-government actors in development and implementation of PVE strategy and action plan	Limited participation	2015
(1h) Reference to FTFs and related measures in PVE strategy/action plan	No	2016
(1i) Reference to terrorism financing and related measures in PVE strategy and action plan	Yes	2018
(1j) Reference to communication counter- or alternative narrative campaigns in PVE strategy/action plan	Yes	2016

2. Comprehensiveness of measures - areas of action, actors and projects	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(2a) Development and implementation of programmes for support of victims of terrorism and violent extremism	No	2020
(2b) Training for frontline practitioners	No	2020
(2c) Initiatives to improve the preparedness of security forces, law enforcement and justice institutions to deal with radicalisation.	Yes	2015
(2d) Development and implementation of P/CVE-specific education initiatives for youth	Yes	2015
(2e) Development and implementation of P/CVE education initiatives and projects for women	Yes	2018
(2f) Platforms for intra and interfaith dialogue between the state and religious leaders	No	
(2g) Networks for civil society, religious leaders, youth and women's organisations for dialogue, cooperation and best practices.	No	
(2h) Grassroots initiatives by civil society actors focussed on prevention	High level	2015
(2i) Counter- and alternative- narrative campaigns	Yes	2016
(2j) Multi-agency cooperation and/or referral mechanisms at local level identifying and supporting at-risk persons	No	
(2k) State-commissioned research on religiously-inspired radicalisation and violent extremism	Yes	2014
(2l) programs and measures to prevent radicalisation into violent extremism in prison and probation settings	No	

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