

## After the Spring: the seventh anniversary of the Jasmine Revolution

Tunisians have seized on commemorations of the [Jasmine Revolution](#)'s seventh anniversary to oppose the government's austerity measures. In a way, the continuing clamour in the North African state is for a consolidation of the fragile gains from the 2011 revolution that set off the Arab Spring. In the weeks-long demonstrations, at least one person has been killed and a few hundred activists detained. The trigger for the unrest is the stringent terms attached to the government's recent budget — a precondition for the \$2.9 billion loan from the IMF. Lower petrol subsidies and higher taxes on cars and utilities are among the measures proposed to reduce the fiscal deficit, currently at 6% of GDP, to 4.9% by the year-end. Further fuelling the anger are the 25% youth unemployment rate, twice the national average, and persisting disparities among regions. Tourism has been one of the sectors worst-hit by the political unrest of recent years and the 2015 terrorist attacks. The government has promised \$70 million in aid to support the poorer communities in a bid to quell the protests. But as the opposition Popular Front has set its sights on the withdrawal of the budget, there are few signs of the turmoil subsiding anytime soon.

The country-wide opposition and police action have, understandably, led to comparisons with Tunisia's 2011 popular uprising that spread across the Arab world. The relatively stable transition witnessed in Tunis, in contrast with the authoritarian backlash in other countries, saw Tunisia being hailed as a global model. Perhaps conscious of this, Prime Minister Youssef Chahed has been cautious, confining his criticism to the violence behind the opposition rather than the expression of dissent *per se* against the fiscal reforms. But he would have to show demonstrable progress in implementing democratic reforms to restore confidence in the government's ability to deal with the discontentment. Of particular concern is a 2015 security law that has been revived following the recent death of a police official. Civil society groups are apprehensive that the measure is intended to grant immunity to the police and the military, as well as to penalise critics. Another controversial law passed in September to grant amnesty to officials charged with corruption allegedly committed during the nearly 25-year rule of Tunisia's ousted dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali is being challenged by some parliamentarians. In recent years, the IMF has seemed more alive to the macroeconomic issues confronting developing countries, even as it has administered the usual recipe of structural reforms. Tunis could do with international support to prevent the country from slipping into the kind of chaos and uncertainty that has gripped the rest of the region. European Union nations in particular have an interest in promoting political and economic stability, in the light of migrant outflows from North Africa to the continent. Above all, the leadership in Tunisia could do more to reclaim popular trust.

Receive the best of The Hindu delivered to your inbox everyday!

Please enter a valid email address.

The draft of Assam's National Register of Citizens is a first step, but it opens up concerns

END

Downloaded from [crackIAS.com](#)

© **Zuccess App** by [crackIAS.com](#)