

## TUNISIA

**Date of Elections:** 2 April 1989

### **Purpose of Elections**

Elections were held for all the seats in Parliament following premature dissolution of this body on 2 March 1989. General elections had previously been held in November 1986.

### **Characteristics of Parliament**

The unicameral Parliament of Tunisia, the Chamber of Deputies, is composed of 141 members elected for 5 years\*.

### **Electoral System**

All citizens aged 20 years or more who have held Tunisian nationality for at least five years and who are in full possession of their civil and political rights are entitled to vote. Disqualified are persons convicted of crime; those convicted of offences which entail either an unsuspended sentence of imprisonment in excess of three months or a suspended sentence in excess of six months; those under guardianship; undischarged bankrupts; the insane; and active members of the armed and security forces.

The electoral registers are permanent. They are revised at the commune or sector level annually in early January. Voting is not compulsory.

Candidates for Parliament must be qualified electors who are at least 25 years of age and born of a Tunisian father. Members of the Constitutional Council, members of the Economic and Social Council, governors, magistrates and members of the police force cannot be elected. The exercise of public functions which are non-elective and remunerated out of funds from the State, public establishments or public collectivities are generally incompatible with the office of Deputy; this is also true for the office of president or director of a national enterprise and public establishment, as well as director or administrator of certain public enterprises. Also incompatible are offices which involve working for a foreign State or an international organization when remuneration is provided by these employers.

Candidatures must be submitted during the third or fourth week preceding the elections. Candidates may either run as independents or as members of a party list; within the same constituency, several lists may not bear the same title or belong to the same party or organization. Each list enumerates as many candidates as there are seats to be filled in the constituency. Candidates need make no monetary deposit but need the backing of 75 electors.

\* See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 17.

Tunisia is divided into 25 electoral constituencies. In each, two to nine candidates, who appear on lists, are elected by simple majority. The elector casts as many votes as there are seats to be filled and, in so doing, may cross out names or split his vote among candidates of different lists. Should only one list be presented, the candidates on it who have obtained the greatest number of votes are declared elected. In case of vote splitting, the seats to be filled are allotted to the candidates of the different lists in the order of votes obtained.

A parliamentary seat which falls vacant between general elections is filled through a by-election held within three months. No by-elections are, however, held within the last 12 months of the expiry of the legislature's term.

### Background and Outcome of the Elections

Following the November 1986 general elections, Mr. Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali took office as President of the Republic one year later - on 7 November 1987 - succeeding Mr. Habib Bourguiba. Another year later to the day, the date of the 1989 presidential and legislative elections was announced (originally for 9 April); polling for the Chamber of Deputies was not normally due until November 1991.

Also in November 1988, six opposition political parties had signed a "national pact" on multi-partyism with the Government. Thus some 350 candidates challenged the 141 (one for each seat of the enlarged Chamber of Deputies) of the ruling Democratic Constitutional Rally (*Rassemblement constitutionnel démocratique* - RCD), known as the Destour Socialist Party (PSD) until 1988. The two-week campaign commenced on 19 March.

On a generally peaceful polling day, Mr. Ben Ali, unopposed, won the five-year term presidency and the RCD captured all parliamentary seats despite a strong challenge from independent candidates linked to Islamic fundamentalists and in the face of a poor showing by the main opposition Democratic Socialist Movement (MDS). This total triumph was attributed to Tunisia's simple majority electoral system.

On 11 April, President Ben Ali reshuffled his Cabinet.

### Statistics

#### 1. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the Chamber of Deputies

Number of registered electors . . . . .	2,711,925	
Voters . . . . .	2,073,719	(76.46%)
Blank or void ballot papers . . . . .	31,838	
Valid votes . . . . .	2,041,881	

Political Group	% of Votes obtained	Number of Seats
Democratic Constitutional Rally (RCD) . . . . .	80.48	141*

\* 16 seats added since last elections.

2. *Distribution of Deputies according to Profession*

Professors, teachers. . . . .	37
Civil servants. . . . .	30
Engineers. . . . .	19
Doctors. . . . .	15
Lawyers. . . . .	12
Businessmen. . . . .	8
Judges. . . . .	4
Farmers. . . . .	2
Pharmacists. . . . .	2
Others. . . . .	12
	141

3. *Distribution of Deputies according to Sex*

Men. . . . .	135
Women. . . . .	6

4. *Distribution of Deputies according to Age*

30-40 years. . . . .	46
40-50 ". . . . .	64
50-60 ". . . . .	22
Over 60 ". . . . .	4
	141