



The Middle East Partnership Initiative

Transition Support for Tunisia

MEPI is leading the U.S. Government's response to support the Tunisian transition to democracy and build the foundation for long-term stability and wider economic opportunity. Through the MEPI Regional Office in Tunis and Headquarters in Washington, DC, MEPI has been working with Tunisians since 2002.

Tunisia's historic transition to democracy calls for even more focused assistance. After January 14th, MEPI moved swiftly to realign its budget to free up \$23 million to support Tunisians during this critical transition period. This \$23 million is reaching Tunisians throughout the country in support of the following priorities:

Support Tunisian Civil Society

MEPI is expanding its support to local civil society organizations through its unique Local Grants program, which directly supports civic groups on the ground. Local grants respond to priorities and proposals from local organizations, ensuring that Tunisians remain out in front of their democratic transition and getting more Tunisians involved in civic life. Since January 2011, MEPI's Regional Office in Tunis has awarded a dozen new local grants to provide assistance on election issues, including election observation, and advancing the role of women and youth in politics. In addition, MEPI has awarded two larger grants, to Mercy Corps and Search for Common Ground, who are working with Tunisian civil society organizations across the country, promoting civic engagement from the coast to the interior of the country.

Strengthen Political Participation

Awards to the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) will help train poll workers, build political party capacity, develop constituent outreach strategies, and assist civil society and the media as they monitor and publicize election preparations. In addition, one of MEPI's local grantees, Youth Observatory for Democracy, was selected by the Tunisian Independent Electoral Commission to manage its voter registration awareness campaigns.

Expand Freedom of Expression

New MEPI projects empower citizens to share their ideas with a national and international audience and to critique social and governmental actions through blogging and internet-based media sites. For example, MEPI local grantee Club UNESCO is creating a youth-run web radio station to cover political events. The Institute for International Education (IIE) is building the capacity of civil society organizations to use of new media to strengthen constituent outreach,

inform and engage communities, and improve communication with government institutions on social and political issues.

Advance the Rule of Law

MEPI is assisting Tunisians to develop and promote a new legal system that is accessible and fair and that protects the rights of all Tunisians. For example, MEPI is building on its long-standing partnership with the American Bar Association (ABA) to promote legal reforms across a range of issues in Tunisia. The ABA will work with the Tunisian Bar Association to reform Tunisia's electoral code, address citizen complaints, improve women's legal rights, and increase women's participation in the political process.

Support Wider Economic Opportunity

MEPI launched job placement and entrepreneurship programs for youth throughout Tunisia through the Education for Employment Foundation (EFE), and is helping support entrepreneurship, franchising, and reforms to the legal infrastructure through the Commercial Law and Development Program (CLDP) and the Financial Services Volunteer Corps (FSVC). These efforts expand on earlier MEPI-supported efforts in Tunisia.

Tunisians are only at the beginning of a long process, and the United States is committed to long-term support for the Tunisian people as they build a strong foundation for democratic growth and economic opportunity. MEPI will devote additional resources in the months and years ahead to assist Tunisia in becoming a more pluralistic, participatory, and prosperous society, as well as a stable and successful example of democratic transition in the region.

For more information on MEPI's Transition Support for Tunisia please visit:
<http://mepi.state.gov/>

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