

“Youth and Democratic Transition in the Mediterranean”

The Mediterranean region, especially the countries of the south are passing through a historical moment at the pace of social claims which is primarily a matter of will to get rid of self-censorship and fear, the ability to mobilize and then force confront, and finally believing in change. We noticed that young people play a vital role and highly important in this initiative and social policy. An initiative that has mobilized various social categories in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, Jordan, Morocco and spreading geographically in the Southern Mediterranean countries and some Arab countries...

It should be noted that the leading social event, triggered without any internal supervision and without any external control is the result of sociological changes and internal policies. This social initiative needs political forces (such as political parties) to develop an ambitious program to reach a real political change, in order to avoid any abortion of this moment because of internal factors and geopolitical interests.

Mediterranean youth were able to build a starting point to new political realities in the region because of their ability to mobilize the masses that led to popular uprisings. Revolts that reflect the aspirations of the peoples of the south countries to establish a democratic society based on principles of human dignity, equality, equity in order to achieve a just and lasting peace .

Young people have broken the barriers of fear and intimidation which were introduced by force in repressive regimes in the region. From consternation to a general mobilization with slogans that at first appears simple but they were extremely deep and have a huge influence on the minds of the peoples of the southern Mediterranean. Some examples of the slogans are: dignity, liberty, social justice, equal rights, the fight against corruption, the claim of citizenship right, human rights, and democracy...

In fact, these slogans reveal signs of injustice, marginalization, corruption and lack of consideration for citizens. They also reveal the absence of mechanisms for building the rule of law and state institutions, lack of democracy and lack of human rights in different fields: political, economic and social. These slogans reaffirm freedom of expression, freedom of forming associations, political parties, and trade unions...

Young people have a sense of oppression and disability compared with the Western model that fascinates, and it was exported more with the growth of new communication technologies. Faced with authoritarianism in place and the hardness of control, young people faced different global challenges thanks to technology and social media such as facebook and twitter. Social media and technology were used to fulfill a real political change.

Since the beginning of the revolt, we aspire to build a true democracy and we support the return of the policy concept in the Mediterranean. This movement opens wide the eyes on the real problems of the region such as: the low growth rate, social disparities, the consequences over the next two decades because of the importance of youth representing about half the total population of the concerned countries, the quality of education, poverty, unemployment, the weak and the non-existent political parties. So many warning signs and factors that cause young people to protest and revolt...

In fact, the European Union and the United States know very well the real situation in the region. However, because of their economic and social interests they did not respect the terms of partnerships, especially when talking about human rights and democracy-building. This situation must now call the European and Euro-Med institutions to think about a new approach in order to assist the people of the Euromed region, and help them in the process of sharing democracy and the rule of law in this area.

Europe is facing a serious handicap in the process of building the Palestinian state. It is led to contemplate a pragmatic solution to ensure the independence of Palestine and its security based on the coexistence of two States which respect the neighborhood, security and development in this region. Europe saw its image decreasing among different citizens of Arab countries and especially young people.

These data assign is making from this democratic transition a popular need. However, building the state institutions and citizenship will not be easy or even accessible. For this reason, Euro-Mediterranean platform and Friedrich Ebert Foundation are collaborating to organize a conference under the theme:

Youth and Democratic Transition in the Mediterranean

Thus, the platform could contribute from its own multi-dimensional approach to the new situation in the Mediterranean region, paving the way for its Mediterranean components of civil society, researchers and relevant institutions to examine the site of young people in this democratic transition in order to establish social justice, democracy, and respect for human rights and ensure equality. Especially in this economic and social circumstance that requires a redefinition of priorities, especially in the field of development and operation. This will require real engagement by the EU to support change and stability politically and financially, all this must be based on respect for the will of the people, and overcome the contradiction between rhetoric and practice that characterized European politics. We are in urgent need today for a genuine examination of the policies of European institutions and in the forefront of a policy review of the basic European neighborhood and partnership agreements with these countries. Without forgetting the need of the EU to revise its relationship with the Mediterranean in order to identify, and reformulate new goals for the partnership with these countries. These remarks were highlighted in the statement of the Euromed Platform at the beginning of these events.

Today, the region needs a new partnership based on respect for the will of the people, independence, change, development, and democracy. This partnership must take into account the aspirations and expectations of youth in everything concerning the guarantee of stability and dignity.

Some preliminary questions may be used to benefit from the discussions and recommendations of this conference:

- What is our reading of the situation of youth today and what are the aspirations of Mediterranean youth?
- What is the role of youth in the project of building the rule of law in the Southern Mediterranean?
- What are the possible rapprochement between young people from both shores of the Mediterranean (north and south), as part of a joint action, even within the current changes in order to establish democracy and governance in the Mediterranean?

It is important to note that our seminar will be held just after the first signs of the Arab Spring. After ten months, we see that elections took place in Tunisia, and it will take place in Egypt and in Morocco in order to achieve a democratic transition in the region. This seminar is a real opportunity to discuss the process of democratization in the Mediterranean based on concrete examples, and it is also the occasion to give opportunity to the platform and the political actors in the region to network with youth movements and NGOs in order to rethink about a future Euromed Youth Network, which will articulate and coordinate youth activities in the region.

Plateforme Euromed/Euromed Platform/المنبر الأورومتوسطي
80, rue de Paris
93100 Montreuil sous-Bois
France
SIRET 484 239 371 00012

Tél +212 6 61 32 15 90
Fax +33 (0)1 48 70 14 29
platform@euromedplatform.org