

Tunisia: the parliamentary elections were exemplary

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The parliamentary elections in Tunisia were exemplary and mark the end of a crucial stage in the post-revolution transition

"I would like to congratulate the Tunisian people on the outstanding quality of the electoral process, marking a crucial stage in the post-revolution transition," said Andreas Gross, head of the delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) which observed the parliamentary elections in Tunisia on 26 October 2014. "The elections were free, inclusive and transparent. The Assembly of the Representatives of the People that has been elected is genuinely representative of the people, with the kind of legitimacy required to take necessary and essential decisions, in the national interest," he added.

The delegation wishes to draw attention to the exemplary nature of the elections and hopes that those who did not win will display the same political maturity as ordinary citizens by accepting the result of the poll, thus not only contributing to the swift establishment of the new legislature but also helping to move beyond the polarisation of Tunisian society.

The delegation was impressed by the way in which the electoral administration organised its work and by its interaction with observers and civil society in the interest of the integrity of the election on 26 October 2014.

Clearly, no democratic process is ever perfect and the PACE delegation has some suggestions for possible improvements in future elections, including notably the following.

The media should encourage debate and comparison between the different agendas and policies so that citizens can better understand the challenges, and make an informed choice on polling day.

The rules on election campaign financing could be revised to allow parties to lawfully increase their spending on elections, while at the same time ensuring absolute transparency regarding the source of their funds.

Policy makers and the various institutions should continue their efforts to encourage young people, women and disadvantaged groups to participate in the electoral process, as the only way of making their voices heard.

The 10-member PACE delegation was in Tunisia from 22 to 27 October. During that time, it met with the President of Tunisia, the President of the National Constituent Assembly, the Chair of the Independent High Authority for the Elections (ISIE), the leaders of the main political parties and also representatives of the media and civil society, the diplomatic corps and international organisations. On election day itself, the delegation was split into five teams which observed the polling in and around Tunis and in the regions of Sfax, Sousse, Ariana, Bizerte, Mateur, Carthage, La Marsa, Kairouan and Cap Bon.

The Assembly will continue to actively assist its Tunisian partners in their efforts to democratise Tunisia. Another delegation will visit the country to observe the first round of the presidential election on 23 November 2014, and the Assembly will debate the two reports on the elections in Tunisia at its January 2015 part-session in Strasbourg.

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