



جامعة جورجتاون  
كلية الشؤون الدولية في قطر  
Model United Nations

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## I. ABOUT THE ARAB LEAGUE COMMITTEE:

The Arab League, first founded in 22 March of 1945, is a regional organization made up of Arab States from the Middle East and North Africa region. The league started off as an organization of six member states has now come to a total of 22 Arab states.

One of the main goals or objectives of the League is to “draw closer the relations between member states and co-ordinate their political activities with the aim of realizing a close collaboration between them, to safeguard their independence and sovereignty, and to consider in a general way the affairs and interests of the Arab countries.” Furthermore, the league deals with are many issues such as the economic and financial issues, which include trade, customs and industry productions. As well as cultural matters and matters connected with nationality, passports, visas etc. Social welfare and health matters are also amongst the issues discussed by the League.

The league has served as a platform for states to voice their positions, discuss and deliberate matters of concern and come to settlements on Arab disputes, such as Lebanon’s 1958 crisis. The Palestinian conflict has long been a matter of concern for the League. Furthermore, the Arab League is rich in resources with rich oil and natural gas exporters as member states. The availability of such funds make deduce from the monetary concerns that the League might have to face and brings greater focus on their objectives.

Each country is allowed as many representatives, however, they are only allowed *one* vote per state as part of the League Council (or Parliament). The Council is responsible for the implementation and supervising the executions of agreements. After the Secretary General

granted the Arab League permission the Council was created in 2004, during an ordinary summit the member states agreed on a date in which to send their representatives to the Council sessions. Until May 22, 2012 the Council sessions had been held in Damascus, however, have been moved since to Cairo.

The Arab Parliament suggested the suspension of Syria in 2011, over reports of disparate violence against opponents and regime protesters during the Arab Spring. Lebanon and Yemen voted against the motion, however, with a majority for Syria has been suspended from the league. The league has come to grant Syrian National Coalition seats in the Arab League.

The Arab League has also played an avid role in shaping school curricula, empowering and developing the role of women in Arab societies, encouraging and advocating child welfare, and sports programs. All the while maintaining the Arab culture and Arab identity between and within states.

## **II. BRIEF BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON ISLAMIST PARTIES AND THEIR RISE AFTER THE ARAB SPRING:**

Islamism, or the belief that Islam should guide political and social life and not just be part of the individuals' personal life, has been on the rise after the crumbling of authoritarian regimes in the region. Islamist parties have long existed, however, have been either pushed down or banned from taking part in the political system of the state. After the Arab Spring, the world witnessed the quick rise of these highly organized factions from the chaos. The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Ennahda Movement in Tunisia stand as the successes of Islamists over the region.

The uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia after the fall of Mubarak and Bin Ali quickly centered on the Muslim Brotherhood, who were able to dominate politics and gain majority of the parliamentary seats. Islamist militias were among the most effective in Libya's revolutionary wars, and similar armed groups are trying to take on the same role in Syria's civil war. Morocco wanting to avoid such a fate rendered its constitution after the sparks of uprising were apparent and King Muhammad VI appointed an Islamist (member of the Justice and Development Party) to the post of Prime Minister.

The Muslim Brotherhood a party founded by Hassan Al Banna in 1928 with the intention of constructing a pan-Arab and religious movement. The goal of the movement is to instill the Sunnah and Quran as

the sole jurisdiction of the state, dictating politics, society and citizens, with a mantra of "Allah is our objective; the Quran is our law, the Prophet is our leader; Jihad is our way; and dying in the way of Allah is the highest of our aspirations." The movement gains its finances through donations from their members coming from different parts of the region. The organization went through a history of repression after being linked to massacres in Syria and assassination attempts in Egypt. The Muslim Brotherhood were finally legalized after the fall of Hosni Mubarak in 2011, winning multiple elections and witnessing the rise of Mohammed Morsi (representative of the party) to the rank of president in 2012.

Ennahda Movement represents another Islamist party that has gained success with the fall of the former secular authoritarian regime in Tunisia. The party, which is also dubbed Renaissance Party, is a moderate Islamist party, which some say are influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood. The interim government granted the group the permission to form a political party in 2011 after the fall of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. Since permission was granted the party has become the biggest and most well organized party in Tunisia. The party won 217 seats assembly seats in the elections held after the revolution, more than any other party. However, in a country where almost three million people did not register to vote, and where the turn out for those who did register was low, winning one million of the votes (as Ennahda party) questions whether or not the party did win the majority of the votes.

Some scholars have come to argue that the rise of Islamist movements in transitional election in the region should not have been a surprise. Islamist movements history of being marginalized has gained them sympathy, also, more importantly they have been disassociated with the previous regimes. They have spent years in reshaping public opinion and discourse of the culture at the different levels of society and through communities. The Islamists were well-positioned and ready to take advantage of the political opportunities that came their way with the collapse of dictators.

### **III. BACKGROUND GUIDE ON THE ISSUE ‘RISE OF ISLAMISM’:**

The rise of Islamism as an issue might be difficult to assess as it is a trend that seems to have arched over the whole region post- Arab Spring. Furthermore, Islamist movements has gained different reactions in different states, with some doing better than others as well as the involvement of other states in the support of one faction over the other. In

totality, Islamists forge ahead with the idea that they will come to create a political order that coincides with the prophetic traditions and with sharia law, coming to create a pan-Islamic identity within the state and within the region.

Although Islamist movements have been on the rise in the Middle East, the opposing factions involved should not be overlooked. The Muslim Brotherhood quick rise to presidential power also brought to the forefront their need for control, alienating other political forces on their way. A year after his position as President of Egypt Mohamed Morsi was himself overthrown by yet another revolution that swept the country.

The involvement of GCC states (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait predominately) should not go unnoticed. The Muslim Brotherhood had clear support from Qatar whereas the opposition was supported by Saudi Arabia and UAE with overwhelming funds being flooded into Egypt. This comes to show the different positions at play when it comes to handling the rise of Islamist parties in the region. Seeing as all these members are part of the Arab League.

Furthermore, the rise of these Islamist parties has exposed divisions within the Islamists themselves. Muslim Brotherhood, Al Qaeda, Global Muslim Brotherhood Organization, Ennahda, and many more all exert different amounts of power and are involved in politics at different degrees. Also, Egypt had come to witness a rivalry amongst the Salafists and the Muslim brotherhood, in gaining votes as well as Islamic credibility. Interestingly, Salafi movements have long rejected political participation and some even rejecting democracy as a whole. However, their new and active role in politics comes to suggest that they may be wearing their ideology lightly. Nevertheless, some of the Salafists extreme remarks and radical views have come to shock both local and international communities. Keeping in mind that these states have diverse cultures and different religions within their borders.

On the other side of the Islamist parties there stand the secular parties or even some reformist parties. However, as stated, opposition can also be other Islamist parties in disagreement. Secular parties call for the separation of religion from matters of state. Tunisia had a previously secular government, however, secularism in that case was abused in which many religious symbols were banned, such as wearing the headscarf for Muslim women.

It is important to look at these different factions as 'parties' rather than assessing their ideologies and whether such ideologies coincide with democracy. For both sides are at fault for something done, however, who is more capable of exerting rule of law and protecting the citizen remains the question.

## IV. KEY PLAYERS:

### Egypt:

- **Muslim Brotherhood (Freedom and Justice Party):** Their existence and coalition in a time of chaos has allowed for their rise to power in Egypt after the Arab Spring, with Morsi as their president. However, the popularity of the Muslim Brotherhood slowly been put to the test as more recent events have ousted Morsi from his short-lived presidency.
- **Al-Nour Party:** A Salafi party created after the 2011 revolution, with conservative Islamic ideology. Gained 127 out of 498 seats in the parliamentary elections coming in second place after the Muslim Brotherhood. Gradually the party started to distance itself from Morsi's government and came in as an opposition in 2013 coup.

### Tunisia:

- **Ennahda Party (Renaissance Party):** The party although Islamist seems to have opted for a more 'moderate' Islamic approach. Gaining votes and the most parliamentary seats after the revolution. The party, which had a long history of being exiled by the previous Tunisian regime, seems to understand the need for a more balanced outlook.

**Libya:** In a region witnessing an Islamist trend Libya stands out as the Libyan elections did show the rise of Islamist parties that was evident in neighboring states, although they did come into play after the revolution. The elections brought to the forefront the National Forces Coalition (NFC) that is a more liberal-leaning party.

The most prominent Islamist Party in Libya is the Justice and Construction Party, which is the Muslim Brotherhood's party in Libya, officially founded in 2012. The party is also said to be the country's most organized political force.

**Syria:** The country's revolution has tragically escalated into a civil war. With different factions being involved, both those with and against the government, the different parties be it secular or religious. The sectarian divides in Syria complicated the situation of assessing the state's conflict.

### Yemen:

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- **Al-Islah Party:** The dominant Islamist party in Yemen is the Islah Party. At the last elections back in 2003 the party won 46 out of 301 seats. Yemeni members of the Muslim Brotherhood created the party in 1990. By 2010, 13 women were members of Al-Islah's Parliament. Tribal identity still at the core of economic, political and social lives, sometimes superseding Islamic sheikhs or figureheads.

**Qatar:** The state was involved in Libya's revolution against Moamar Qaddafi. Qatar was first to recognize the Transitional National Council, selling oil on behalf of the state and sending millions of dollars in aid. Qatar also sent fighter jets to join in NATO operations. Furthermore, the state has shown clear alliance with the Muslim Brotherhood in their rise to power.

**Saudi Arabia:** As a reaction to the fall of Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Saudi witnessed an escalation by the brotherhood in Saudi Arabia. The state did not support the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, lending monetary aid to the generals wanting to remove the Muslim Brotherhood from power, all the while defying an ally, the United States.

**United Arab Emirates:** Along with Saudi Arabia, the UAE did not show support for the Muslim Brotherhood nor any other Islamist parties. The UAE arrested Muslim Brotherhood affiliates within its own borders recently, where it is said that they were entirely a political movement with charitable and social organizations making up only a small percentage of their agenda. The UAE had the right to arrest such members seeing as law in the state bans the political movements

### Question to Consider:

- Which states support the Islamist parties and which states oppose them?
- How has the rise of Islamist parties affected relations of states within the Arab League?
- Who has been directly involved with the Islamist parties?
- How have the different parties been handling their new power?
- What are the apparent differences between Islamist parties in the different states? (For example, the difference between Ennahda in Tunisia and Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt) and how these differences might have influenced the outcomes in more recent events?

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- What about these states foreign policy? Especially with regards to the West
- What about opposing Islamist parties within the states?
- What were factors that could have contributed to the parties success at the time?
- Where does the party stand on women's rights?
- How does the party define democracy?
- Does the party call for any form of violence?
- What do more recent events show about the rise or fall of Islamist parties? And where in your opinion did they go wrong?
- Can there ever be a Islamic form of Democracy?
- Why do Saudi Arabia and UAE see Islamists as a threat? Or is it only the Muslim Brotherhood those stand as a threat?

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