

## ARAB SPRING

Adila Jaleel<sup>1</sup>

### *Abstract*

*2011 came with the thunder of the Arab Spring. The trees of dictatorship were falling. The lakhs of springs were premature, but it was a manifestation of the glorious yearning for freedom. Arab streets were celebrating the newfound energy. Hosni Mubarak's 3 decade long dictatorship was thrown into the dustbin of history. In Libya Gaddafi was overthrown. Salih resigned in Yemen. The Arab region was witnessing recurrence of the cyclical impact of the communist bloc following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Developments during the spring were seen as good signs which showed that it was an evolutionary phase in which Arabs were taking over their countries form the plundering countries which set agendas using external power. Until then, those countries that did not recognize their own size and worth. The governing bodies were merely stages for puppetry.*

### INTRODUCTION

In terms of its geographical location, population, strategic importance, ampleness of resources etc., on the world map itself these Arab countries had an important position. Many of these countries were communities that shared boundaries with each other. They were connected by land and sea routes. These areas start at 18 degrees west of the Greenwich Mean time, pass through Mauritania and Senegal in Western Africa, and extend 140 degrees east along the Atlantic coast to the Indonesian Island of West Aryan. These countries are present in Asia, Africa and Europe. In addition to the religious and cultural unity, the linguistic component also served as an integrating force for a significant section of these countries. Many countries outside of the Gulf also spoke Arabic.

### TUNISIA

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<sup>1</sup> Government Law College, Ernakulam Law Student

Jasmine is the National flower of Tunisia. When the self-proclaimed President Zainul Abhidheen was thrown from the capital Tunis on January 14, 2011, the uprisings in the street took the name of national flower 'Jasmine'. It started from the city of Saedi Busaid. Mohammed Abu Azizi, a young graduate, who was a street vendor, committed suicide by pouring petrol on himself after being denied justice and was humiliated. At an unprecedented moment, Abu Azizi's fire spread from the northern tip of Africa to Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Bahrain. The agitation ignited by Abu Azizi was taken up by the Tunisian people, regardless of gender. The government witnessed the people and their power for the first time. From famous film scholars to film stars, Zainul Abidheen was asked to step down. Bin Ali had to perform a political umrah to Saudi Arabia in the wake of army's ultimatum to leave the area within 72 hours. The regime led by Bin Ali deceived the world media by portraying Tunisia as a developed city, carrying out national plunder like all dictators who depend on foreign powers. Unemployment was 14% behind the glistening face of Tunisian cities. But more than that, the people's explosion was caused by the president's family and allies seizing all the wealth.

The Tunisian protest attracted international attention when several protesters lost lives in clashes with police. The usage of brute force to suppress protests was highly criticized. Meanwhile, Ben Ali dismissed Rafik Belhail Kace, the minister of interior and also vowed to establish a committee to examine the government's response to the crisis. The government had to deploy troops as the clashes worsened and spread to the capital. Broader concessions to oppositions, promises to not seek another term etc. were made by Ben Ali on National Television to suppress the blazing protests. He also conveyed regret over deaths and vowed to stop usage of violent police force. Addressing the grievances, he also promised to reduce food prices, ease restrictions on internet use etc. These concessions did not pacify the people, they continued to clash with the security forces. Upon declaration of emergency on January 14, the Tunisian state media announced that government has been dissolved and legislative elections will be held within 6 months. Even this failed and finally Ben Ali had to step down. Ghanouchi replaced him as interim president. Disorder lingered in the days after Ben Ali's departure and people protested objecting the participation of members of RCD politicians belonging to Ben Ali's same party.

Formation of a new unity government which incorporated several opposition figures alongside Ghanouchi was announced. Promises were made to preserve stability and freedom in Tunisia

quickly. Political prisoners were released and media censorship was eliminated. Even these attempts failed when opposition figures resigned in order to continue the protests. The interim govt finally officially suspended all RCD activities and lifted ban on all opposition parties.

The transition was not easy, it was arduous and long. Conflicts and tensions arose between secularists and religious groups while drafting the new constitution. After a lot of discussions a constitution was finally promulgated on January 2014.

## **EGYPT**

Egyptian youth inspired by the ouster of Ben Ali in Tunisia organized a social media campaign and brought out massive crowds in the streets of Cairo, Alexandria and other cities on January 25. The government failed to suppress and control the massive demonstrations and clashes which lasted for a month. major turning point came at the end of the month when the Egyptian army announced its refusal to use force against protesters and supported the ousting of President Hosni Mubarak. Without support from the military, the President left his office on February thus ending his 30 year rule. The military, led by General ,Abdel Fattah el-Asisi then took over . But its apparent prioritization of stability over democratic transition dampened the optimism and set out the fire in the minds of people. The Kifayah movement of 2005 is said to have had a major role in the 2012 uprisals. It is often seen as the continuation of Kifayah movement. The Muslim Brotherhood also played a major role in the Spring and earned great acceptance from people during the spring. It gained major victories in the following elections as well.

## **BAHRAIN**

The people of Bahrain started flowing into the streets from mid February 2011 demanding political and economical reform in the country. The protests were led by Bahraini Human rights activists and Bahrain's Shia marginalized majority. With the support of Gulf Cooperation Council security force these protests were violently suppressed. The team from Saudi Arabia consisted of about 1000 soldiers and 500 police officers from UAE. Upon entering the country during march, they stifled the mass protest movement

In the aftermath, many accused protest leaderships were convicted. They were accused of indulging in non-governmental activities. Apart from imprisonment Shia workers who were suspected of supporting the protests were fired. Shia mosques were demolished and atrocities were

targeted extensively against Shia community. Upon conducting independent investigation into the uprising afterwards it was concluded that the government had used excessive force and torture against protesters. The commission set up adopted for reforms but those were clamped down further on opposition groups in the following years.

The protesters, on February 15<sup>th</sup>, gathered in the Pearl Square round about which they renamed as 'Tahrir Square' and raised demands for a constitutional monarchy along with other reforms.

The camp set up by the protesters was stormed by the police three days later leading to the death of four people and injured many.

## **LIBYA**

The protests against regime of Muammar al -Qaddafi in Libya escalated to armed revolts quickly. When the rebels were on the verge of defeat, an international coalition led by NATO co-operated and launched an air strike campaign targeting Qaddafi's forces. Despite the support from NATO and shifting of military favor to the side of rebels, Qaddafi managed to cling on to power in the capital city of Tripoli for several months. On the same day the Bahrain protests started, the Libyan police used force to break up sit in against government in the second city, Benghazi. Gaddafi pledged to hunt down the 'rats' opposing him. The uprising led to a civil war with France, UK and USA air forces intervening against Gaddafi. August 2011 marked the forcing out of Qaddafi when the rebels took complete control of Tripoli. After being captured for weeks, Qaddafi was finally killed on October, 20th in Sirte by the rebel forces, where he was found hiding in a storm drain.

An internationally recognized Transitional National Council was set up by the Rebel forces to exert authority post the events, But struggle amongst the leaderships precipitated the outbreak of civil war in 2014. Libya was then onwards split between rival eastern and western administrations.

## **SYRIA**

Mid summer of March 2011 marked the breaking out of protests calling for resignation of President Bashar Al-Assad. The Assad regime responded with brutal crackdowns against protesters, drawing condemnations from international leaders and human rights groups. A council for the Syrian opposition leadership formed in Istanbul in August and opposition militias began launching attacks

on governmental forces .In spite of all this, Assad appeared strong and powerful and was also able to retain support of critical military units which composed largely members of Syria's Alawite minority, to which Assad belonged. Divisions in the international community made it unlikely that with international military intervention , which had proved to be decisive in Libya ,would be possible in Syria. Russia and China vetoed the UN Security council move meant to pressure Assad and vowed to oppose any measure that would lead to foreign intervention inside Syrian territories. The arrival of Arab delegates to speak peace from Arab league did almost nothing to reduce violence.

The course of war changed when Al-Assad's biggest Ally, Russia started air attacks against Syrian Rebels on September 30, 2015. After continuously fighting for about 10 years Al Assad claimed significant victory which left around 380000 dead. With the international rival countries split on two sides and funding arms , the situation worsened and culminated in a devastating civil war which claimed many lives and lead to a massive refugee crisis.

This Civil war also lead to the formation of ISIL(ISIS) and renewed conflict in Iraq, resulting in genocidal attacks on minorities in the country.

The intra-doctrinal spirit of jihad was the path to victory in Iran's Victory . Such a spirit was seen in the beginning of Arab spring as well. Studies state that ISIS was a creation of Western powers in order to suppress the spirit and divert the people and create a terrorist image and promote islamophobia.

## **YEMEN**

The first protests started appearing in Yemen in the late January of 2011. President Ali Abdullah Saleh's base support was ruined when many of the country's most powerful tribal and military leaders aligned themselves with the pro-democracy protestors .Failure of negotiations regarding removal of Saleh led to clash between loyalists and opposition fighters in Sanaa. Saleh was then

injured in a bomb attack and had to leave for medical treatment. This raised hope among the opposition that a transition was going to start. Saleh's unexpected return after 4 months added to the uncertainty and confusion about Yemen's future. He then signed an international mediated agreement in November handing over his powers to the Vice President, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, thus ending his 33 year old rule. Hadi took over governing responsibilities immediately and formally assumed presidency soon after standing as sole candidate in the February 2012 election. His inability to improve situations and maintain stability lead to armed confrontations and rebellion which devolved into a civil war in 2014. The poorest Arab nation, Yemen also descended into violence following the initial protests.

### **SAUDI ARABIA**

The people of Saudi raised voices relatively in small numbers compare to other nations. Only few dared to take to the streets and call for reforms and for grievances to be addressed. The Saudi government foreseeing the protests, to discourage dissent extended additional benefits to citizens worth \$127 billions. In March 2011 the government reaffirmed the ban on protests after many took place in Riyadh which was home to a Shia majority that complained about discrimination faced at the hands of Sunni ruling family.

Hundreds were arrested and dozens were kept in custody. Special Criminal courts were set up for trying the opposition and human rights activists on various charges including 'disobeying the ruler'.

Despite this demonstrations continued in Shia towns and villages, by reform advocates, women rights activists etc. The usage of excessive force against demonstrators were reported, many were shot dead by officials which till now they deny.

Unlike other nations the uprisings in Saudi Arabia was brutally suppressed. The people still strive and continue to fight despite the draconian laws which threat their lives.

### **CONCLUSION**

The article presents the set of revolutions and uprisings that brought significant changes in the Arab world which started from a spark in Tunisia. The success of Arab spring may not always depend on strength and effectiveness of internal players but sometime require concerted and decisive action that involve all the regional stakeholders for the betterment and stability of the

whole region. The Arab world was shook and the spring brought rise to a new era and put an end to the tyranny of many despots. The role played by the youth is undeniable. Enlightening itself and sharing the spark to its neighbors and unitedly fighting against injustice. This particular chain of events provoked many other nations and gave them courage to strive for justice.

Arab spring of 2011 was a unique interconnected struggle for democracy. But the push to end corruption and improve the quality of citizen's life did not end there. Even after years that spirit has been passed on and the Arab world has witnessed it in the late 2010s and early 2020s. Algerians toppled the government of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, Sudan's military ended the 30 year rule of President Omar al-Bashir by conducting massive protests, Iraq and Lebanon also witnessed major movements against incapable governments. Although all these individual protest movements weren't inspired by one another, the scale and similarity of their grievances led to many referring to this wave of protests as a second Arab Spring. The spirit of these springs can be connected to the revolutionary thought of Khomeini and the ever lasting courageous spirits of Palestinians. The refusal to surrender to despots and puppets of West and reclaiming their rights has always been there in the blood of Arabs. The Arab Spring has not died or lost its spark even now. The undercurrents are active as ever and the revolutionaries are cooking a second spring.

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