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Tunisia

After the elections in Tunisia

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The first free elections drew most of the Tunisian population to the polling stations. [1] The first results show the Islamist party Ennahdha in the lead.

Nine months after the outbreak of the Tunisian revolutionary process and the departure of Ben Ali, the aspiration for democracy motivated Tunisians to take part in these elections. As this article is being written, the final results are not yet known and there are all sorts of rumours.

One thing is certain, the Constituent Assembly will have very few women among its members: in fact, only seven per cent of the lists had put a woman in the number one spot, including among the parties which make long speeches about equal rights between men and women!

Success for Ennahdha

This election especially benefitted the Islamist movement Ennahdha, which has come out largely in the lead. Even though this party did not take part in the mobilizations that brought down Ben Ali, it drew respect because of its militants who had given their lives and the thousands of others who had been imprisoned and tortured under the dictatorship. Furthermore, it benefitted from colossal financial resources, coming in particular from wealthy former leaders of the RCD (Ben Ali's party) enabling it to undertake charitable work, ensuring support from the poorest layers in society.

Ennahdha also benefitted from official propaganda which oriented the campaign towards its favourite theme: Arab-Muslim identity.

And if Ennahdha allies with the CPR of Moncef Marzouki, these two formations could have an absolute majority in the Constituent Assembly.

It should be noted that Ennahdha furthermore benefits today from the support of the imperialist powers. There is nothing surprising about that, for a party whose economic programme is closely aligned with the solutions recommended by the IMF and the World Bank, with their succession of privatizations, lay-offs and dismantling of public services. So there is nothing surprising about the fact that Barak Obama was the first to congratulate the Tunisians on the result of these elections. In addition to the retreat into identity-based attitudes and the serious threats which now endanger women's rights in particular, and which are in the programme of Ennahdha, will the workers who revolted with cries of "a job is a right, gang of thieves!" have confidence for long in such a party, which will represent and guarantee imperialist interests in Tunisia ?

Setback for the radical Left

What also emerges is that the organizations of the radical Left are the big losers in this election. They stood divided, each organization thinking that only it incarnated the essence of radicality. Some, like the League for a Workers' Left (LGO), finally decided to boycott it. As a result, the radical Left has only four people elected (three from the Workers' Communist Party of Tunisia, one from the Movement of Democratic Patriots).

Development of struggles?

After the elections in Tunisia

After the elections, the situation of the workers has not changed, and that will be the principal disillusion for many of them. The role of revolutionary militants will then be more decisive than ever. Indeed, it will be necessary to struggle against the continuation of the neoliberal policies which Ennahdha intends to implement, as well as the foreseeable attacks against women's rights. The many trade-union and political activists and who had more or less deserted the terrain of struggle since the beginning of the summer in order to engage in the electoral campaign will have the heavy task of helping the mobilizations which will not fail to develop.

This is an updated (October 31st) version of an article published in the October 27th issue of Tout est À nous, weekly paper of the New Anticapitalist Party (NPA) in France.

[1] Out of the 4.1 million people registered, more than 90 percent voted. A significant proportion of the 3 million who had not registered also voted. Some reports spoke of 70-80% participation countrywide