

## Unrest in Tunisia

### What is the issue?

\n\n

At a time when Tunisia must be cherishing the 7<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the “Jasmine Revolution”, the country has crept back to turmoil.

\n\n

### What is Tunisia’s story?

\n\n



\n\n

\n

- Tunisia is a small country in northern Africa, along the southern Mediterranean coast.

\n

- The country saw intense civil unrest in 2011, which led to the ousting of the 23 year old authoritarian regime of president “Zine El Abidine Ben Ali”.

\n

- The demonstrations were caused by high unemployment, food inflation, corruption, a lack of political freedoms and poor living conditions.

\n

- This (jasmine revolution) subsequently inspired similar demonstrations around the Arab world, which came to be known as Arab Spring.

\n

- While many died in the protests and police action, unlike rest of the Arab world, Tunisia managed to make a fairly comfortable transition to democracy.

\n

- While the country was stable thus far, recent austerity budget cuts and the economic situation have led to some unrest, which could spell danger.

\n

\n\n

## **What has led to the current wave?**

\n\n

\n

- IMF had set stringent pre-conditions regarding austerity budget cuts, for offering a loan of \$2.9 billion, which the government has concurred to.

\n

- This implies lower petrol subsidies and higher taxes on cars and utilities, for the reducing fiscal deficit from the currently at 6% of GDP, to 4.9% in 1 year.

\n

- Further, 25% youth unemployment rate, and persisting disparities among regions has also contributed to current unrest.

\n

- Notably, the crumbling of the Tourism industry due to the poor security scenario has affected the economy significantly.

\n

- While the government has promised \$70 million in aid to support the poorer communities in a bid to quell the protests, it has failed to cut ice.

\n

- Notably, PM Youssef Chahed has been cautious in criticising only the violence behind the opposition rather than the dissent against the fiscal reforms.

\n

\n\n

## **What can be done?**

\n\n

\n

- The PM would now have to show demonstrable progress in implementing democratic reforms to restore confidence in the government.

\n

- Particularly, the 2015 security law and the proposed amnesty for corrupt officials of previous dictatorial regime have been politically controversial.

\n

- These needs to be addressed by building considerable political consensus and garnering popular public support.  
\n
- Also, as foreign aid is indispensable, the government will have to tactically balance international players with the domestic political compulsions.  
\n
- Significantly, EU would be keenly interested in Tunisian affairs due to the persistent cross-Mediterranean migration.  
\n

\n\n

\n\n

**Source: The Hindu**

\n

