More than any other country, Tunisia has become synonymous with the Arab Spring. Often held up as the lone success story of the movement, the huge wave of protests that forced out authoritarian President Ben Ali in 2011 after decades of kleptocratic rule, was the first of a wave of uprisings that toppled leaders across the Arab world. Nevertheless, the suspension of parliament in July 2021 could pose an existential threat to Tunisia’s fragile democratic gains, in what some have called a coup d’état. Up to this point, it should also be noted that democracy has not proved a panacea for the country’s deep political, economic, and security issues. Political deadlock, a dysfunctional economy, high youth unemployment rates, and continuing institutionalised corruption are fuelling further large-scale protests and resentment at the lack of progress since the revolution.

Overall scores
The size of the colour band corresponds to number of countries that fall into that category.

TUNISIA SCORE
HIGH RISK
D
40

Risk Comparison

POLITICAL
FINANCIAL
PERSONNEL

OPERATIONAL
PROCUREMENT
**Parliamentary Oversight**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislative oversight of budget (Open Budget Survey, 2019)</th>
<th>45/100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Military expenditure as a share of government spending (SIPRI, 2020)</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee members with defence expertise (%)</td>
<td>Data is not publicly available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of meetings/year</td>
<td>Data is not publicly available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last review of defence policy/strategy</td>
<td>The strategy is not publicly available.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tunisia’s post-revolution political institutions operate as part of a complex power-sharing system designed to provide strong checks on presidential power. However, successive Presidents have sought increasingly to consolidate power, including on defence and security issues, and the limits of parliament’s powers were laid bare when it was suspended in July 2021. Parliament’s influence over defence has thus been limited in the face of its lack of political power and resources, despite having two committees dedicated to defence, one standing and one special committee, which should theoretically provide for significant oversight. The special committee on defence, which monitors and oversees government activity, has strong formal powers. However, a lack of expertise amongst members undermines their ability to fully utilise these powers and a review of activity reports shows it fails to review major defence policies and decisions.

Similarly, despite formal powers to analyse the draft defence budget, no record of such discussions could be found and no reports were produced on budgetary matters, indicating very weak budgetary oversight. Instead, the committee mainly discusses issues, questions ministers, and issues general recommendations, without investigating specific issues or engaging in responsive policymaking. Similar weaknesses undermine relatively strong formal auditing practices. Internal auditing by the Inspector General and General Directorate of Financial Affairs is regular and staff have received capacity-building training in recent years. However, the legislature receives only limited information and audits overwhelmingly focus on administrative and financial aspects, rather than performance assessments. The Court of Audit ensures external auditing, alongside government General Control bodies, although the Court of Audit is the only one to publish reports. Regardless, Ministry of Defence expenditure is not included in its scope of work for security reasons and the Audit body has little authority to challenge this.

**Financial Transparency**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Defence-related access to information response rates</th>
<th>(1) % granted full or partial access: Data is not publicly available.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defence-related complaints to ombudsman/commissioner</td>
<td>Data is not publicly available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the commissioner have authority over the MoD?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audit reports on defence (2015-2020)</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Budget Index (IBP, 2019)</td>
<td>35/100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the secrecy and highly centralised nature of decision-making under Ben Ali, recent years have seen marked improvements in government transparency, including the passing of a new freedom of information law and legislation requiring officials to declare financial assets. This progress is also reflected in transparency standards related to the defence sector’s finances, which are far superior to Tunisia’s neighbours. Defence institutions do not have beneficial ownership of commercial businesses that generate income on a large-scale. No evidence of off-budget expenditure could be found, and the law explicitly prohibits this practice, with the entirety of the expenses of the Ministry of Defence provided by the state budget. There is also no evidence of unauthorised private enterprises and legislation in this area is robust and enforced. As a result, the published state budget provides an accurate figure for the total resources dedicated to defence, reducing the risk of unregistered and unauthorised spending. However, the defence budget itself is not fully detailed and for certain sensitive areas, such as military acquisitions and operational costs, only top-line figures are provided. Though a budget explanation is provided, it is designed for an expert audience; there is no summary for non-experts, reducing budget legibility for the public. Furthermore, though access to information has been strengthened by the 2016 Organic Law, which establishes information rights and appeals processes, its applicability to defence institutions remains questionable. The Ministry of Defence has broad powers to refuse requests on closely defined ‘national security’ grounds and the law has been criticised by civil rights groups for its security-related exemptions.

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11 Republic of Tunisia, ‘Rules of Procedures of the Assembly of People’s Representatives’, Article 73.
14 Republic of Tunisia, ‘Association des Cadres de Contrôle, d’inspection et d’audit dans les Structures Publiques Tunisiennes’.
Personnel Ethics Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># defence-sector whistleblower cases</td>
<td>22 (2017)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># Code of conduct violations</th>
<th>Military: Data is not publicly available.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civilian: Data is not publicly available.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Financial disclosure system* | # submitted: Data is not currently available. |
| # of violations: Data is not currently available. |

*Website not functioning at time of research (April 2021).

The professionalization of the Tunisian Armed Forces has been noted by many Tunisian and foreign observers, while the creation of the Anti-Corruption Commission (INLUCC) and its working relationship with the Ministry of Defence are positive signs for anti-corruption efforts in the sector. Accordingly, the military’s personnel management frameworks are relatively robust and provide a positive basis for integrity-building measures. Military and civilian personnel are subject to relatively strong, albeit somewhat vague, codes of conduct. The military code is available to all units, while the civilian one is publicly available, and breaches are usually investigated, although more so in relation to serious violations. Generally speaking, corruption cases are investigated and prosecuted through formal processes, after being transmitted to the INLUCC by the Ministry of Defence. Furthermore, Tunisia has whistleblowing legislation, granting protection of identity, protection against retribution, and waiver of liability. The Anti-Corruption Authority has been heavily involved in promoting the practice and encouraging whistleblowers to come forward, although defence authorities have so far not actively encouraged it, despite complying with the legislation. Although some whistleblowers have come forward, there remains fear of repercussions amongst personnel, especially when reports involve senior officers. Despite progress in other areas, recruitment and promotion processes remain susceptible to corruption. Formal processes are in place, but there is still no parliamentary scrutiny of the appointment of senior military personnel. In fact, there is no evidence of any form of external scrutiny, with the decision resting solely with the office of the President, increasing the risk of political factors influencing such appointments. Equally, promotion criteria for officers are extremely vague, and despite formal promotion boards being in place, the lack of objective criteria heighten the risk of non-performance related factors influencing such decisions.

Operations

| Total armed forces personnel (World Bank, 2018) | 47,800 |
| Troops deployed on operations # | 75 in Mali (MINUSMA) |

With troops deployed as part of the United Nations stabilisation mission in Mali and on counter-terror operations along the Libyan border, Tunisia’s military has been building up its operational capabilities and experience. However, given Tunisia’s important role in regional security and peacekeeping, significant corruption risks pervade its governance of military operations. The military does not have a doctrine that addresses corruption as a strategic issue for operations. Accordingly, corruption is not included in the forward planning of military operations, nor does it receive resources at the strategic level. Though some anti-corruption training has been held, it is largely delivered by international partners, is not systematic, and is overwhelmingly attended by personnel from the headquarters based in Tunis with few attendees drawn from rural units. Moreover, the military has no policy of monitoring and evaluating corruption risk in the field and personnel receive no guidelines on how to identify and address corruption-related issues while on deployments.

19 Wehrey, ‘Tunisia’s Wake-up Call.’
21 For civilian personnel, ‘Code of Conduct for Public Officials,’ approved by the decree dated 3 October 2014.
26 Wehrey, ‘Tunisia’s Wake-up Call.’
Defence Procurement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Military expenditure (US$ mil) (SIPRI, 2020)</td>
<td>1,046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open competition in defence procurement (%)</td>
<td>Data is not publicly available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main defence exports – to (SIPRI, 2016-20)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main defence imports – from (SIPRI, 2016-20)</td>
<td>United States, Netherlands, Turkey, France, Germany</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After decades of neglect under Ben Ali, the Tunisian Armed Forces transformation from a neglected and outdated operation, into a leaner, more agile and responsive outfit has been remarkable. Though not without its issues, successful military modernisation has been propelled by the threat from Libya and military cooperation with international partners, most notably the United States. A key pillar of the modernisation has been the procurement of new weapons, equipment and technologies, however, lingering opacity throughout the procurement cycle heightens corruption vulnerabilities and risks contributing to the loss of public funds. Though large defence purchases are usually made public, this is by no means systematic, and the authorities often exclude additional details related to contracting terms and bidders. Equally, notification of planned purchases is infrequent and individual purchases are not linked to explicit strategic objectives, leading to uncertainty around how such decisions are made. Alongside this, efforts to enhance transparency and oversight in the contracting process have had only mixed results. Existing legislation governing purchases of military equipment is vague, especially when pertaining to the acquisition of sensitive equipment. Legislation provides for a special committee to oversee the acquisition of sensitive items, although the committee is highly politicised as it is chaired by the Defence Minister. Moreover, its reports are overly vague and exclude significant information, such as justifications, details on the process, and monitoring and evaluation of contract fulfilment. The military appears to be exempt from a procurement initiative aimed at institutionalising open contracting for all government ministries through an online e-procurement platform (TUNEPS). The Ministry of Defence has not yet made use of this platform, benefitting from a vaguely-worded article in the public procurement law allowing for military procurement to be single-sourced for security reasons.

## 2020 GDI Scorecard

### TUNISIA

#### OVERALL COUNTRY SCORE
- **Grade:** D
- **Score:** 40

#### Political Risk (Political Risk D 40)
- Q1 Legislative Scrutiny: D 50
- Q2 Defence Committee: C 50
- Q3 Defence Policy Debate: E 31
- Q4 CSO Engagement: E 25
- Q5 Conventions: UNCAC / OECD: B 75
- Q6 Public Debate: D 38
- Q7 Anticorruption Policy: B 75
- Q8 Compliance and Ethics Units: C 50
- Q9 Public Trust in Institutions: NS
- Q10 Risk Assessments: F 0
- Q11 Acquisition Planning: D 42
- Q12 Budget Transparency & Detail: C 63
- Q13 Budget Scrutiny: C 50
- Q14 Budget Availability: C 63
- Q15 Defence Income: D 42
- Q16 Internal Audit: D 33
- Q17 External Audit: E 25
- Q18 Natural Resources: A 92
- Q19 Organised Crime Links: A 100
- Q20 Organised Crime Policing: E 32
- Q21 Intelligence Services Oversight: E 0
- Q22 Intelligence Services Recruitment: E 17
- Q23 Export Controls (ATT): E 0
- Q24 Asset Disposal Controls: E 17
- Q25 Asset Disposal Scrutiny: B 67
- Q26 Secret Spending: F 0
- Q27 Legislative Access to Information: F 0
- Q28 Secret Program Auditing: F 0
- Q29 Off-budget Spending: A 100
- Q30 Access to Information: B 75
- Q31 Beneficial Ownership: A 100
- Q32 Military-Owned Business Scrutiny: A 100
- Q33 Unauthorised Private Enterprise: A 100
- Q34 Defence Spending: F 0

#### Financial Risk (Financial Risk C 51)
- Q34 Public Commitment to Integrity: C 63
- Q35 Disciplinary Measures for Personnel: C 63
- Q36 Whistleblowing: C 63
- Q37 High-risk Positions: C 63
- Q38 Numbers of Personnel: C 50
- Q39 Pay Rates and Allowances: A 100
- Q40 Payment System: B 75
- Q41 Objective Appointments: E 25
- Q42 Objective Promotions: B 69
- Q43 Bribery to Avoid Conscription: A 83
- Q44 Bribery for Preferred Postings: A 100
- Q45 Chains of Command and Payment: A 100
- Q46 Military Code of Conduct: C 50

#### Personnel Risk (Personnel Risk C 63)
- Q47 Civilian Code of Conduct: D 44
- Q48 Anticorruption Training: C 63
- Q49 Corruption Prosecutions: B 67
- Q50 Facilitation Payments: A 83
- Q51 Military Doctrine: F 0
- Q52 Operational Training: C 63
- Q53 Forward Planning: C 50
- Q54 Corruption Monitoring in Operations: F 0
- Q55 Controls in Contracting: F 0
- Q56 Private Military Contractors: NS

#### Operational Risk (Operational Risk F 10)
- Q57 Procurement Legislation: A 100
- Q58 Procurement Cycle: D 33
- Q59 Procurement Oversight Mechanisms: D 42
- Q60 Potential Purchases Disclosed: F 13
- Q61 Actual Purchases Disclosed: F 13
- Q62 Business Compliance Standards: C 63
- Q63 Procurement Requirements: D 33
- Q64 Competition in Procurement: F 0
- Q65 Tender Board Controls: D 38
- Q66 Anti-Collusion Controls: E 25
- Q67 Contract Award / Delivery: D 44
- Q68 Complaint Mechanisms: C 58
- Q69 Supplier Sanctions: B 75
- Q70 Offset Contracts: F 0
- Q71 Offset Contract Monitoring: F 0
- Q72 Offset Competition: F 0
- Q73 Agents and Intermediaries: A 100
- Q74 Financing Packages: F 0
- Q75 Political Pressure in Acquisitions: NS

#### Procurement Risk (Procurement Risk D 36)
- Q76 Lobbying: F 0

### Key
- NEI: Not enough information to score indicator
- NS: Indicator is not scored for any country
- NA: Not applicable
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