

<b>Committee / Council:</b>	ECOSOC
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## Introduction

Our world today is becoming increasingly democratic, yet there are many steps that need to be taken. Countries, that are located in the north of the African continent and in the Middle East, are in need of reforms. During the last few months, the citizenry in these countries has decided to overthrow their government and to proceed into forging a new path towards political and economic growth and progress. Therefore countries of the Arab World, such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, Syria, Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Lebanon, Mauritania, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Sudan faced serious demonstrations and protests against their governments in the last two years. In some countries, protests got out of control and there were numerous clashes between rebellions and the government armed forces. For example, we can all remember what happened in Egypt, with President Hosni Mubarak, and what is currently going on in Syria, where people fight for their freedom, but President Bashar al-Assad is not willing to give up his power. These protests and demonstrations were given the name of **Arab Spring**, signaling a new Arab revolution. It started on the 18th December of 2010 in Tunisia and has not stopped since, affecting many countries in the greater region. The people have stated many times that the main goal that they want to achieve through the Arab Spring is to change the regime, to have democratic principles and to end any human rights violations. Up until now, only four countries, Tunisia, Yemen, Egypt and Libya, successfully overthrew their previous government and changed their regimes, although there were many casualties in the civil warlike protests and conflicts that took place, especially in Libya. But what was the driving rationale behind the desire of the civilians to go against their governments in the first place? The formal declarations of causes and goals announced causes are pertinent to issues such as oppression, government corruption and human rights violations. But the Arab Spring is far from being solely linked to the exclusionary characteristics of the fallen regimes, as stated above, but it was also deeply related to economic reasons, such as the rise of the food prices, unemployment and lack of public services.

## Definition of Key-Terms

Despite having already explained the Arab Spring, we feel committed to provide you with a definition of this key term. According to Oxford Dictionaries, Arab Spring means: a series of anti-government uprisings in various countries in North Africa and the Middle East, beginning in Tunisia in December 2010.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/Arab%2BSpring>

## Background Information

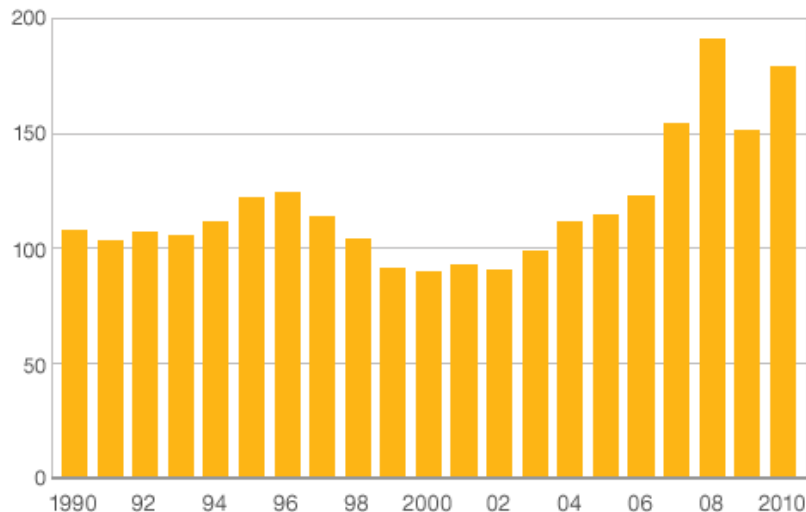
### Food Prices in the Arabic World

The food prices in the Arabic World got heavily influenced by the fact that large corporations of the western world overshadow any exports from smaller countries whose main source of national income are agricultural activities and by the fact that countries import large quantities of food, rather than promoting and enhancing their own domestic agricultural sector. According to a 2008 study of the World Bank, more than 50% of the food consumed in the Middle East and North Africa was imported thus having a massive negative impact on the domestic markets of these countries. Another key factor in this rise of prices is the World Food Prices Crisis that occurred in 2007-2008. World population growth, the increased demand and the effects of petroleum were the main factors of this crisis. Due to overpopulation, large corporations felt obliged to make even a bigger profit out of exporting foods. So as there was less food available for these countries and more buyers turned up, the corporations of the West increased their prices. So the situation is: less food + more buyers => higher prices. To get back on track, as these large corporations saw that some foodstuffs were highly consumed and the demand was really high, at an unexpected moment, when people did not expect the price to change, they raised the price of the food exported to these countries. This created a global food prices crisis and affected every single country, developed or undeveloped.

Below we can see a table from a BBC article<sup>2</sup>, which shows the food prices development since 1990.

#### Food prices since 1990

Food Price Index



Source: FAO

It is clear to everyone that there is a significant trend towards higher prices and thus more expensive food. This alteration on prices, according to research and as explained in the article, was mainly due to the increasing oil prices, severe weather conditions that damaged the harvests and crops and as stated before, because of the increasing demand for food.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-11389725>

## Unemployment

Although the Arab Spring aimed to reduce the unemployment rate and promote, support and encourage young people to work and support their families, ironically, it has resulted to an increasing number of unemployment. For example, over 17 million of university graduates remain unemployed, where in general terms the youth constitute almost the 45 % of the population. The causes of unemployment are in every case the same. Weak economy, poor governance, inability to successfully exploit resources and dysfunctional educational system are the main contributors that lead Middle East and North Africa (MENA) to the lack of job opportunities.

In Egypt, a noticeable increase in unemployment rates has occurred in the last year. Both male and female have been influenced by it, as statistics show that neither side has been able to find a job. Moreover, according to an IMF report, the total youth between 15 and 24 years old, who are unemployed in the region of Egypt and Syria, exceed 50% of the people, in total, that are unemployed.

Morocco's unemployment rate has even worsened with the Arab Spring as many Moroccan workers returned back to their country and sought job opportunities. According to a World Bank report, 30% of people who are aged between 15 and 29, are currently unemployed. The Moroccan Minister of Employment and Vocational Training, Dr. Abdul Majid Jihad, stated that overthrowing the government and changing their regime did not bring Morocco to the state that everyone hoped for or dreamed of but it actually worsened their economic and social conditions. He also stated that his country did not benefit at all from the Arab Spring, as many investors of the Arab World had a second thought in investing in a country with such an instable economy, society and political condition.

In Tunisia, the unemployment rate for male has reached almost 16% and for female it is estimated to be around 29%. In this image, we can clearly see the huge increase of unemployment over five years' time in Tunisia.

Tunisian Unemployed by Education 2006 - 2011

	May 2006	May 2007	May 2008	May 2009	May 2010	May 2011
No education	27.7	18.2	16.3	23.7	21.9	29.2
Primary	164.1	147.5	136.0	132.0	118.5	157.9
Secondary	155.1	173.6	194.5	194.5	193.6	299.8
High	62.6	97.0	139.4	139.4	157.3	217.8
Undeclared	0.2	0.1	0.7	0.7	0.5	0.2
TOTAL	429.7	436.4	490.3	490.3	491.8	704.9

Source: National Employment Survey

## Major Countries and Organizations Involved

### Libya

Libya is definitely one of the most significant countries that are involved in the Arab Spring. The question is why? The answer to that question can easily be given. Libya had as President Muammar Gaddafi, who had been repeatedly criticized as being an autocrat. To continue, on 15 February of 2011, Libyan people began protests against their government, in order to overthrow it. They continued by capturing several cities in Libya and this is something that an “autocrat” could not tolerate. Therefore President Muammar Gaddafi proceeded with military actions against his own people. This action was strongly criticized by the UN as threatening world peace and violating human rights. On 19 March 2011 the UN implemented the “United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973” which referred to a military intervention by UN and NATO forces, demanded immediate ceasefire and called for a no-fly zone over Libya. As the President did not follow some of the above proposals, the UN and NATO forces started striking Libya. In the end, there were many civilians casualties and UN was criticized that they did not respect the country’s sovereignty. This “civil war” in Libya ended with the death of Gaddafi. But now there is also another matter to be debated. President Gaddafi had over \$100 billion in assets around the world; where as the two thirds of them are in the United States of America, Germany and England. It should be pinpointed that all of his assets around the world are blocked and some of them are seized by the government, as what happened in Italy. The Libyan people request from the US treasury to have immediate access to them in order to pay for humanitarian needs, but up until now no further actions have been taken over this issue and this is something that has to be debated, whether the Libyan people are the rightful owners of the assets or not. Another economic relation between Libya and the rest of the world is the oil prices. During the “civil war” in Libya oil prices had spiked to levels that had not been seen since 2008. This had a really negative impact on the global market, as the people were forced to pay much more money in order to use their personal vehicles. It was of significant importance, because it happened in the early days of the economic crisis that the world is going through and it only made matters even worse. Through all the above information, you delegates are in position to see how a country’s instability in the political and social sector can affect the economic sector of the rest of the world.

### Egypt

Egypt is a country of great importance in the African continent. Following the Tunisian uprising, which was the first country to start this and successfully managed to overthrow their government, Egyptian civilians started a number of public demonstrations in order to overthrow their government, who was lead by president Hosni Mubarak. Although everything started in a peaceful way, numerous clashes did occur resulting in almost a thousand casualties and over 6.000 people wounded. The reasons why Egyptian people started going against their government were related to oppression, poverty, injustice and the massive income gaps during Mubarak’s regime. The irony is that after they overthrew their government, according to some Central Bank figures, their economy started slowing down and it is estimated to have fallen from 7% growth to

under 2%, foreign investment is insignificant and the unemployment rate rose by 3% reaching the 12%. It has been reported that foreign investments did not proceed with expanding their transactions in Egypt, as the political and social unrest did not support such a move. It has also been stated by many reporters, that because President Mubarak went to prison with many businessmen that served him, their future plans of growing and enhancing the economy of Egypt will fail to happen, that causing even more loss of jobs and opportunities of economic growth.

### Syria

Last but not least, another country of great importance in the Arab Spring is Syria. On 15 March 2011 civilians started some public demonstrations against their government. Later on this period, President Bashar al-Assad felt the need to call and regroup the Syrian Army in order to confront these protests and demonstrations. Everything got out of control as governmental forces opened fire on innocent civilians. This led to numerous consecutive collisions between civilians and governmental forces. As a result, the death toll of the Syria civilians, according to the UN, is reported to be well over 7.500. What the Syrian people are trying to achieve though this, is to change the regime and continue with social and economic reforms that will bring a brighter day to Syria. It is known that Syria is an economy based on agriculture, oil, industry and tourism but because of the political isolation Syria has got low levels of productivity in these sectors. This automatically leads to a low income, financial problems, low standard of living conditions, high unemployment rates, growing poverty and growing income gap. This is something that the Syrian civilians are willing to change and give to the future generations a country worth fighting for and living in. These protests have not come to an end up until now and President Basher al-Assad is not willing to implement any of the agreed proposals that have been made by the UN. Unfortunately, the Security Council fails to pass any resolution on this issue, as countries with the VETO power, China and Russia, state clearly that they respect the country's sovereignty and in any case do not want to interfere. The actual reasons behind the position that these countries hold, are believed to be economic. For example, Syria imports a great amount of ammunition from Russia and Syria is a "partner" with great contribution in the Western part of Asia.

## **Timeline of events**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>
<b>Tunisia</b>	<b>18 December 2010- 27 January 2011</b>	<b>Overthrew the government</b>
<b>Egypt</b>	<b>11 February 2011</b>	<b>Overthrew the government</b>
<b>Yemen</b>	<b>27 January 2011- 27 February 2012</b>	<b>Overthrew the government</b>
<b>Libya</b>	<b>23 August 2011</b>	<b>Overthrew the government</b>
<b>Morocco</b>	<b>November 2011</b>	<b>Change of Regime</b>
<b>Syria</b>	<b>15 March 2011- ongoing</b>	<b>Efforts to change the regime</b>

There is also a much more detailed and interesting timeline of events that was found at a website. The link is: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/interactive/2011/mar/22/middle-east-protest-interactive-timeline>. I would personally advise delegates to take a closer look to the events through this timeline.

## **Previous Attempts to solve the Issue**

According to the UN policies, each country has to respect the other's sovereignty and should interfere neither politically nor militarily. Therefore all possible solutions or resolutions submitted by UN members have just been debated and introduced to the countries that face social and political instability. Unfortunately, as their regimes do not follow democratic principles, most of their governments are not willing to give up their power and therefore they cause much bigger clashes between them and the civilians, which is something that cannot be tolerated by the UN as human rights are being violated and the world peace is being under threat. In the Arab Spring, UN's Security Council and NATO interfered only once, as they suspected that the situation would get out of control, but matters got even worse. We are referring to the Libyan matter, where President Muammar Gaddafi was in power and the military interference resulted in his death and many civilian casualties. Many strong proposals have been debated over this issue. Up until now, the most effective way of dealing with this ongoing issue is to implement the proposed sanctions. Most of the countries, which have been exporting or importing goods from countries of the Arab World, have imposed sanctions, such as the temporary blockage of oil traffic, travel ban, the freeze of government's assets and ban of all transactions between the governments and the central bank. The most intriguing part of this method to deal with this issue is that you respect the sovereignty of the country as you do not pressure the regime to change, but encourage government to improve their relationship with the civilians, in a peaceful way.

## **Conclusion**

This study guide has been written in order to provide you, delegates, with the general background of the topic and highlight the most important facts. It is time to encourage all of you to be equally prepared and to know your countries policy and position concerning this issue. You should not limit your research to this study guide, but should read other articles on this topic. It is a really intriguing one as for the last years the UN could not be in a position to tackle it efficiently. You are reminded that you should follow your country's policy and should not hesitate to support any idea just because you do not feel comfortable with it as a person. Hope you find this study guide really useful. Looking forward to meet all of the delegates in October and taking the most out of this experience.

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