

**NGO Parallel Report on the Republic of Tunisia's
Seventh Report on the Implementation of the Convention on the
Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women**

*Submitted to the
UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
for consideration in the formulation of the
List of Issues during the 75th Pre-Sessional Working Group (22-26 July 2019)*

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PURPOSE OF THE PARALLEL REPORT

1) The purpose of this Parallel Report is to assist the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (the “Committee”) in the formulation of the List of Issues during the 75th Pre-Sessional Working Group (22-26 July 2019), leading to the discussion of Tunisia’s Seventh Periodic Report on its implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) during the 75th Session of the Committee.

2) The Republic of Tunisia ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women on 20 September 1985.¹ It is currently undergoing its seventh periodic review.

3) In the Concluding Observations and Recommendations for Tunisia’s previous periodic report (2010), the Committee placed significant emphasis on the country’s outdated and discriminatory laws, lack of social and health services, and cultural stereotypes that allowed for continued discrimination and violence against women, particularly in rural and remotes areas.² The Committee called upon the Tunisian government to make the necessary legislative reforms to then-existing discriminatory laws; to take specific steps aimed at the empowerment of rural women, including access to education and health-care services; and to increase public awareness of the rights protected under CEDAW and the obligations placed on the government, law enforcement, judges, community and religious leaders to fulfill these rights.³

4) Despite significant changes to the Tunisian government and national laws since 2010, many of these issues remain unresolved. The authors of this Parallel Report respectfully request that the Committee make a series of recommendations that would bring Tunisia’s domestic laws and practice into conformity with its international human rights obligations; in particular, its obligations under CEDAW Articles 2, 5(a), and 14.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS OF THIS REPORT AND SOURCES

5) This report has been prepared by Margaret Davenport, JD Candidate 2020, of the International Human Rights Clinic of Loyola Law School, Los Angeles, under the supervision of Professors Cesare Romano, Rajika Shah, and Hannah Robinson.

6) The International Human Rights Center of Loyola Law School, Los Angeles is committed to achieving the full exercise of human rights by all persons, and seeks to maximize the use of international and regional

¹ *States Party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, United Nations Treaty Collection, https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-8&chapter=4&lang=en (last visited May 1, 2019).

² UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), *Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: Tunisia*, 47th Session, October 2010 CEDAW/C/SWE/CO/7 [hereinafter 2010 Concluding Observations].

³ *Id.*

political, judicial, and quasi-judicial bodies through litigation, advocacy, and capacity-building.⁴ Loyola Law School, Los Angeles is the school of law of Loyola Marymount University, a Jesuit university.

7) Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates (ATFD) is a highly regarded NGO that provides support and advocacy for women victims of violence in Tunisia.

8) Muslims for Progressive Values (MPV) is a human rights organization that promotes theologically-sound frameworks for Islamic liberalism. We seek to reinvigorate the Islamic tradition of ijihad (critical engagement and interpretation of sacred texts), intellectual and cultural discourse in changing hearts and minds.

9) The information presented includes first-hand investigative findings and national surveys by ATFD and other non-governmental organizations. Since much of the necessary information is under state control and remains difficult to access, the authors further relied on media and other outside sources, including representations that the state of Tunisia has made to various international bodies.

BACKGROUND

10) Although Tunisian women tend to be less discriminated and enjoy more rights than their counterparts in other MENA countries,⁵ in Tunisia there are still too many laws, customs, and practices in place that impede the fulfilment of women's rights and enable violence.

11) In 2010, the Office National de la Famille et de la Population ("ONFP") carried out a national survey on violence against women, finding that it is more prevalent in rural areas.⁶ This is the most recent survey of this kind available, and its conclusions are hardly surprising. Rural women in Tunisia are more likely to have a lower level of education, higher unemployment, lower pay, and limited access to healthcare and support services.⁷ They often live in households where traditional gender roles prevail and have gravely limited access to justice.⁸ These factors create conditions in which gender violence can take place and will not be punished.⁹

12) This honorable Committee has addressed this reality in its General Recommendation 34, recognizing that rural women are less likely to be educated, at higher risk of gender-based violence, more vulnerable to

⁴ See *International Human Rights Clinic*, Loyola Law School, Los Angeles, <http://www.lls.edu/academics/experientiallearning/clinics/socialcriminaljusticeclinics/internationalhumanrightsclinic/> (last visited May 1, 2019).

⁵ Tunisia's Personal Status Code, enacted upon independence in 1956, was arguably the most progressive for women's rights at the time and is still today. Among its provisions, it abolished polygamy, granted equal rights to men and women in marriage and divorce, and removed the duty of wives to obey their husbands. Tunisian women were also among the first in the MENA region to obtain the right to vote, and Tunisian women gained the right to abortion the same year as women in the United States. Amnesty International, *Assaulted and Accused: Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Tunisia*, at 21, (Nov. 2015), available online at <https://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/tunisia-assaulted-and-accused-report.pdf> [hereinafter *Assaulted and Accused*].

⁶ Office National de la Famille et de la Population, *Expérience et vécu des femmes survivantes à la violence conjugale dans les régions du Kef, Béja et Jendouba: résultats d'une étude qualitative* (Tunis, 2015), available online at http://www.onfp.nat.tn/liens/violence_nord_ouest_resultats_2015.pdf [hereinafter ONFP 2015].

⁷ Id.

⁸ *Assaulted and Accused*, at 21.

⁹ Id. at 57.

stereotyped gender roles, and particularly disadvantaged in access to healthcare and other government services.¹⁰ In such regions, there often exist “overlapping and conflicting statutory, customary, and religious laws and authorities”, which contribute to discrimination and make justice virtually inaccessible to some women.¹¹

13) Rural women in Tunisia are especially vulnerable, as regional disparities and inequality between the urban and rural areas are dramatic: per capita income is about half that of the wealthiest regions, the poverty rate is three times higher, and educated women have the highest rate of unemployment, as most employment in rural areas is either unpaid family work or seasonal work with the lowest wages in the country.¹²

DISCUSSION

I) **The 2011 Revolution Advanced the Rights of Rural Women**

14) It was precisely these disparities emanating from the rural regions that led to the 2011 uprising and eventual overthrow of Ben Ali’s regime.¹³ Women played an instrumental role in organizing demonstrations, and, once freed from the restrictions of the authoritarian regime, women’s rights organizations fought to ensure that gender equality and women’s rights remained high on the political agenda during the transition.¹⁴ The progress of the women’s rights movement was reflected in the adoption of Tunisia’s new Constitution in 2014, which guarantees greater protection against violence, equality between men and women, and requires the state to work towards gender parity in elected assemblies.¹⁵ Though contested, the new Constitution did not include reference to Sharia law but instead an entire article dedicated to protecting and strengthening women’s rights.¹⁶ Later that year, Tunisia withdrew all of its reservations to CEDAW.¹⁷

15) Another major step forward for women’s rights in Tunisia was the adoption of Organic Law No. 2017-58 on the Elimination of Violence Against Women in August of 2017.¹⁸ The law amends provisions of the

¹⁰ UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), *CEDAW General Recommendations No. 34, adopted 2016* (contained in Document C/GC/34) available at: https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/1_Global/INT_CEDAW_GEC_7933_E.pdf.

¹¹ Id.

¹² Mongi Boughzala, “Promoting Inclusive Growth in Arab Countries: Rural and Regional Development and Inequality in Tunisia”, *Global Economy and Development, Working Paper 71* (February 2014), available online at <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Arab-EconPaper5Boughzala-v3.pdf>.

¹³ Id.

¹⁴ In April 2011, women’s groups were instrumental in adopting an electoral law requiring gender parity in candidate lists submitted by all political parties ahead of the elections in October. See *Assaulted and Accused*, at 21.

¹⁵ *La Constitution de la République Tunisienne* (2014). Available online at <http://www.legislation.tn/fr/constitution/la-constitution-de-la-r%C3%A9publique-tunisienne>.

¹⁶ UN Women, *Tunisia Passes Historic Law to End Violence Against Women*, (August 10, 2017), available online at <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2017/8/news-tunisia-law-on-ending-violence-against-women>.

¹⁷ Id.

¹⁸ Organic Law No. 2017-58, 11 August 2017, available online at: <http://www.legislation.tn/en/actualites/organic-law-n%C2%B02017-58-dated-11-august-2017-eliminating-violence-against-women> [hereinafter Organic Law No. 2017-58]. See also Time, “One Year Ago, Tunisia Passed a Groundbreaking Law to Protect Women. Has It Worked?”, (July 26, 2018), available online at <http://time.com/5348377/tunisia-women-violence-law/>.

Code of Personal Status and the Penal Code, and it requires the State to expand support services for women victims of violence and to develop an approach to prevention.¹⁹ The law vastly broadens the definition of violence against women to include “any moral, sexual or economic assault against women, based on discrimination against the sex and which results in prejudice, suffering, or physical, psychological, sexual or economic damage”.²⁰ Notably, this definition considers discrimination itself as a form of violence.²¹

16) The law makes it easier to prosecute domestic abuse and imposes penalties for sexual harassment in public.²² It abolishes Article 227 of the Penal Code, which offered immunity to perpetrators of sexual acts with minors who married their victims.²³ The law also includes preventive measures such as directing government agencies to train their staff to detect and prevent violence against women, prosecuting police officers for failing to file complaints, and creating a National Observatory for the Prevention of Violence Against Women, responsible for monitoring the effectiveness and efficiency of the law’s application.²⁴

II) Despite Legislative Reforms, Violence Against Rural Women Has Increased as Employment, Enforcement, and Government Services are Insufficient

17) According to both official and civil society surveys, this increased violence can be attributed to a greater willingness of rural women to speak out about their abuse as well as an actual increase in violence due to economic vulnerability, the persistence of traditional attitudes towards women, and inadequate governmental services and enforcement.²⁵

i) Rural women face discrimination and violence because of precarious and difficult working conditions

18) Primarily employed in either agricultural or domestic work, rural women are often subjected to low pay and intensive exploitation in the absence of basic labor rights and protections.²⁶ Only 19.7% of rural women have their own income, compared with 65.3% of men.²⁷ Women are paid roughly half as much as men for the same work, if at all, leaving them dependent on their families and unable to leave if victim to their husbands’

¹⁹ Vanessa Szakal, “Violence against Women: New Tunisian Law in Effect, Will It Be Effective?”, Nawaat (February 2018), available online at <https://nawaat.org/portail/2018/02/12/violence-against-women-new-tunisian-law-in-effect-will-it-be-effective/> [hereinafter Szakal, New Tunisian Law].

²⁰ Organic Law No. 2017-58, Article 3.

²¹ Szakal, New Tunisian Law.

²² Id.

²³ Id.

²⁴ Id.

²⁵ Id.

²⁶ Summary of key concerns submitted by the *Association tunisienne des femmes démocrates* (ATFD) to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

²⁷ Shiraz Kefi, “Tunisia: Marginalized Rural Women, Study Finds”, GlobalNet (March 2014), available online at <http://www.gnet.tn/temps-fort/tunisie-les-femmes-en-milieu-rural-marginalisees-selon-une-etude/id-menu-325.html>.

abuse.²⁸ Moreover, most rural women do not have the ability to realize or defend their rights since they are typically working outside a contractual framework.²⁹

19) Like other Muslim nations, Tunisia's inheritance law still allows for a son to inherit twice as much as a daughter from their father's estate.³⁰ But in rural areas, even this discriminatory law is rarely applied, with sons taking far more than double that of daughters.³¹ Without receiving her share of land, a rural woman can only work and easily falls into a dangerous situation if she can no longer work because of illness or otherwise.

20) Without any protections, rural women in agricultural or domestic work are exposed to sexual violence.³² A survey by the Association of Tunisian Women for Research and Development ("AFTURD") on full-time domestic workers, of which 96.7% have no job contract, shows that 15% of respondents claim to have been victims of sexual abuse by their employers, 16% of young women report they were forced into sexual touching, and 18% forced into sexual intercourse. One must also take into consideration that most acts of violence and harassment go unreported, as women in informal work have no legal protection.³³

ii) Persisting patriarchal attitudes towards women perpetuate the cycle of gender-based violence in rural areas

21) Tunisia's transition to democracy offered conservative Islamist groups opportunities to participate in public life that were not previously available, and, especially in rural regions, the expression of these rights often conflicts with the secular perspective on women's rights.³⁴ Patriarchal cultural norms and misguided legal and religious interpretations drive discrimination and violence against women.³⁵ Even though Organic Law No. 2017-58 abolished the previous Code granting a rapist immunity by marrying his victim, this practice is still prevalent in the rural areas where families are more likely to encourage the marriage of young girls for financial security.³⁶

22) Spousal violence is the most common form of violence against rural women, but survivors are often told to remain in the marriage rather than bring shame to their family.³⁷ In the Arab-Muslim culture, rape is particularly taboo and the focus on dignity keeps women from speaking out about their abuse, as women are often made to feel responsible for what happened to them.³⁸

²⁸ ONFP 2015.

²⁹ Id.

³⁰ As of January 2019, legislation has been proposed to make inheritances equal between male and female heirs. Arab News, "In Rural Tunisia, Inheritance Reform Offers Women Rare Boost", January 25, 2019, available online at <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1441566/middle-east>.

³¹ Id.

³² AFTURD Report, *Violence Against Women in Rural Tunisia*, May 2015.

³³ Id.

³⁴ *Assaulted and Accused*, at 28.

³⁵ Id. at 25.

³⁶ Id. at 36.

³⁷ Id. at 36.

³⁸ Global Net, "Rape in Tunisia", 15 May 2017.

23) In certain regions of Tunisia, Sharia law holds more legitimacy than any domestic or international law, and thus many rural women are either unaware of their rights under the CEDAW or they have no meaningful significance.³⁹ According to Islamic feminist and human rights activist Zainah Anwar, in order to convince women of their rights under the CEDAW, it is necessary to engage with Islam and present human rights as consistent with its values and principles.⁴⁰

iii) Insufficient government services and the inadequate enforcement of existing protections for victims severely limit the ability of rural women to receive treatment, counseling, and justice for their abuse

24) In the Greater Tunis District, the average illiteracy is 20% for women, while rates in rural governorates vary from 46% to 48.5%.⁴¹ This disparity is linked to the lack of transport systems to get women and girls to school and severe poverty forcing young women to drop out of school and contribute to their families through farm and housework.⁴²

25) Existing counseling and health services for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence are limited and inadequate, especially in rural regions due to lack of access and financial resources.⁴³ Only one in ten rural women reported having accessed any type of support or counseling services within the last 12 months.⁴⁴ Health institutions are not adequately equipped to receive victims of sexual and gender-based violence and do not offer the anonymity or privacy essential for their safety.⁴⁵ In the southern and western regions of the country where domestic violence is particularly prevalent, no shelters are available.⁴⁶

26) While Organic Law No. 2017-58 sets out ambitious policies and programs aimed at assisting women victims of violence, it fails to stipulate how the state will fund these measures and the current budget

³⁹ John Hursh, *The Tunisian Spring: Women's Rights in Tunisia and Broader Implications for Feminism in North Africa and the Middle East*, 46 U. Balt. L. Rev. 277, 331 (2017).

⁴⁰ Id. at 332.

⁴¹ ONFP 2015.

⁴² Id.

⁴³ A study conducted in 2013 by the Ministry of Women and Family reported that rural women walk an average of five kilometers to get to the nearest clinic and take up to twelve hours to do so. "Tunisia: Marginalized Rural Women", Global Net, available online at <http://www.gnet.tn/temps-fort/tunisie-les-femmes-en-milieu-rural-marginalisees-selon-une-etude/id-menu-325.html>.

⁴⁴ The ONFP Center in Bar Arous is the only state body that specializes in providing psychological support to survivors of violence, and thus much of the support falls on civil society organizations. See ONFP 2015.

⁴⁵ ONFP 2015.

⁴⁶ The national helpline for women victims is non-operational and emergency accommodations for survivors are inadequate, particularly in rural and remote areas. The Ministry of Social Affairs runs only three shelters, located in the larger, coastal cities of Tunis, Sousse and Sfax, which are not designed to address the specific needs of women victims of violence. The assistance is typically short-term and aimed at achieving social reintegration, effectively encouraging the cycle of violence. As a result, women rarely make any complaints against their husband. According to the 2010 ONFP study, as many 75% of women seek help from their families are being subjected to violence, but only 40% leave their homes. In most cases, women have nowhere to go and thus are forced to remain in abusive environments. *Assaulted and Accused*, at 43.

does not account for them.⁴⁷ While the law requires authorities to refer women to shelters if they are in need, it does not set aside money for shelters and includes no provisions for funding either governmental or nongovernmental shelters. It also fails to set out mechanisms for the government to provide financial assistance to meet women's needs or help in finding long-term accommodations.⁴⁸

27) Despite new reforms and standards, fear of police impunity and distrust in the criminal justice system stifle and deter rural women's ability to obtain justice for their abuse.⁴⁹ Caseworkers report that it is common practice for police to encourage women to drop a complaint against their assailant, especially in cases of domestic violence, where the general belief is that it is a private issue to be resolved within the family.⁵⁰ The pressure is even greater in rural areas where perpetrators can influence police through personal or social connections.⁵¹ When victims of spousal violence do bring cases against their abuser, judges are reluctant to convict a husband in the absence of visible physical injuries.⁵²

28) Police rarely, if ever, investigate the crime scene to collect evidence or witness statements.⁵³ Victims bear the responsibility to prove that they were a victim of violence, forcing them to gather evidence of the crime by themselves.⁵⁴ Women must first obtain a medical certificate establishing violence and its severity, and then must go to a forensic medical doctor in a public hospital designated by the judge in order to draw up a report on the nature and length of incapacity suffered as a result of domestic violence.⁵⁵ In rural areas, this is often not possible given transportation and financial constraints.⁵⁶

TUNISIA'S INTERNATIONAL LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

29) In addition to its obligations under CEDAW, Tunisia has international legal obligations pursuant to its ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ("ICCPR"), the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights ("ICESCR"), and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights ("ACHPR").

⁴⁷ Human Rights Watch, "Tunisia: Landmark Step to Shield Women from Violence", (July 2017), available online at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/07/27/tunisia-landmark-step-shield-women-violence>.

⁴⁸ Assaulted and Accused, at 43.

⁴⁹ In a survey conducted by Transparency International in 2013, 56% of respondents in Tunisia consider the judiciary corrupt or very corrupt, and 69% felt the same was true about the police. Assaulted and Accused, at 43.

⁵⁰ Survivors have reported that police officers have changed their statements or failed to transfer their complaint to a court. Assaulted and Accused, at 41.

⁵¹ Id. at 42.

⁵² Many judges are strongly opposed to the new law and its increased rights for women seeking justice for domestic violence. Assaulted and Accused, at 6.

⁵³ Id. at 6.

⁵⁴ Id. at 7.

⁵⁵ Id. at 21.

⁵⁶ Id. at 22.

30) The ICCPR requires that State Parties guarantee its citizens the equal enjoyment of all enumerated rights, equal protection before the law, protection from unlawful attacks on one's reputation, and a limitation on religious expression only in order to protect the safety, health, and freedoms of others.⁵⁷

31) The ICESCR requires that State Parties guarantee working conditions for women that are not inferior to those enjoyed by men,⁵⁸ protect women against spousal and other forms of domestic violence,⁵⁹ provide access to medical care for all persons, and secure the right to education.⁶⁰ As with the ICCPR, the ICESCR requires State Parties to guarantee that the rights espoused in the treaty be exercised without discrimination.⁶¹

32) The ACHPR requires State Parties to guarantee freedom from discrimination, equal protection before the law, the right to the respect of human dignity and freedom from inhuman or degrading treatment, the right to equitable and satisfactory working conditions, the right to the best attainable state of physical and mental health, and the right to education.⁶² Articles 18 and 19 specifically require additional protections for the family, the elimination of every discrimination against women, and the protection of the rights of women as stipulated in international declarations and conventions.⁶³ In addition, under the ACHPR, every *individual* also has a duty to respect others without discrimination, to promote "harmonious development of the family", and to work for the cohesion and respect of the family.⁶⁴

33) It should be noted that Tunisia is one of the few African countries that has neither signed nor ratified the Protocol to the ACHPR on the Rights of Women in Africa (also known as the Maputo Protocol). The Maputo Protocol contains additional State obligations and protections for women, recognizing that women in Africa continue to be victims of discrimination and harmful practices.⁶⁵

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

34) Taking into consideration the Concluding Observations and Recommendations from the last reporting cycle in conjunction with the political and cultural reforms that have taken place since the 2011 revolution,

⁵⁷ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 16 December 1966, 999 U.N.T.S. 171, Articles 3, 17 and 18.

⁵⁸ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 16 December 1966, 993 U.N.T.S. 3, Article 7 [hereinafter ICESCR].

⁵⁹ ICESCR Article 10; see also Submission to the Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, The Advocates for Human Rights and MRA, August 2016.

⁶⁰ ICESCR, Article 7.

⁶¹ ICESCR, Article 2.

⁶² African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights ("Banjul Charter"), 27 June 1981, CAB/LEG/67/3 rev. 5, 21 I.L.M. 58 (1982).

⁶³ Id.

⁶⁴ Id.

⁶⁵ Some of these obligations require the state enact legislation aimed to prohibit all forms to discrimination; take corrective action in areas where discrimination against women in law and in fact continue to exist; to provide necessary support to women victims through health and legal services, psychological counseling, and vocational training; and to modify social and cultural patterns of conduct based on the idea of the inferiority or superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for women and men. Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in African (hereafter referred to as "The Maputo Protocol"), Preamble.

Tunisia has taken significant steps towards to elimination of violence against rural women. However, much progress remains to be made.

35) We believe Tunisia is in violation of Articles 2 and 5(a) of CEDAW by failing to fully implement and uphold the legislative reforms identified in the last reporting cycle. Insufficient funding for shelters and health services in rural areas, the failure of government actors to recognize and uphold their legal obligations, the lack of education programs aimed at raising awareness of women’s rights under the Convention, and the failure to combat harmful stereotypes in rural areas dominated by conservative and patriarchal attitudes are acts of omission on the part of the government that put it in violation of Articles 2 and 5(a). Moreover, we believe Tunisia is in violation of Article 14 by failing to fully address the particular issues faced by rural women, and more specifically to ensure that rural women have the same access to education, healthcare, social services and employment opportunities as both men and women in urban areas.

36) Therefore, the authors of the present report respectfully request the honorable Committee to ask Tunisia during the preparation of the List of Issues phase of the current periodic review at least some of the following questions:

1. Why have the reforms, protections, and programs contained in Organic Law No. 2017-58 on the Elimination of Violence Against Women not been fully implement and enforced yet?
2. What is Tunisia doing to increase access for rural women to education, health, and support services, training and education of law enforcement and religious leaders as to their legal obligations, and programs to empower women in their work and family life?
4. What does Tunisia intend to do to adequately fund the National Observatory for the Prevention of Violence Against Women, created through Organic Law No. 2017-58?
5. Will Tunisia include in the Annual Budget funds to expand health centers and support and counseling services in rural and remote areas?
6. Will Tunisia implement training and education for law enforcement, the judiciary, and religious leaders as to their obligations and the rights of women protected under CEDAW and other international mechanisms?
7. Does Tunisia intend to emphasize the compatibility of CEDAW with the teachings of Islam by promoting and mandating regular sermons on women’s rights at Friday prayers in mosques throughout the country?⁶⁶
8. Does Tunisia intend to sign and ratify the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on Women’s Rights in Africa (Maputo Protocol)?

⁶⁶ Pursuant to the Tunisian Constitution and domestic legislation, “the government oversees Islamic prayer services.” U.S. Department of State, Tunisia 2016 International Religious Freedom Report (Aug. 15, 2017), available at <https://www.state.gov/svp-content/uploads/2019/01/Tunisia-4.pdf>. The Tunisian Ministry of Religious Affairs may “suggest [] themes for Friday prayers” and “initiate administrative and legal procedures to remove imams whom authorities determine to be preaching ‘divisive’ theology.” Id. Thus, it is the government's responsibility to ensure all of its institutions work toward and implement its own laws regarding women’s rights.