After the Arab Spring: what’s changed?

When the Arab Spring occurred in 2011, many observers both in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and Europe, saw the popular uprisings as a chance to enact region-wide reforms and advance towards more accountable, democratic and economically sustainable societies. However, today the overall picture in the region looks bleak: most of the main factors contributing to popular dissatisfaction – including repressive political landscapes, and high levels of violence and unemployment – are worsening to varying degrees.

How did the Arab Spring affect the MENA and its population?

Youth unemployment rate (age 15-24) 2010 vs 2016

Population growth in the MENA (%)

Freedom of press in the MENA 2010 vs 2016 (Freedom House score)

Prison population trends - change (%) in number of prisoners before and after the Arab Spring (based on average accessible data)

*This designation, found here and thereafter in this publication, shall not be construed as recognition of a state of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the member states on this issue. **No data available for 2010.
In the light of the Arab Spring, the European Union and its member states re-defined their priorities with regard to the Official Development Assistance (ODA) in the MENA. Combined, aid flows from the EU institutions and the member states have increased by 52%. European funding focused on addressing the most pressing humanitarian crisis (Syria), while continuing the extensive support provided to the countries neighbouring the EU. The Union and its member states collectively remain the biggest donor in the MENA, and account for one-third of all aid sent to the region.


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