



## [U.S. Secretary of State Urges the Tunisian President to Implement Reforms in Response to the Country's Citizens' Desire for Democratic Progress](#)

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has urged Tunisian President Kais Saied to enact reforms in order to heed to the country's citizens' desire for continued democratic progress. Tunisia has been embroiled in an ongoing political crisis since Saied strengthened his grip on power several months ago, drawing widespread criticism both at home and abroad for suspending parliament and dismissing his cabinet. Thousands of Tunisians continue to engage in large-scale pro-democracy demonstrations demanding that Saied reinstate the assembly, while many nations, international institutions, and advocacy groups have also called for a return to the democratic process and normal constitutional order. A crippling economic downturn and political upheaval have observers worried about further destabilizing conditions across the region, with Secretary of State Blinken and others paying particular special attention to the Tunisian president's power grab due to the country being one of the main democratic successes to emerge in the aftermath of the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings.

Secretary of State Blinken's remarks on the situation in Tunisia come as global aid from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has been halted until the nation reverses course, with Tunisia still grappling with a significant economic crisis on top of its political uncertainty. As a result of Saied's actions, much-needed relief has not been provided and has further pushed Tunisia into deteriorating economic and political conditions. Some analysts contend that these circumstances may have nudged Saied into pledging the U.S. Secretary of State – one of the harshest critics of Saied's power grab – that democratic reforms will be implemented. Additionally, the United States has expressed its position that it will assist in alleviating Tunisia's economic crisis, but only as soon as Saied demonstrates a clear and dedicated plan for reinstating the democratic process in the country.

Pro-democracy advocates in Tunisia have expressed considerable doubt about Saied's promises, seeing little options for positive reform with him in power – especially given his blatant efforts to consolidate it over the past few months. Saied has continually tried to defend his authoritarian coup, using the economic problems in the country as a convenient political tool by erroneously claiming that it was a necessary step to keep the nation from disaster. Ultimately, the relatively high unemployment and inflation rates in Tunisia have simply opened the door for Saied's power grab, and are causing both domestic and international rights activists to ramp up the pressure against his behavior – which has been damaging to the prospects of upholding democratic ideals and principles that the majority of Tunisians are supportive of.

Saied's actions have heightened concerns regarding a potential authoritarian backslide in Tunisia. As such, advocates have widely condemned his attempts to consolidate control over the country's civic and political environment. Observers are at least encouraged by the decisions of groups like the IMF to put a halt on the deliverance of economic relief, given the hope that it serves as a push towards needed democratic reforms in the face of Saied's power grab. Furthermore, thousands of Tunisian citizens continue to take part in protests against Saied's measures, and by doing so maintain focus on the clear desire to uphold the democratic process. Lastly, U.S. Secretary of State Blinken's attention to the matter highlights the fact that key global forces are also rightly mindful of the important issue.