

Is there democracy without social Justice?

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“Democracy is fragile because it does not possess all the truth... If it claims to have it, it becomes something else, a dictatorship perhaps,”

French philosopher Edgar Morin, May 29, 2015.

Like the Candlelight Rallies that lit South Korea streets from autumn 2016 to spring 2017 calling for President Park impeachment because of her involvement in corruption scandals and power abuse, the three-week Tunisian Revolt that was sparked after the self-immolation of a street vendor in the long-forgotten area of Sidi Bouzid managed to oust the dictatorship of Ben Ali. The slogans of the three-week uprising were clear: freedom, democracy and social justice.

However, More than seven years after that volcanic reaction to decades of political and social repression, protests are increasing showing that Tunisia , though depicted as the only success story in the Arab world because other countries like Libya or Yemen have plunged into endless violence or into a military dictatorship as is the case in Egypt, has still a long way ahead.

In fact, the country has made important strides towards democracy: it enshrined basic constitutional rights, including freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, freedom of conscience and freedom of belief. An exception in the Arab world!

Yet, many observers believe that the main demand of social justice is slow to arrive: youths, citizens in underprivileged interior regions have begun to lose patience: lack of economic opportunities, slow social development and youth crisis have fueled anger that is often ignored by the government. The hopes and expectations of the three-week (December, 17th, 2010- January 14th,2011) have faded away giving place to some frustration and despair. Youth emigration is one sign of that despair as tens of thousands have left the country both legally and illegally. Brain drain to Europe and Canada risks emptying the country of its elite.

But there is some bright spot: Tunisia is entering a new phase of irreversible change, turning its back on the gloomy past of dictatorship. Civil society is as resilient as in the past and plays its role. Women have gained more rights: the law that forbids violence against women, sexual harassment in public spaces and domestic violence was voted by the parliament in summer 2017. Still, most young people believe that peaceful protests are the only way to get their rights.

Like Koreans who toppled a military dictatorship, Tunisians have eradicated a repressive regime showing that eagerness to democracy and human rights. Now, we have to give another example: **that justice is a sine qua non condition to the success of democracy. Not only in Tunisia, but in the world.**