

## Lent Prayer - Tunisia

Project(s): 53-1026

Country/Region: Middle East and North Africa, Tunisia, Africa

**It was in Tunisia that the so-called “Arab Spring” was launched in January 2011, when the authoritarian President Ben Ali was ousted by violent protests. As the transitional government promised democratic reforms, hopes were raised of real freedom for the country’s people, including its tiny and vulnerable Christian minority.**

Demonstrations in Tunisia launched the “Arab Spring” in 2011, but the success of Islamists in recent elections threatens the security of the country’s Christians  
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But subsequent developments in Tunisia have dashed these hopes and may foreshadow even greater trials for the churches than they experienced under Ben Ali. A few Christians who sought to take advantage of the revolution to share their faith were forced to flee the country or move to a safer location after receiving threats from Islamists. There were reports of an increasingly public imposition of Islam, including condemnations for apostasy. In September a group of Muslims attempted to turn a Christian church building in Kef into a mosque.

Then in October the main Islamist party, Ennahda, emerged from the first elections since the revolution as the largest party in the national constituent assembly. Outlawed under Ben Ali on suspicion of planning an Islamist takeover, Ennahda will now have a dominant role in shaping the new Tunisia. Its opponents are concerned that it may not respect the country’s secular and progressive traditions.

Christians in Tunisia are widely scattered. In a population that is more than 99% Muslim, there are only a few hundred indigenous believers, and only about a third of these can meet with each other for worship. The rest are scattered, and many are secret believers, as they face the usual problems of harassment and discrimination endured by converts from Islam in Muslim-majority contexts. If the Tunisian government becomes more definitely Islamic, their freedom and safety is likely to be jeopardised even further.

Pray for the indigenous Christians of Tunisia at this time of massive political change. Pray that their limited freedom to practise their faith will not be threatened further, and that they may be protected from attacks by radical Muslims. Ask the Lord to overrule in the shaping of Tunisia’s new government, that the influence of Islamist groups will be restricted and the country will not impose sharia law. Pray too for the country’s expatriate Christian community, that they may find ways to support their Tunisian brothers and sisters.

### **Barnabas Fund projects include:**

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