

**MONITORING THE COVERAGE  
OF THE OCTOBER 2004 LEGISLATIVE AND PRESIDENTIAL  
ELECTIONS IN TUNISIA**

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Prepared by

The Tunisian League for the Defence of Human Rights  
The Tunisian Association for Democratic Women  
National Council for Freedom in Tunisia

In cooperation with International Media Support



and



Centre for Media Policy and Development

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## Introduction

The project partners conducted monitoring of the media for a period during the official campaign period of the legislative and presidential elections from 15 to 22 of October 2004 in Tunisia using international methodological standards of quantitative and qualitative analysis. The project assesses the performance of the media in its coverage during the official campaign period. There is a specific focus on the coverage of the media against normative principles including the right of access, equitable coverage and balance. The monitoring was initiated by International Media Support and a small group of international media experts of the Centre for Media Policy and Development worked alongside the local organisations.

### Staffing

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### International Experts

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### Methodology

The monitoring team was based in Tunis at the offices of the Tunisian League for the Defence of Human Rights. The team employed quantitative and qualitative methodological tools according to international standards for media monitoring. In addition the legal framework that pertains to the role of the media in covering the elections was reviewed to assess its effectiveness.

The quantitative monitoring of media coverage was undertaken over an eight day period. It monitored the two Tunisian television channels, a sample of radio news bulletins and the main daily newspapers.<sup>1</sup>Media monitoring was conducted by a team of Tunisian and international members.

### Methodology for content analysis of media coverage

The monitoring unit observed media coverage of elections in order to assess:

- whether political parties and candidates gained fair access to the media;
- whether political parties and candidates were covered in a unbiased and equitable manner;
- whether the media and the authorities abided by the rules and regulations covering their conduct during the campaign – both in terms of national legislation and international standards; and,
- whether it was possible for the public to gather sufficient information via the media to assist them to make a decision on election day.

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<sup>1</sup> The choice of the sample used for media monitoring was based on three main criteria: ownership, penetration and audiences.

On 15 October, the media unit started monitoring the election campaign on the state owned television stations TV 7 and Chaîne 21. It also monitored seven daily newspapers: the state owned La Presse (French) and Essahafa (Arabic), as well as the privately owned Le Quotidien (French) and Achourouk (Arabic), Le Temps (French), Essabah (Arabic) and Assarih (Arabic). Starting from 18 October, the media unit also monitored the main news editions of the state owned radio station, Radio Tunis.

Television was categorised into sections: news, free airtime, special programmes on elections, current events programmes and “other” (entertainment, religious programmes, etc.). As well as measuring the time and space allocated to political actors, parties and candidates, the media unit also measured the quality of media coverage according to a three level scale (positive, negative and neutral) in order to assess the overall tone of the media outlets towards contestants and the different political parties. Articles in newspapers were categorised into sections: news and information, editorial, letters and opinions, pictures, advertising and “other”. The pages were also classified into sections: first page, national pages, economy, international affairs, regional affairs, culture and entertainment, sport and special supplements. Positive and negative coverage was recorded only if the monitoring team agreed on judging it to be unequivocal and explicit.

### Outline of the sample

**Table 1: Newspapers monitored**

Title	Ownership	Language	Period
Essabah	Private	Arabic	15 – 22 October
Achourouk	Private	Arabic	15 – 22 October
Assarih	Private	Arabic	15 – 22 October
Essahafa	State	Arabic	15 – 22 October
Le Temps	Private	French	15 – 22 October
Le Quotidien	Private	French	15 – 22 October
La Presse	State	French	15 – 22 October

**Table 2: Broadcasters monitored**

Channel	Ownership	Hours monitored	Period
Télé 7	State	14 - 24	15 – 22 October
Chaîne 21	State	18 - 24	15 – 22 October
Radio Tunis	State	Radio news 14 Radio news 20	15 – 22 October

The qualitative analysis consisted of interviews with key stakeholders. Three broad groups were interviewed: journalists, election candidates and parties and legal experts. The interviews were undertaken in order to identify any failures in the present system and assess the views and opinions of these groups. The team attempted to interview representatives of state bodies including the Ministry of Interior, the Government General Secretary, the General Director of Information of the First Ministry and Constitutional Council, but unfortunately we were unable to gain access to this group despite repeated attempts.

## Recommendations

- The Tunisian media law needs to be reviewed in order that the Tunisian public are better served by a plural media sector that acts independently of political affiliations and patronage.
- The government should encourage the broadcasting sector to develop both private and public initiatives in order that television and radio provide an independent range of programmes.
- The present election law has failed to ensure adequate coverage of the whole spectrum of political representation. It is crucial that the election law enshrines the principles of access and balance to media outlets for all political parties. In this respect the law needs to be overhauled and modernised to ensure transparency and access for all of the parties and candidates. The law should develop an adequate framework to guarantee consistent implementation of the legal framework to regulate balanced quality coverage with equal access to the media.
- Despite the fact that equal access to the media is important other means and formats should be developed to encourage quality coverage of the elections. To guarantee the public have access to in depth information about the candidates and parties, initiatives need to be developed, in order to support a greater range of information available to voters.
- The publicly funded broadcasters and newspapers should be obliged to serve the public, not political forces. In order to do so they should be guaranteed editorial and financial independence.
- Free air time granted to candidates should be made available during prime time where they are most likely to reach the largest part of the audience and it should be extended. This is especially important when the free allocation of airtime is the only opportunity that candidates have to access the media.
- There needs to be a clearer separation between programmes related to the election and other programme formats. Programmes that are not directly related to the election should not be used to promote political parties.
- Paid advertisements should be clearly marked and regulated. Financial transparency should be guaranteed both for the funding of political parties and their campaigns to ensure equity between the contestants.
- Self regulatory guidelines for journalists and editors should be developed to ensure that there is a respect for professional journalistic standards and embodied in a code of conduct that is respected by all parties.
- Attempts by the authorities to block and suppress alternative media that supports the democratic development of Tunisia as well as foreign media should be removed as serious infringements on the rights set out in the Constitution of Tunisia and especially Article 8. This includes the Internet and other mediums.

## Summary Findings

- The media demonstrated significant bias in their coverage of the elections favouring the RCD Party and the presidential candidate Ben Ali. This trend was evident in all of the media monitored, but was more pronounced in the state controlled media where the imbalance in coverage was overwhelming. Although free access was granted to candidates for the presidential and legislative elections the presidential campaign dwarfed that of the parliamentary elections that received very small relative coverage.
- All broadcast media monitored (which are state owned), failed to comply with the basic obligations of balance and equitable coverage of parties and candidates. State owned media therefore fell short, in particular with regards to two basic rights protected in the electoral process: the right of voters to be informed about political alternatives and matters of public interest and the right of candidates to put their messages across.
- The state owned press clearly favoured the incumbent president and RCD who were granted the largest and most positive coverage thus failing to support the public interest. In the period observed, the two state dailies La Presse and Essahafa devoted 75% and 84% respectively of their coverage to RCD. There was a similar pattern observed in the private press who devoted an average of 69% of space to the ruling party. Among the Arab language dailies this trend was repeated as 78% of Achourouk's and 89% of Assarih's coverage was devoted to the RCD. The coverage of the French language daily Le Quotidien was also unbalanced and it devoted 80% of coverage to RCD. The two other dailies provided more balanced reporting of election news and their content was characterised by slightly different coverage. At the same time the incumbent president and RCD continued to be the main object of political reporting: the French language title Le Temps devoted 38% of its overall political coverage to RCD while the Arab language title Essabah devoted 57%.
- The Electoral Law failed to achieve a level playing field for the candidates to access the mass mediums of newspapers, radio and television. It failed on all points when tested against the principles of access, diversity and pluralism. It is evident that the present Electoral Law is insufficient in guaranteeing that the media provide balanced and fair coverage of elections. It is also evident from the qualitative research conducted that there is a general consensus that the Administration overtly abused certain resources and relationships in order to shape the nature of the media's coverage of the elections.
- Journalists appear to have been closely managed and censored during the election campaign period in a process that stifles their journalistic freedom and has resulted in a highly distorted and unfair balance in media coverage of the election campaign.
- The results of this monitoring suggest that the Tunisia media failed to serve the public interest during these elections. The range of information communicated was narrow and unbalanced both in tone and space devoted to the candidates and parties. The media therefore failed to serve Tunisian democracy and it has failed to reach international standards that have been developed to ensure that the media cover elections according to democratic and transparent principles.

## Qualitative Analysis

### Media environment

The Tunisian media sector is one characterised by a range of state and private print media and state broadcast media. Although a private television channel will be introduced in 2005 and a range of foreign satellite channels are accessible at the current time there is a lack of a national alternative to state television. The newspaper sector is also closely aligned to the political process in Tunisia and there are a large number of party titles.

### Background

The overall situation of media freedom in Tunisia has been degrading since the 1980s according to reports from a number of **opposition independant** based Human Rights organisations. Despite the fact that it has been amended three times since 1987 the Press Code remains characteristically repressive and some of its provisions have been transferred to the Penal Code where there are penal sentences for certain infringements. The repressive nature of the Press Code and its effect on freedom of expression has been reinforced by a new law on terrorism issued on December 10, 2003, which condemns certain journalistic and editorial activities.

A number of reports by these organisations suggest that journalists in Tunisia work within a system that consists of overt pressure from the authorities and less visible pressures deriving from the link between the media and political parties. The regulatory system itself does little to promote journalistic freedom and the pressures placed on journalists and media outlets that provide an alternative voice to the ruling party lead to a situation whereby these voices are marginalised. The General Secretary of the International Federation of Journalists in 2004 claimed that the continuing pressure from the Tunisian government threatened freedom of expression and human rights and "seriously damages the image of Tunisian journalism." In 2004 the International Press Institute also called for the World Summit on the Information Society to be abandoned in Tunisia due to its poor record on human rights and especially the lack of respect for freedom of expression and the media in violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

### Pressures on journalists

These pressures also support a strong culture of self censorship in the media and the relationship between political parties and the newspaper sector means that political parties have a high degree of influence over content. Journalists have complained about tightening censorship and these feelings have been summed up in a letter the journalists of the La Presse group (which comprises La Presse and Essahafa) distributed on March 9, 2004 entitled "We draw your attention". They describe the state of affairs at La Presse as "totally unclear" in a situation whereby they no longer know what is permitted or taboo when they cover domestic and international news issues. They also state in their letter that it is an anomaly that issues that were openly treated by them in previous times have become off limits today due to the fact that the general manager and the editor-in-chief reject many articles without offering, in most cases, any reasons or explanation, and sometimes without even informing the relevant journalist.

The journalists of the La Presse group conclude their letter by emphasising "the forceful return of censorship and pressure on their articles" due to the "distortion of articles and changes to content". When the journalists requested clarification about these boundaries and the institutional censorship imposed on them by the management, the management are said to have replied that there were instructions from above which they could not reveal. The general director of La Presse has, it was suggested repeatedly stated that "journalists have no right of control of their articles once submitted to the people in charge".

There have been cases recorded prior to the elections whereby titles have been stalled by administrative measures and some of the provisions in the Press Code appear to be exploited by the authorities to restrict the growth of an alternative press. The authorities have forced some printing-houses such as those of El Maoukef (Opinion) and Ettarik El Jadid (The New Path) to wait until the Ministry of Interior allows them to deliver their titles and these are delayed due to the variable times it takes to issue receipts, without which the edition cannot be issued. The procedure takes a day for Ettarik E Jadid and from 24 to 72 hours for El Maoukef.

Even when authorised the opposition press lives under the threat of suspension and restrictions, which impedes it from thriving and developing. The state's financial help to the sector is also restricted and selective and it supports opposition papers whose parties enjoy parliamentary representation. Distribution delays, withdrawal of copies from kiosks by the Ministry of Interior, restrictions on distribution to retailers and postal distribution also constrain the growth of an alternative press.

There have also been cases whereby the authorities have confiscated foreign newspapers when they have criticised the internal situation in Tunisia (Le Monde, El Quods El Arabi, Al Hayet). Other newspapers have been frozen for long periods such as Libération and Le Canard Enchaîné.

These conditions are reinforced by a poor working environment for journalists. Over the past couple of years it was claimed that there has been a culture of dismissals for journalists who openly criticise the authorities especially on questions such as human rights. Pressure from the government has been a major factor in redundancies. Pressure from journalists for improvement in their conditions and the proper application of the rule of law has been met with dismissals and there is a general consensus that many competent journalists have been forced either to seek employment on foreign newspapers or to abandon the profession. Other obstacles placed in the way of journalists include the withdrawal of their press cards that excludes them from seeking work for foreign media outlets.

There have also been cases where media outlets have been exposed to blocking authorisations that have stopped their distribution. This has also been the case for Internet websites that have had their access blocked by the authorities. Militant journalists who persist in maintaining opinions criticising the authorities risk imprisonment, trial or exile and there have been numerous such cases in Tunisia that have been recorded by Human Rights groups in the region.

Overall, the conditions for journalists are poor. A range of pressures are applied on them in order to ensure that reporting on sensitive issues is suppressed. Poor working conditions and the lack of protection in the workplace and unfair dismissals have led to some journalists (160) to launch, in May 2004, a trade union to defend the interests of the profession. The Chairman and the General Secretary were summoned to the Ministry of Interior in August 2004 to be informed that their activities were illegal. However, the law stipulates that such organisations have an obligation to inform the authorities, but not seek permission from them to establish such an organisation: the case is clearly a reflection of the legal uncertainty and confusion in Tunisia and this particularly appears to be the case in the field of the media.

## **The legal framework for elections**

The Constitution of Tunisia contains the basic rights enjoyed by Tunisian citizens and guarantees certain fundamental freedoms. In terms of freedom of expression Article 8 states: "Freedom of opinion, expression, the press, publication, assembly and association are guaranteed". Laws pertaining directly to the elections are set out in the Electoral Code. The Code regulates all aspects of the elections including media coverage. There are both positive and negative measures in the Electoral Code that are technically intended to ensure that the media cover the elections in a fair and balanced manner. There are, however, important gaps in the electoral law that relate to media coverage that are a source of legal uncertainty. Article 37 contains the main rules for media coverage of the elections.

The basic provisions of Article 37 provide for a system of access to the media for candidates. It states that candidates for parliamentary and presidential election have the right to access state radio and television for the purposes of their election campaigns. Each candidate, pursuant to the election law is obliged to submit a request to the relevant body to receive airtime on the broadcast media. There are no set specific rules relating to the amount of time allocated to the candidates in the Law. And there are no rules relating to access and coverage of the press or other mediums except posters which are regulated pursuant to Article 33.

The presidential candidates were granted 20 minute slots for their party political broadcasters and the parliamentary candidates five minutes.

Generally, however, the law pertaining to the media's role in the elections is minimal and lacks basic provisions and thus creates legal uncertainty. There are, for instance, no rules related to complaints and there is no appeal mechanism set out in this rule to manage complaints. It cannot, in its present form, be understood as providing international standards in this field as it lacks important detail and remains inadequate as a legal instrument.

## **Assessment**

Selected stakeholders were interviewed from government, private and opposition newspapers, political parties standing for election and legal experts in order to assess the performance of the media and media law during the election campaign. The sample included journalists working for three opposition newspapers: El-Maoukef (PDP), Attarik Al-Jadid (Ettajdid Movement) and Alwahda (PUP) as well as journalists from government and private newspapers.

During the interviews journalists working for the two government newspapers Essahafa and La Presse alleged that instructions had been given to journalists of both newspapers to only cover the activities of the opposition candidates when they were asked to do so by the management of the newspapers. A systematic and organised system of allocating staff to reporting certain events was imposed on journalists that acted to exclude the opposition parties from coverage. A specific journalist was assigned to cover the opposition parties that supported the incumbent president and both the Parti d'union populaire (PUP) and its candidate Mohamed Bouchiha for the presidential elections, and the Parti social liberal (PSL), and its candidate for the elections Mounir Beji, received coverage.

## **Self regulation and news management**

According to the interviews journalists claimed that they were not allowed to publish news from the other opposition parties that was deemed too radical and critical of the government, such as the Parti democrate progressite (PDP), and the presidential candidate of the Initiative democratique Mohamed Ali Halouani. The journalists remarked that they were assigned work that reflects a clear bias towards the ruling party RCD.

Precise instructions were handed down to journalists to cover certain activities and events which ranged from conducting interviews with famous personalities who praised the work of the incumbent president to specific requests for journalists to cover the activities of members of the government and officials of RCD who were campaigning for the incumbent president.

In fact a whole range of resources were allocated to cover RCD and the incumbent president, and the other three presidential candidates were neglected. A group of journalists were given the task to expand on the 21 points delivered in President Ben Ali's inaugural speech of the campaign. Each journalist was asked to focus on one specific point, and his name was stated openly. A group of journalists were also dispatched to work in ATCE (Tunisian Agency of External Communication), as well as in the campaign headquarters of the presidential candidate Ben Ali. Journalists were also required to produce special supplements on the president's achievements at the national and international levels. The editorial direction of these two newspapers also relies heavily on the news distributed by TAP, the official Tunisian press agency that is a main source of news collection which further increased its reliance on information promoting the ruling party.

Journalists were interviewed from Realites, Achourouk and Assabah. The evidence collected from the interviews demonstrates similar practices used to orient journalists, interference with their work and censor their articles. Journalists received instructions from their editors-in-chief, not to put the other candidates on the same footing as Ben Ali when they write articles. It was also suggested that one of the editors even refused to publish a report on one of the candidates because it might be interpreted as they were on the same footing as Ben Ali.

Journalists also received instructions not to write on political parties that adopted radical views towards the government, such as PDP and FDLT. The same regime applied to non-recognised political parties such as POCT, Congres pour la Republique and Ennahdha. It was suggested that one editor made it clear during an editorial meeting that there were only three presidential candidates, alluding to the fact Mohamed Ali Halouani should be excluded. The Chourouk editor-in-chief also is said to have handed down instructions not to publish Halouani's photograph in the newspaper. Journalists in three other newspapers (Essabah, Chourouk and Le Temps) also received instructions not to mention the Initiative democratique which proposed Halouani as a candidate and to merely mention the Ettajdid movement, the party to which Halouani belongs.

One of the journalists covered the first press conference in which Halouani announced his candidacy for the presidential elections, but his article was rejected by the editor-in-chief on the grounds that instructions had been given that only news issued from TAP was to be accepted for publication. The same thing happened with Nejib Chabbi, leader of PDP party, who organised a press conference to announce the authorities' refusal to allocate five lists of his party. It was alleged that the editor's reply to the journalist was that he had discussed the matter with Abdelwahab Abdallah (presidential advisor for the media), who had ordered him not to publish the article. The same practice was repeated in Chabbi's subsequent press conferences during the election campaign, it was claimed.

Journalists complained that RCD candidates and activities were assigned the most prominent pages and places in newspapers, whereas opposition candidates were relegated to the bottom of pages. They also resented the fact that daily instructions were issued by the editorial staff of newspapers not to criticise the incumbent president and not to write articles about the national amnesty or changes to the Constitution through the referendum organised in April 2002.

All newspaper journalists, however, admitted that they were able to publish some opposition news and were given far greater scope than journalists working for the broadcast media, which remained limited to the official line, except for the amount of time allocated to the list-heads by the Administration.

During the election campaign the Internet played a role in providing information and opinion. An official site devoted to President Ben Ali outlines the presidential campaign of the RCD

candidate on [www.benali.tn](http://www.benali.tn). Another website connected to the official site [www.tunisie.com](http://www.tunisie.com) contains details of the elections "elections 2004 Tunisia". The access to these sites is open. However, Tunisian opposition websites were apparently blocked, and access to them was not possible during the mission. These websites included [www.tunisnews.net](http://www.tunisnews.net), [www.kalimatunisie.com](http://www.kalimatunisie.com) and [www.tunezine.com](http://www.tunezine.com). Other websites of international NGOs were also apparently blocked during the election campaign, such as [www.ifj.org](http://www.ifj.org).

### **Political parties and candidates**

Many opposition figures who were also interviewed pointed to the discrepancies between the law in Tunisia and the realities. **Ayachi Hammami**, the legal advisor of "Initiative democratique" summed up the media coverage of the campaign as:

"Media disinformation and blackouts around the activities of certain parties and cases where articles were not being published. Newspapers frequently refused to publish photographs of certain parties and candidates. In reality when there is a press conference it is seldom reported in the newspapers, despite the fact that journalists attended the conference".

This viewpoint was also shared by the PUP presidential candidate **Mohamed Bouchiha Nejib Chabbi**. The party withdrew its candidates from the elections three days prior to Election Day citing "accrued violations and pressures..... We were muzzled in our country and abroad".

A number of the candidates interviewed expressed a concern about the transparency of the election framework. There was a broad consensus that it was essential to establish an independent election body that operated at arms length from the political sphere. In this respect the Election Observatory was criticised. The national observatory was established by President Ben Ali to supervise the elections. According to the President of the Observatory "its reports are confidential and it gives an account of its activities only to the president". (Assabah, October 19, 2004) It therefore lacks any form of public accountability. It also has no real legal statute according to a number of legal experts interviewed. The opposition parties were particularly critical of the observatory claiming that it was not impartial and that "it was only made up of people close to, and designated by, the regime".

All parties interviewed bemoaned the lack of impartiality in the media and the selective reporting of the election candidates that led to very different coverage (both in terms of tone and space assigned to the different parties) of the parties. It seemed to be common knowledge amongst stakeholders that journalists were given instructions to promote the ruling party.

### **Access to the media**

Access to the media was highly selective and where, pursuant to the Electoral Law there was supposed to be equal access to state radio and television there has been evidence of a breach of the rules on equality of access. The spots assigned to candidates were recorded and were not broadcast live and magistrates were present during the recordings. A number of complaints were received from stakeholders that suggested the attendance of the magistrates at the recording of the election broadcasts was an indirect way to intimidate candidates and an overt way to censure their programmes. No legal representatives were permitted to accompany the candidates to the recording sessions and the legal basis of the system was challenged by the legal advisor to the Democratic Initiative group. In response the magistrates replied that they had been instructed to attend the recording sessions to ensure that there were no violations of the Press Code. It was suggested that the magistrates had actively interfered with the recordings.

The Electoral Code states that all candidates "are allowed to use Tunisian television during election campaigns". The official authorities in charge of the legislative elections decided that each candidate head of list was allocated five minutes speech time on television and radio. Yet

candidates were only allowed one recording for television, which was re-used for the reserved radio broadcasts. For the presidential elections, the candidates were allocated 20 minutes each.

This right to have access to radio and television for the election campaign was not respected according to certain opposition groups. In terms of the access granted to presidential candidates Halouani received his time allocation on state television at 16.30 (interrupted by a call for prayer) only on the last day of the campaign, and the broadcast time was advanced to 14.00 unlike the other opposition candidates whose speeches were broadcast after the television news. Had the broadcast not been brought forward it would not have been necessary to interrupt it. Bouchiha was allocated 22 minutes on television, and Mounir El Béji 17 minutes. The candidate Ben Ali benefited from an exceptionally long time which lasted approximately one hour on the first day of the election campaign and was distributed live.

Despite the provisions of Art 37 there was some criticism of the amount of airtime enjoyed by the different parties. One candidate rejected the ten minutes allocated to him, arguing that it represented less than the radio and television coverage of the activities of the incumbent president. In a similarly vague manner financial transparency of the election campaigns is not adequately set out in the Electoral Code except for a prohibition on parties receiving finance from foreign organisations (Article 62a).

Also the scheduling appeared to work against certain parties. Due to Ramadan, the structure of the working day was changed to a one shift system (8.00-14.00). Legislative candidates' speeches were scheduled between 14.00 and 15.30, at a time of very low viewing and listening. Presidential candidates' speeches on the other hand were scheduled within a window during the primetime television news at 20.30.

Speeches of many candidates for the parliamentary elections were not shown on television. This mainly concerned four candidates from the Democratic Initiative, Jounaidi Abdeljawad(Monastir), Mohamed Kallel (Sousse), Adel Aloui (Silliana), Hassen Toukabri(Béjà), as well as two candidates from PDP, Issam Chabbi (Ariana) and Rachid Khechana (Kairouan). Their speeches were not aired and without receiving any information or explanation from officials as to why. When some candidates insisted on knowing why this was the case, the official in charge of television programming, Rachid Mabrouk, allegedly answered "these are instructions beyond my reach".

Finally, Article 31 clearly states that documents related to the election should not be distributed during the moratorium. There were very clear violations of these provisions in the media's coverage of the elections during this period.

## **Conclusion**

The legal framework set out in the Electoral Code proved inadequate to ensure that the media covered the elections in a fair and equitable manner. The media coverage was consistent, but it was consistent in the bias it demonstrated both in terms of space and tone. The systematic management of the coverage of the campaign by editorial and management of the media outlets presented a strait jacket on journalists. The allocation of resources by these institutions meant that there was a highly imbalanced focus on certain actors during the elections at the expense of others that were standing for election. This seriously narrowed the focus of the coverage of the media. The coverage of the elections appears to be characterised by an extension of the practices that journalists and human rights groups have raised objections to, prior to the elections.

Even positive measures such as the free access to the broadcast media for the candidates was tainted by unequal treatment of the parties and candidates that should be seen as an attempt to restrict the access that the public have to the candidates and their manifestos.

## Quantitative Analysis of Media Coverage

### Overview

Tunisian media paid a great deal of attention to the election. The information related to the campaign was extensive and regular in all the main national media outlets. The activities of candidates, parties and the election administration were extensively covered throughout the period observed. However, this constant attention was characterised by an evident lack of balance and impartiality in the coverage of the candidates and parties.

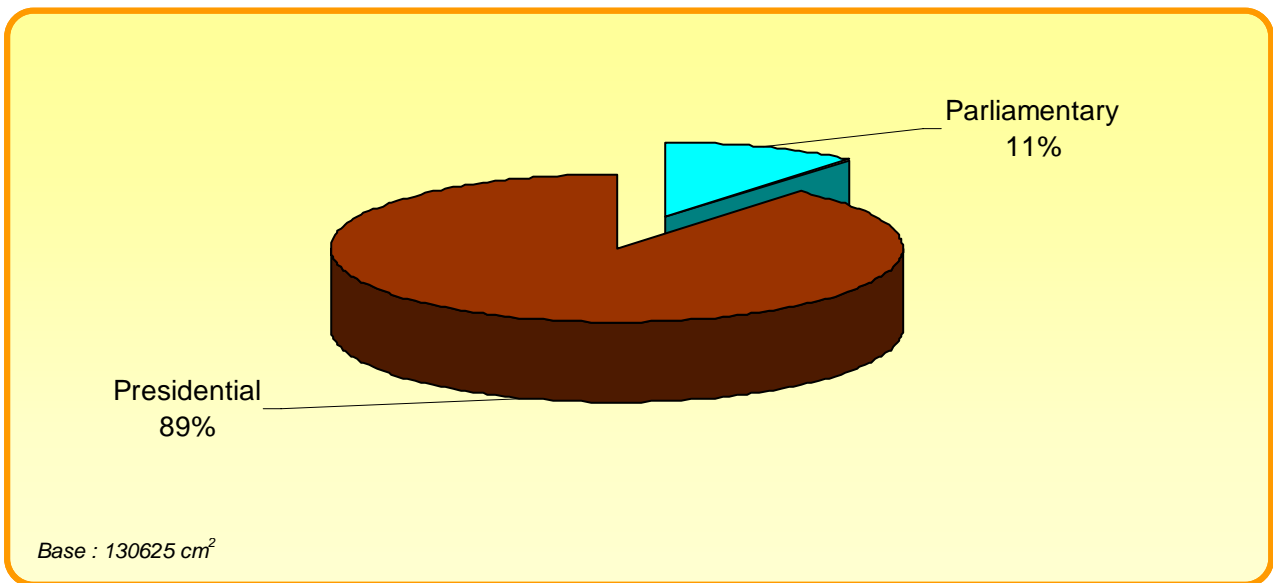
Members of government were actively involved in the presidential campaign in favour of the incumbent president. Most of the ministers were covered while attending rallies and meetings to promote Ben Ali's candidature. Moreover, the government openly promoted the president through their activities such as fulfilling ministerial duties, despite the fact they were not running as candidates. The President formally kept a low profile in the campaign. In this respect the government employed indirect campaign support by systematically announcing decisions and measures aimed at improving the quality of life of citizens.

The topics covered by the media reflected the advantage given to the incumbent president: issues such as the development of the economy, education, environment, women's empowerment, and information technologies were exploited to promote Ben Ali's candidacy and its political programme. The president was often covered in the frame of his institutional duties that were constantly used as a privileged occasion to campaign and to stress the popular support he enjoys. In this respect the media conducted a parallel and informal campaign under the banner of "The achievements of Tunisia" as they presented a very positive inventory of the former presidential mandate supporting the electoral promises for the next mandate.

The parliamentary elections received less attention in the national media. In many cases, MDS and independent candidates for parliament expressed their open support for Ben Ali's candidacy rather than explaining their electoral programme. Similarly, RCD candidates focussed more on the promotion of Ben Ali than on communicating their own manifestos. The disproportionate coverage among candidates was less evident in this case although the RCD was still the party that received the largest amount of coverage by all the media.

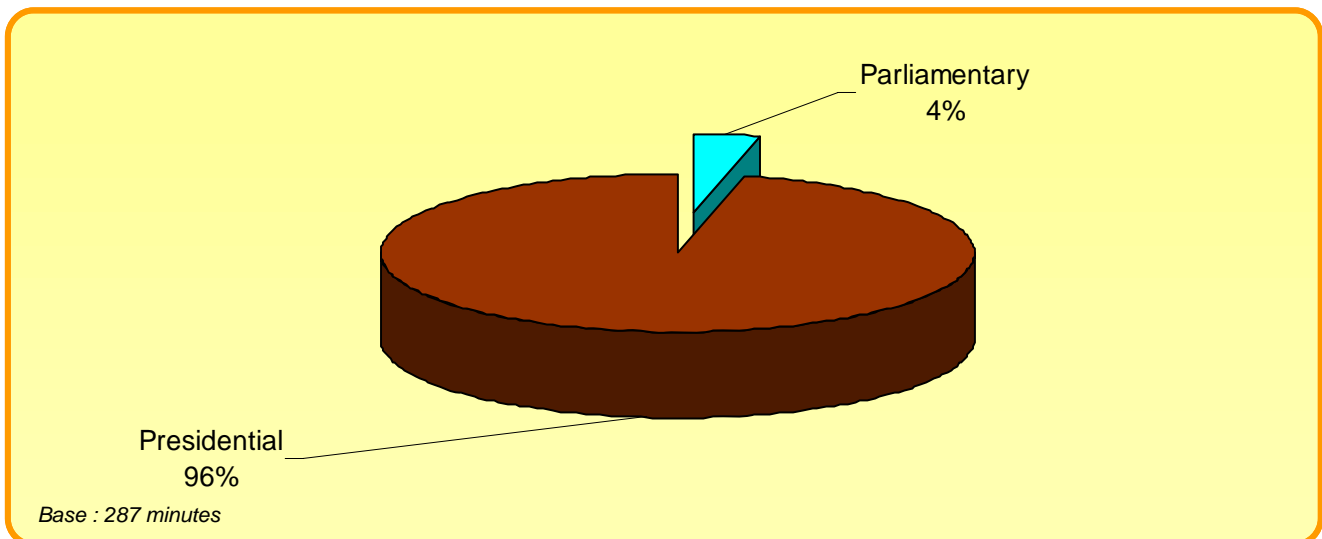
A clear and significant difference in time and space allocated to the four presidential candidates was also observed. All media outlets devoted an overwhelming percentage of their coverage to the president and RCD. President Ben Ali was the central actor of this campaign, receiving an average of 77% of the time in broadcast media and an average of 92% of the space in the daily press. The tone of the coverage for the president was extremely positive and characterised by an emphasis placed on Tunisian social and economic development under his leadership.

Chart 1: Coverage allotted to elections in the daily press



In the period observed, the main focus of election coverage was the presidential elections while the parliamentary elections received limited coverage in the media. There was also a strong tendency towards personalisation in the presidential campaign: President Ben Ali was identified with the national interest and specifically the progress made by Tunisia which was consistently framed as being the result of his political decisions. There were also regular and exclusive associations between the President and national symbols such as the Tunisian flag and the Tunisian logo throughout the election period.

Chart 2: Coverage allotted to elections in the broadcasting media



A positive element of this campaign was the relative absence of hate speech or defamatory language among candidates. This feature was reflected by media coverage that was characterised by a general lack of negative tones.

### The daily press

Charts 3 and 4 give a general outline of the level of coverage for all the actors involved in the election campaign on behalf of the state and private press. The data shows an imbalance in

coverage in favour of RCD and government that received a large amount of coverage in all pages. The state owned press clearly favoured the incumbent president and his party by allotting them the largest and most positive coverage. In the period observed, the two state dailies devoted an average of 90% of their coverage to RCD and the government. The private press displayed a similar, although less pronounced trend.

A comparison between state and private press illustrates that:

- the total space allotted to the RCD and the government is bigger than the whole of the time devoted to all the other parties together (91% versus 9%);
- the private press provided the opposition parties with a greater amount of coverage than the state press, even though the ruling party remained prominent (77% versus 23%).

Chart 3: Allocation of space among political groups in the state owned dailies

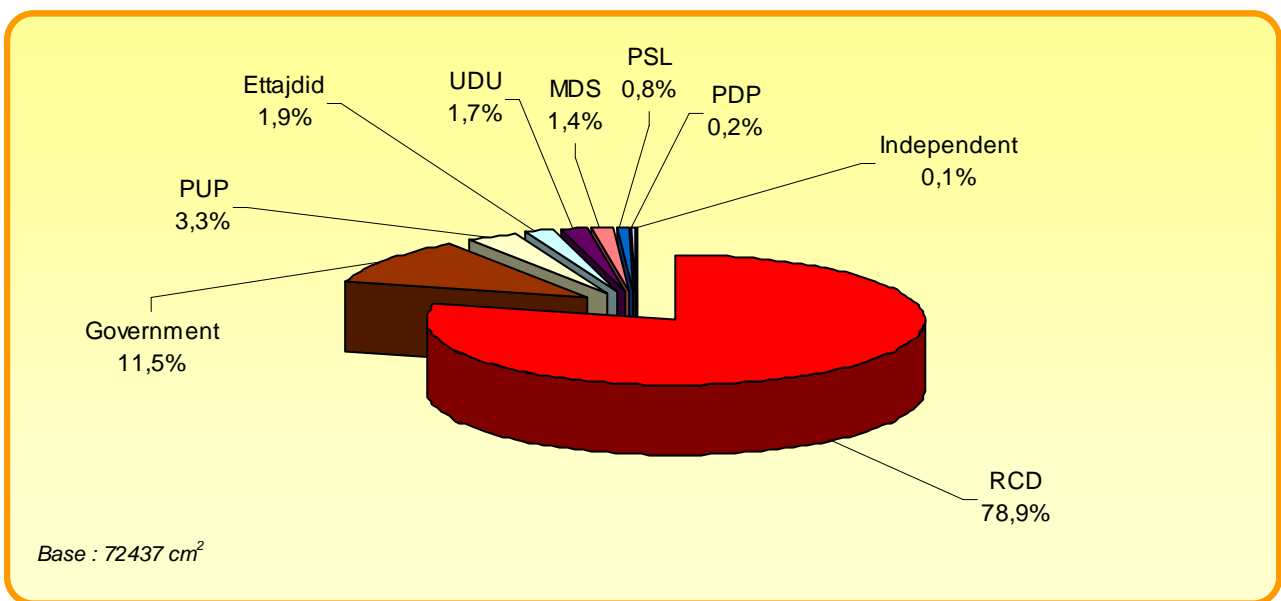
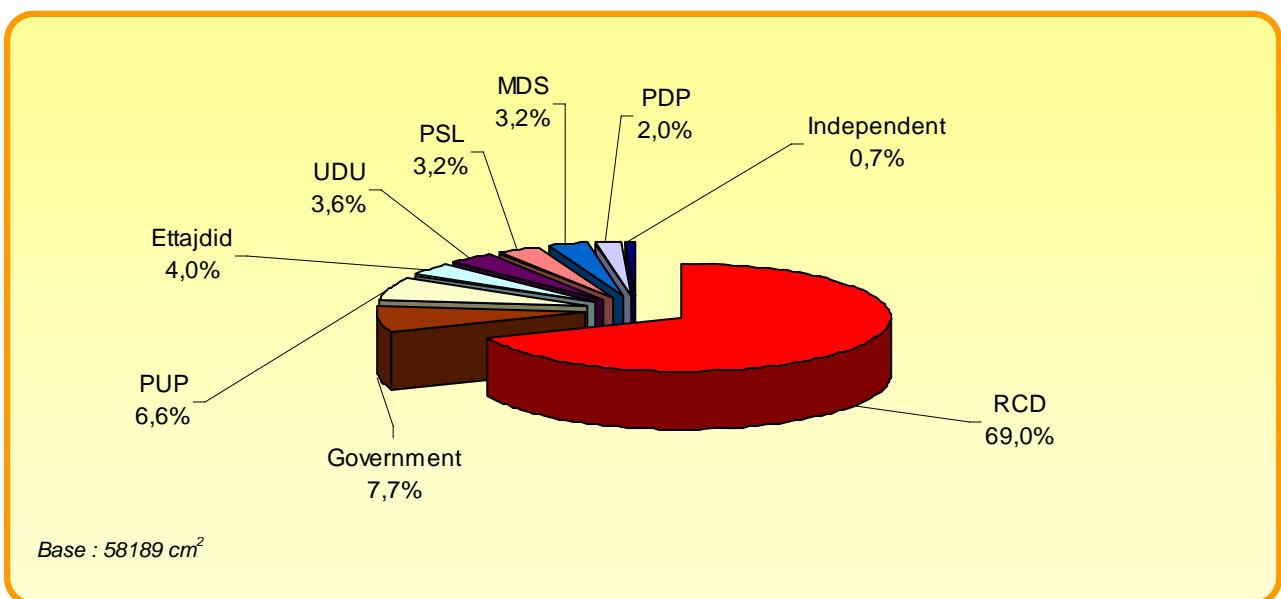


Chart 4: Allocation of space among political groups in the privately owned dailies



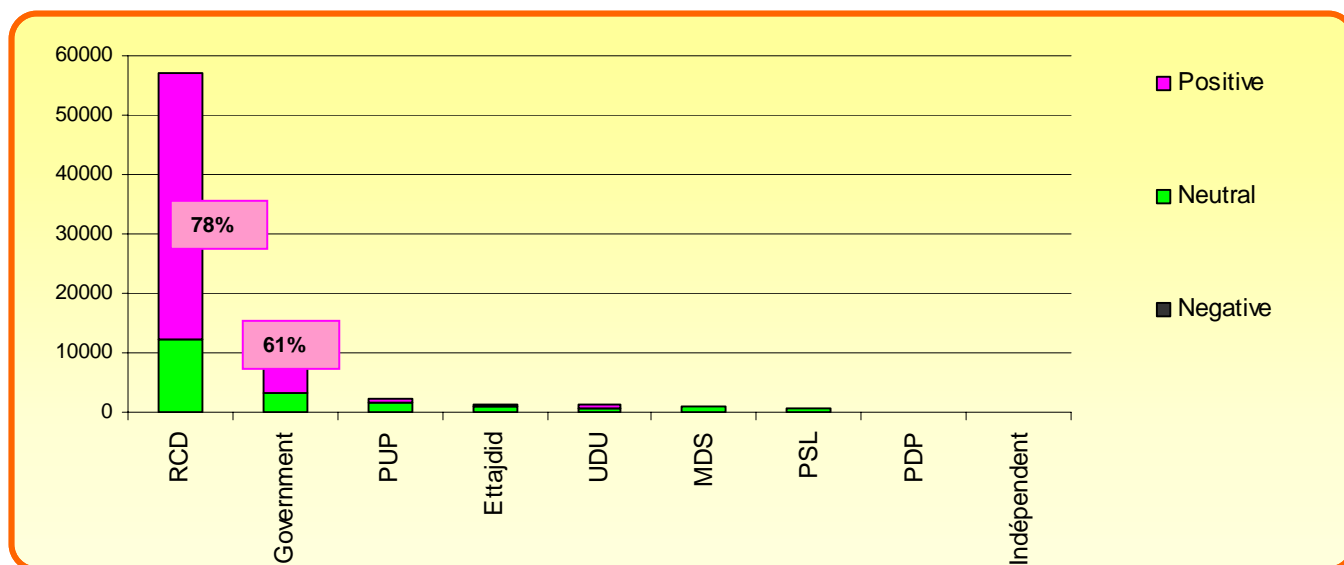
Despite a constant pattern in election coverage favouring the RCD, it must be pointed out that two dailies Essabah and Le Temps<sup>2</sup> distinguished themselves from the other titles in the sample due to their lower levels of coverage dedicated to the ruling party.

Table 3: allocation of space among political groups in national dailies

POLITICAL GROUPS	ACHOUROUK	ASSARIAH	ESSABAH	ESSAHAFI	LA PRESSE	LE QUOTIDIEN	LE TEMPS	TOTAL
RCD	78%	89%	57%	84%	75%	80%	38%	74%
Government	5%	8%	12%	12%	11%	5%	9%	10%
PUP	5%	0%	6%	2%	4%	10%	14%	5%
Ettajdid	1%	1%	7%	1%	3%	0%	10%	3%
UDU	3%	1%	4%	0%	3%	1%	9%	3%
MDS	3%	1%	3%	0%	2%	2%	7%	2%
PSL	2%	0%	6%	0%	1%	1%	8%	2%
PDP	1%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%	5%	1%
Independent	1%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

The quality of coverage for political parties and candidates was generally neutral or positive with differences emerging between the ruling party and the other parties running for election. The state press almost always covered RCD in a positive manner (78% of positive space). A similar favourable portrayal was observed for the members of the government (61% of positive coverage) while other parties generally received neutral or negative coverage. The coverage of the private press was characterised by similar reporting with very positive coverage of the ruling party.

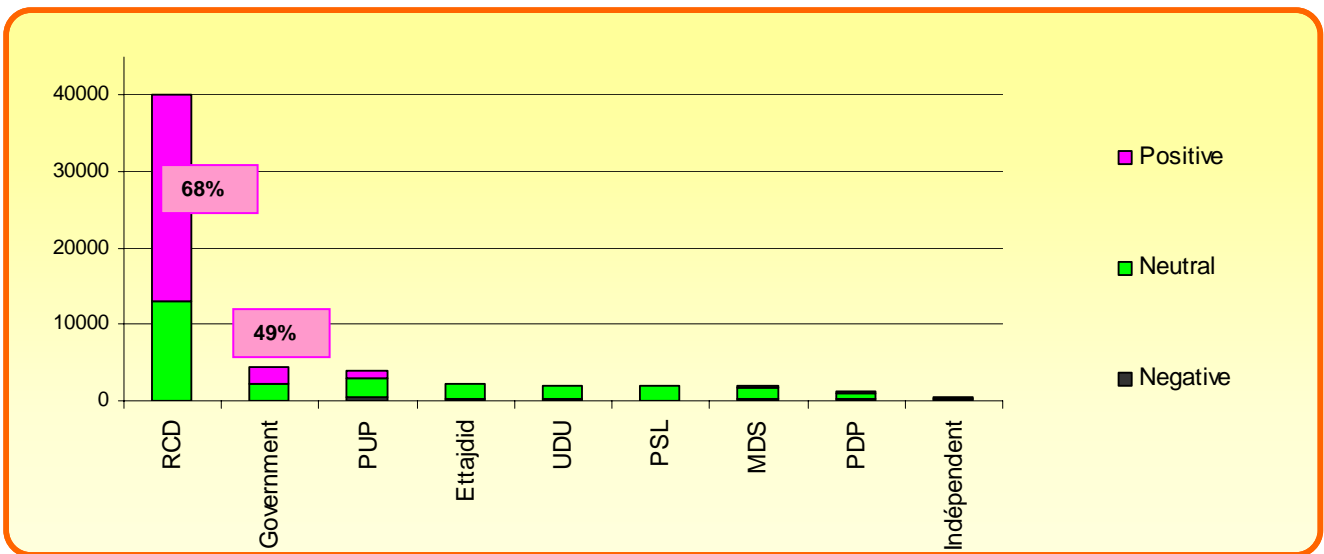
Chart 5: Tone of the coverage of political groups in national state owned dailies



The private press accorded to the ruling party and the government a less evident advantage, though they enjoyed more positive coverage than the other parties and never received negative coverage. Out of the total space devoted to the RCD, 68% was positive; similarly the government received 49% of positive coverage.

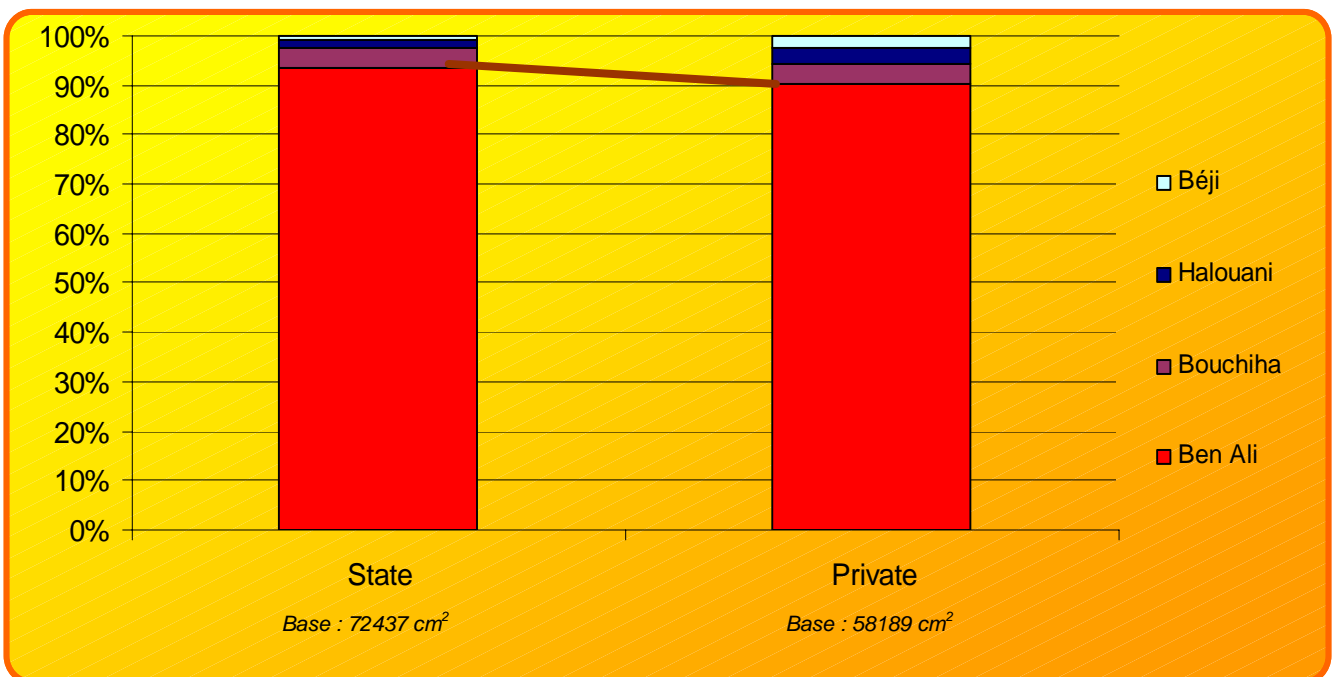
<sup>2</sup> Le Temps is the French version of the Arab Essabah.

Chart 6: Tone of the coverage of political groups in national privately owned dailies



In terms of the presidential elections, the incumbent president enjoyed an unequivocal advantage both in the state and private press. Overall both sectors allocated 94% and 90% respectively of their total space to presidential candidates.

Chart 7: Allocation of space among the four presidential candidates in the national dailies



The tone of the reporting of the candidates and their activities provides evidence that the incumbent president received more favourable coverage than his challengers.

Chart 8: Tone of the coverage for the four presidential candidates in the state owned dailies

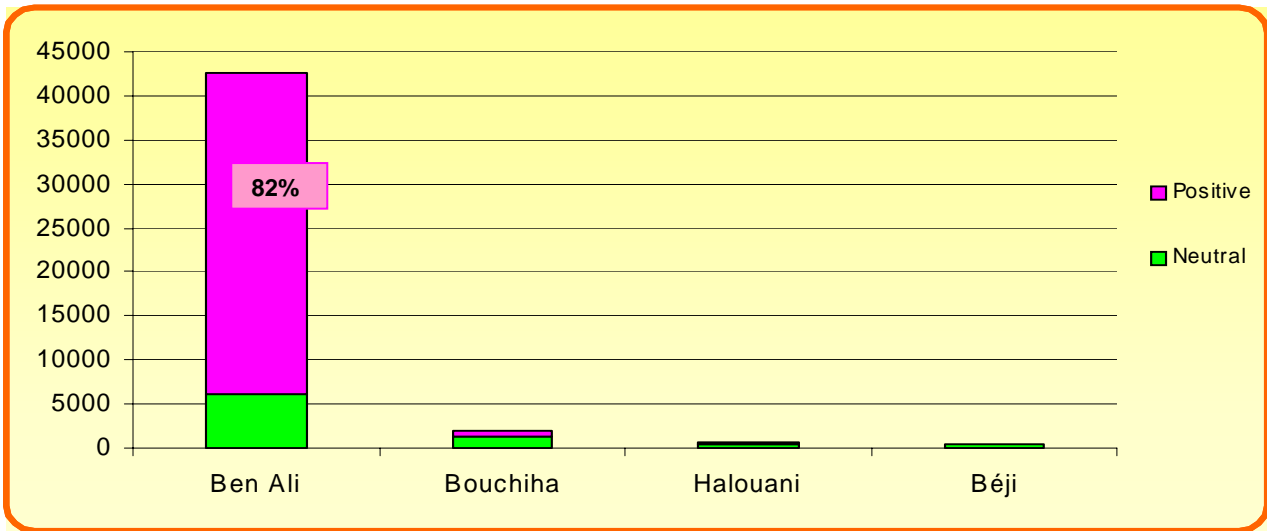
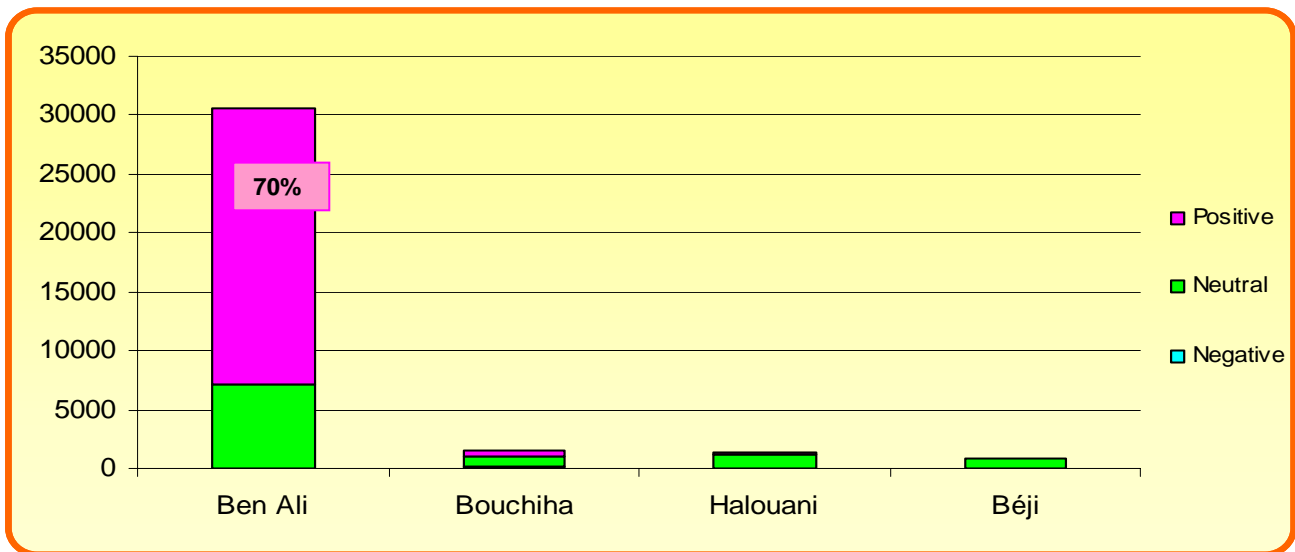


Chart 9: Tone of the coverage for the four presidential candidates in the privately owned dailies



The advantage accorded to the incumbent president was reflected not only by the space allotted and the tone of his coverage but also by the position and the formats in which he appeared in newspapers: the first page was generally occupied by headlines, articles and pictures referring to the president and his activities. Also, colours were often exploited to catch readers' attention and were used for photos and titles related to news about the ruling party.

Chart 10: Space of the photos devoted to the four presidential candidates in the national dailies

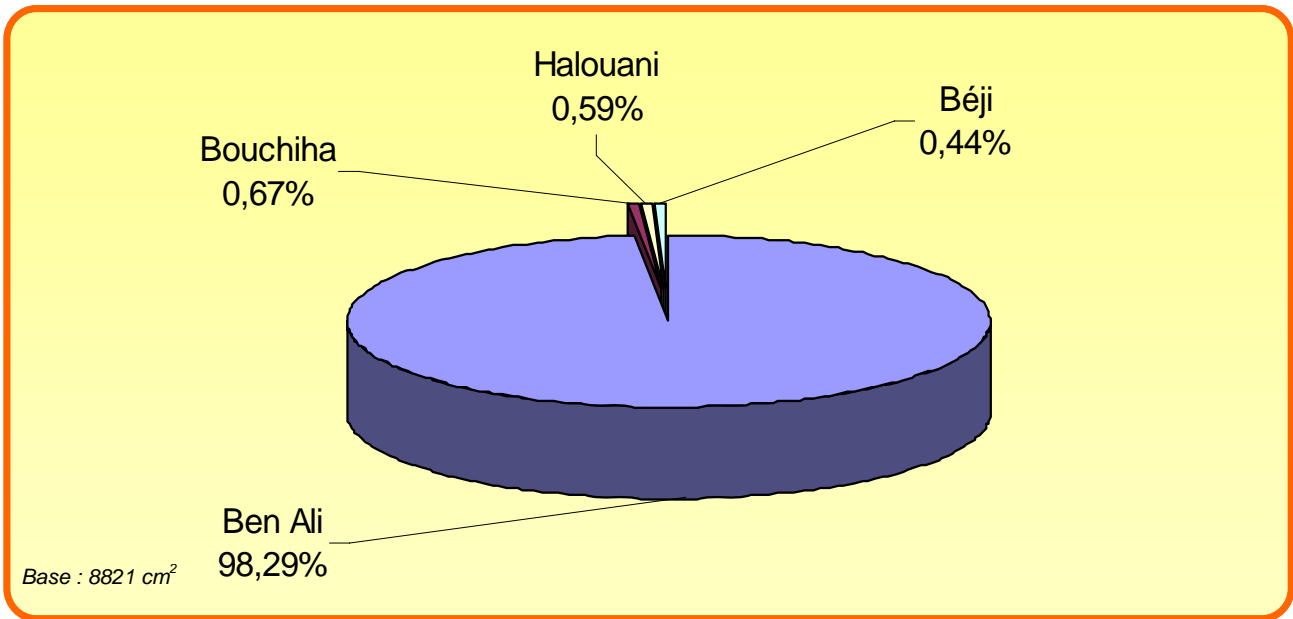
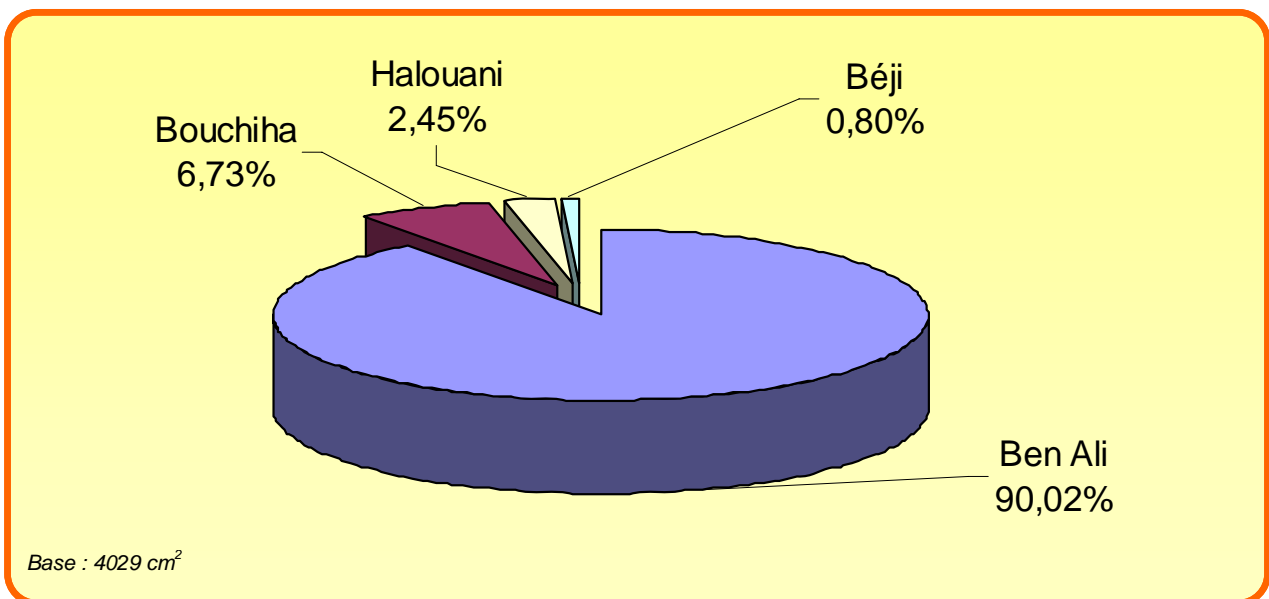
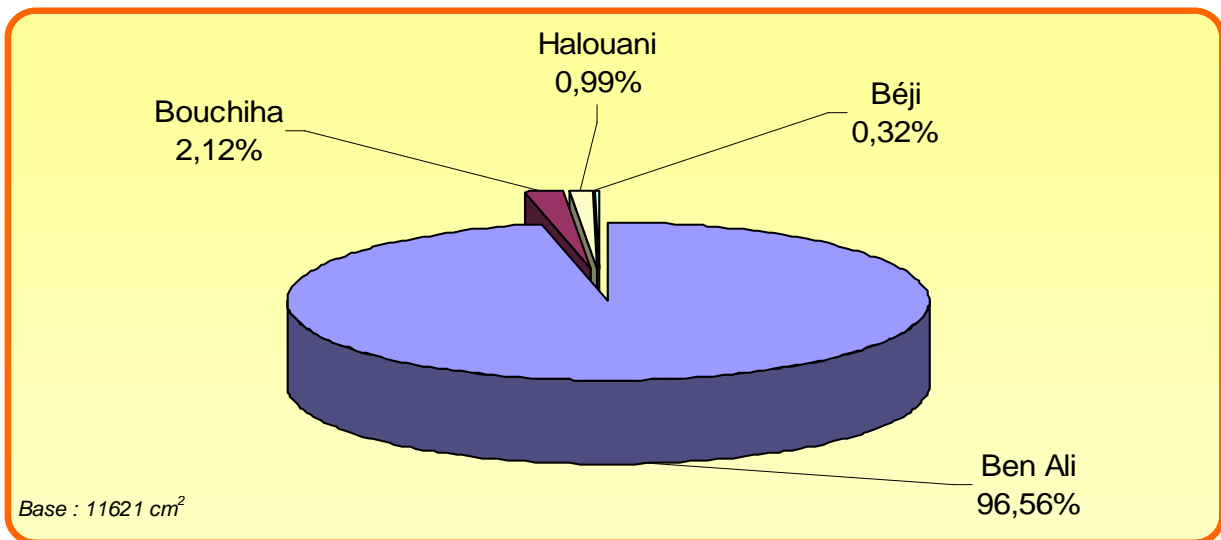


Chart 11: Space of the headlines devoted to the four presidential candidates in the national dailies



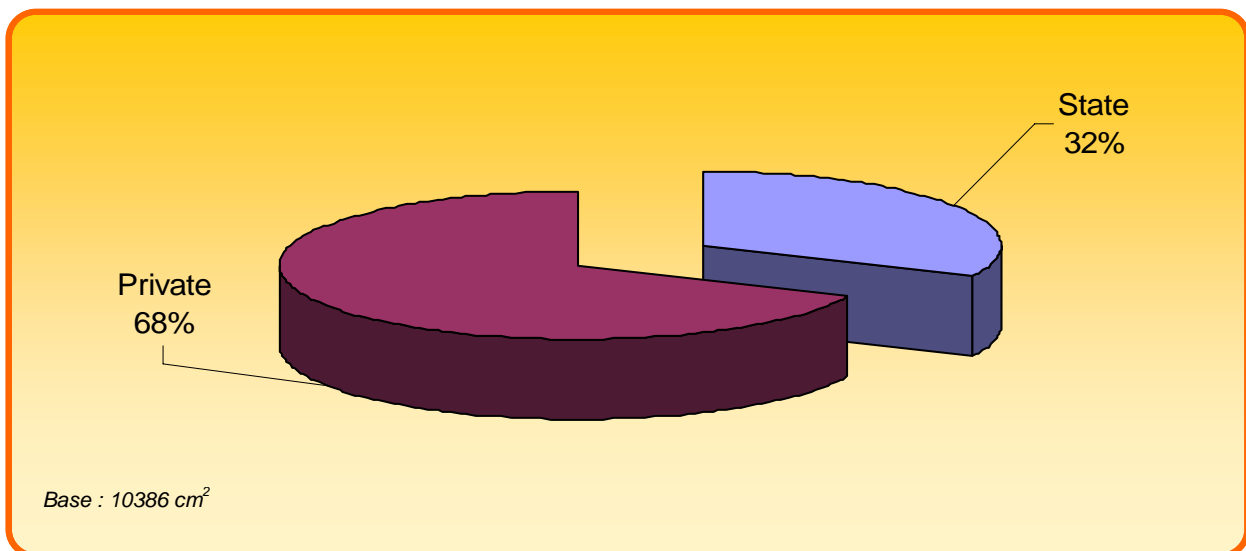
In comparison to the other presidential candidates the space allotted to Ben Ali in the first pages was 97% for the state press and 94% for the private press. There was also systematic use of the most prominent pages (page 3, central pages, and final page) dedicated to coverage of the incumbent. In contradistinction, other candidates did not receive any similar treatment and their coverage was usually contained in less relevant pages and in less appealing formats.

Chart 12: Space devoted to the four presidential candidates in the front page of the national dailies



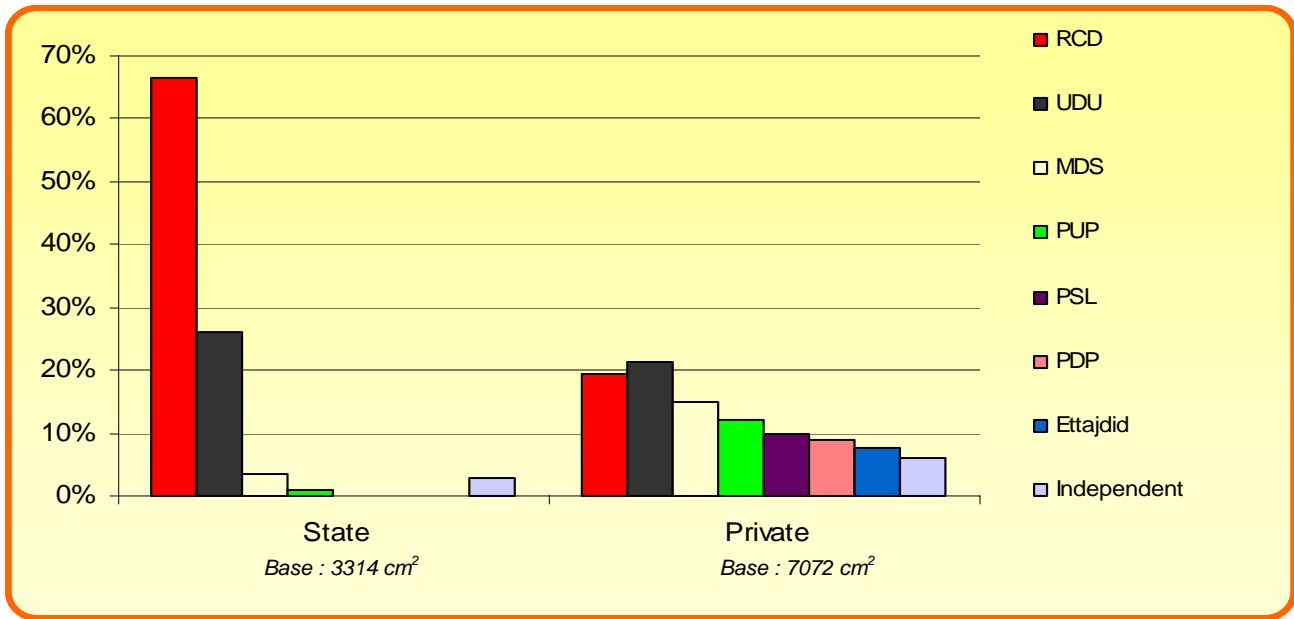
Parliamentary elections received marginal attention compared to the presidential race, which actually dominated much of the news on candidates for parliament. It must be also noted that the private press devoted more extensive coverage to parliamentary candidates than the state owned dailies.

Chart 13: Coverage of candidates for parliamentary elections in state and private dailies



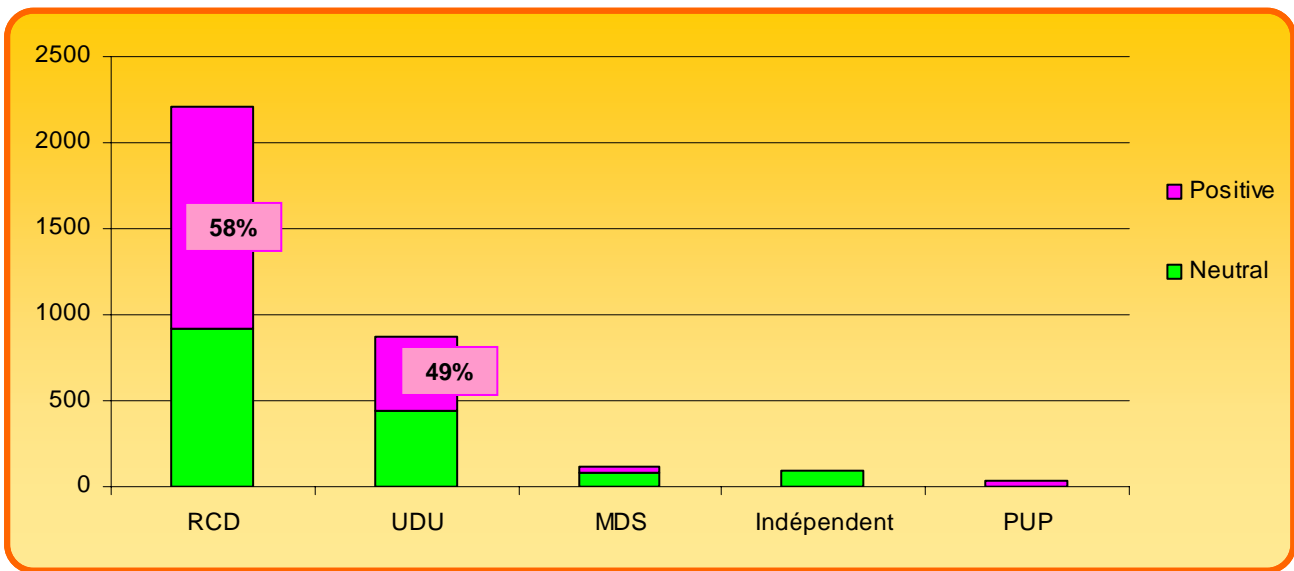
In the state press the ruling party and its candidates, who received an overall 67% of the space, received extensive coverage. The private press' coverage, however, was characterised by limited space allocated to the RCD (19%) and a wider space accorded to opposition parties. Among the opposition parties, those receiving larger coverage with regards to parliamentary elections were MDS (average 15%), PUP (average 12%) and UDU (average 21%).

Chart 14: Allocation of space devoted to candidates for parliamentary elections in state and privately owned dailies



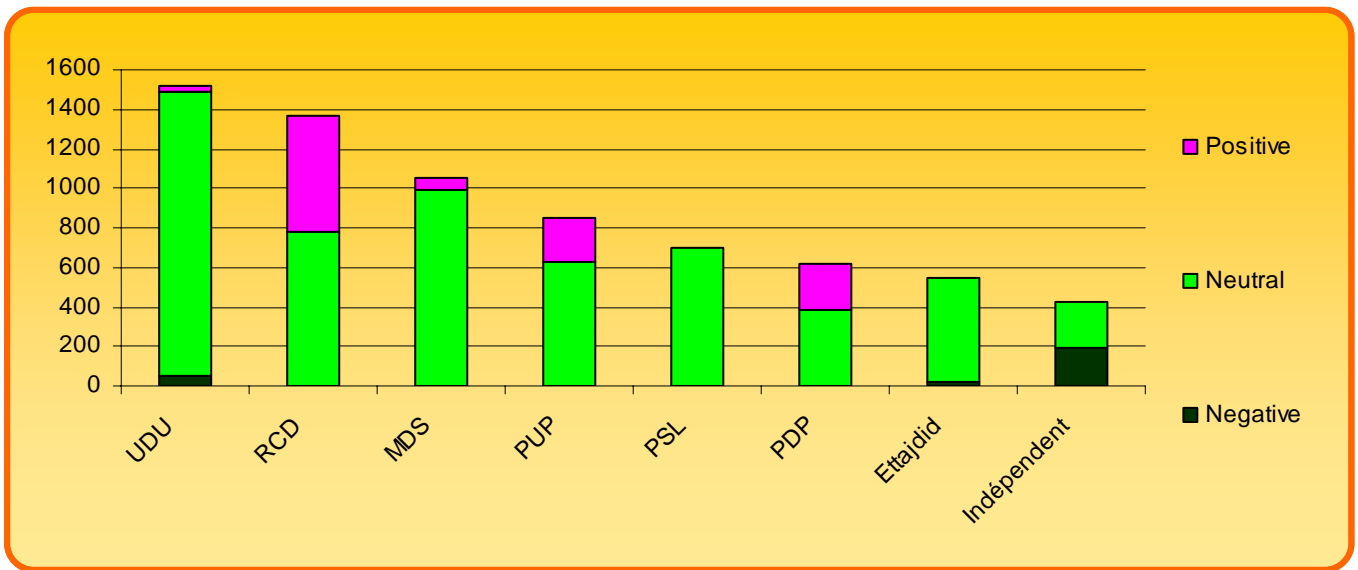
The state press' coverage was also very favourable to the RCD and the UDU. The ruling party received positive coverage for more than half of the space.

Chart 15: Tone of the coverage for candidates to parliamentary elections in the state owned dailies



The private press provided opposition parties with larger coverage than the state press; however some of their coverage was negative in contrast to the coverage of RCD that was either positive or neutral.

Chart 16: Tone of the coverage for candidates to parliamentary elections in the privately owned dailies



### The Broadcasting Media

In parallel to the imbalance evident in the coverage of the press sector all broadcast media monitored failed to comply with the basic obligations of balance and equitable coverage of parties and candidates. This was the case despite the positive measure of the right of parties standing for election to have limited access to the broadcast media from the resources of state radio and television. Parliamentary candidates could access state radio and television to present their programmes using a standard format that was usually broadcast between 14.00 and 15.30. As was the case with the print media some candidates from the opposition parties often declared their support for Ben Ali in their five minute slots.

Table 4: Description of some of the free airtime slots for parliamentary elections

Candidate	Party affiliation	Time of speech	Issues
Kadija Mbasia	PUP	4 minutes and 43 seconds	Social and economical development
Yousef Ramedi	RCD	5 minutes and 15 seconds	Illegal immigration, the support to Ben Ali, the strength of RCD
Adel Chaouich	Ettajdid	4 minutes and 48 seconds	Importance of the elections, role of the media and freedom of expression, support to Halouani
Hicham Hadji	PUP	4 minutes and 51 seconds	Freedom of expression, political and civic rights, education, unemployment, environmental issues: traffic, pollution, support to Bouchiha
Mohammed Idriss	Ettajdid	4 minutes and 32 seconds	The links and the problems between religion and politics The development of democracy in Tunisia Political and civic rights The support to Halouani
Ali Ben Said -	MDS	4 minutes and 46 seconds	The importance of voters' participation in the election process Political and civic rights Political and institutional change in Tunisia, Role of the media and freedom of expression, The need for reforms in Tunisia, The support to Ben Ali
Mohammed Laarath	UDU	3 minutes and 55 seconds	Unemployment, Globalisation and development, Criminality Welfare state and health policy International affairs: Middle East and the Iraqi war, Arab identity
Jamile Saidi	PSL	3 minutes and 19 seconds	Policies for the youth Unemployment
Aroussi Nalouti	MDS	4 minutes and 32 seconds	Social and economical development The context and the conditions of elections The support to Ben Ali Unemployment, environment Human Rights
Boujamaa Yahyaoui	PSL	5 minutes and 03 seconds	Political and social development Youth policies Democracy and social solidarity
Ahmed Mouhi	PDP	3 minutes and 40 seconds	Policy for rural development The crisis of Tunisia: economy, society, education, emigration
Mouhamed Mountasar	RCD	4 minutes and 44 seconds	The support to Ben Ali Democracy and political change in Tunisia
Faical Ben Nasr	PSL	4 minutes and 14 seconds	Political competition and pluralism The support to Ben Ali as a guarantee of stability and security
Bachir Bejaoui	Independent	3 minutes and 26 seconds	Unemployment Policies for youth Policies for rural development The support to Ben Ali The lack of national values of the opposition parties

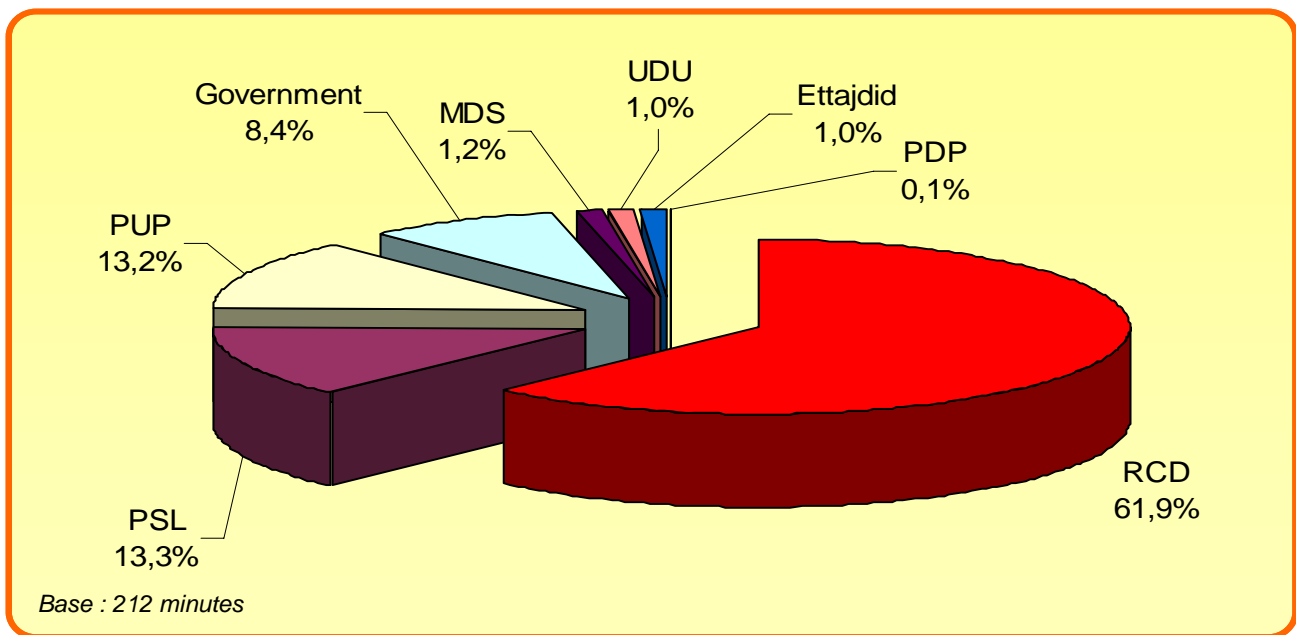
In terms of free airtime for presidential candidates unequal treatment was evident in the positioning of the slots: Bouchiha and Béji, who officially expressed their support for Ben Ali, had their messages broadcast during prime time news at 20.00 on Télé 7; Halouani's message

was broadcast at 14.00 and it was momentarily interrupted by a “call for prayer” thus cutting his speech<sup>3</sup>.

As for other kinds of programmes, particularly information, state broadcasters accorded an overwhelming advantage to the president and the ruling party in terms both of quantity and quality of coverage.

In the period observed<sup>4</sup>, Télé 7 devoted an average 70% of its election broadcasts to the president, the government and the ruling party and the tone of their coverage was generally positive.

Chart 17: Allocation of time among political groups in Télé 7 (All programmes)

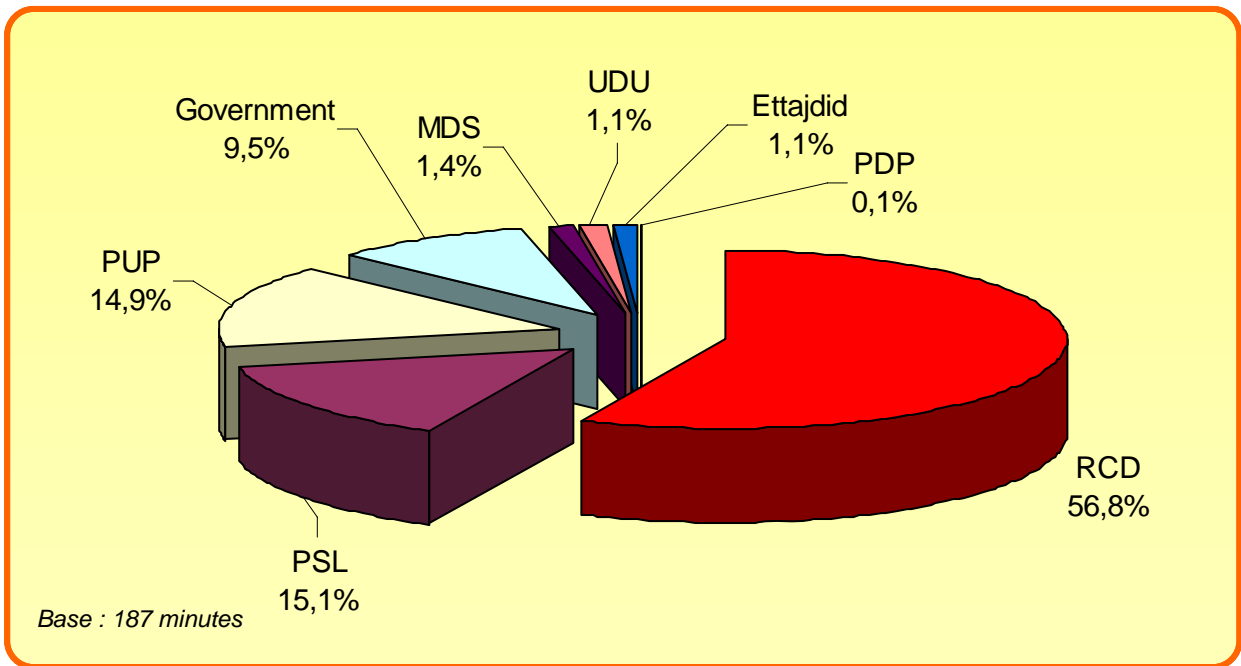


This percentage slightly decreased in news bulletins where RCD and the government received 66% while PSL and PUP 15% each. The increase in their coverage was mainly due to the possibility given to their presidential candidates (Bouchiha and Béji) to present their platforms in the course of prime time news.

<sup>3</sup> Ben Ali’s speech was broadcast on 10<sup>th</sup> October that was outside the sample of media monitoring. The President’s speech was aired live and it lasted about one hour.

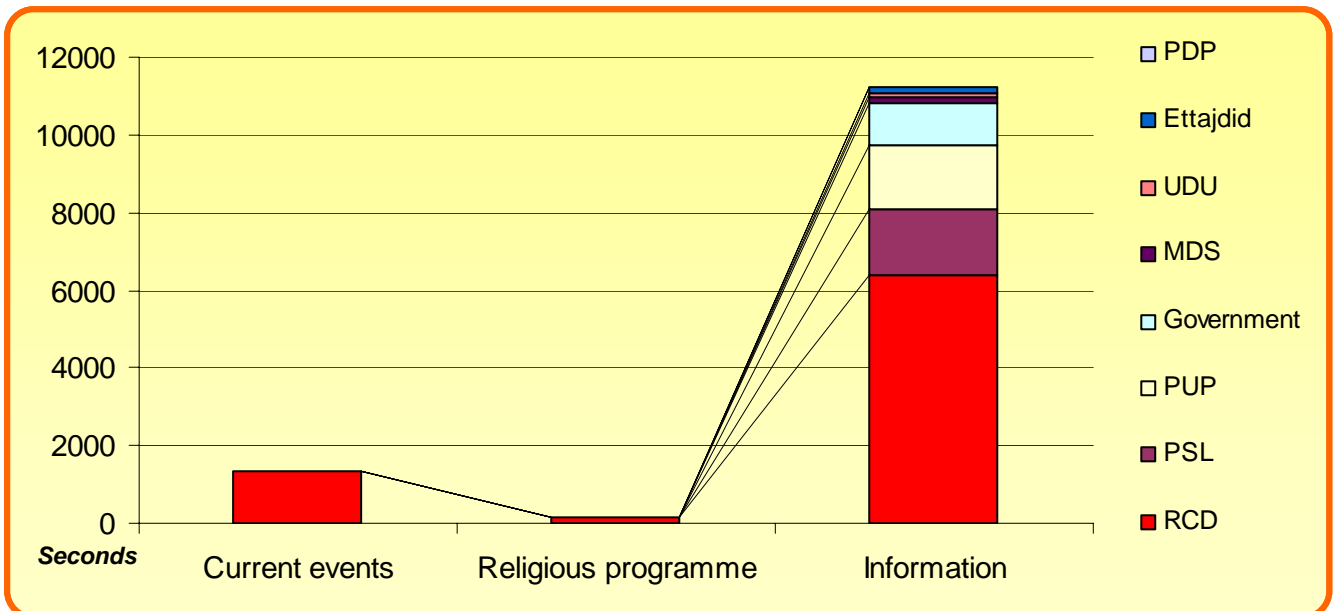
<sup>4</sup> The sample for TV 7 was from 16.00 to 12.00 pm in the period 15-22 October.

Chart 18: Allocation of time among political groups on Télé 7 – News bulletins



The allocation of airtime in other programmes (current events, entertainment, religious programmes etc.), shows that the ruling party monopolised the political discourse on the public channel: throughout the period observed, the RCD, through Ben Ali, was the only party that received detailed coverage.

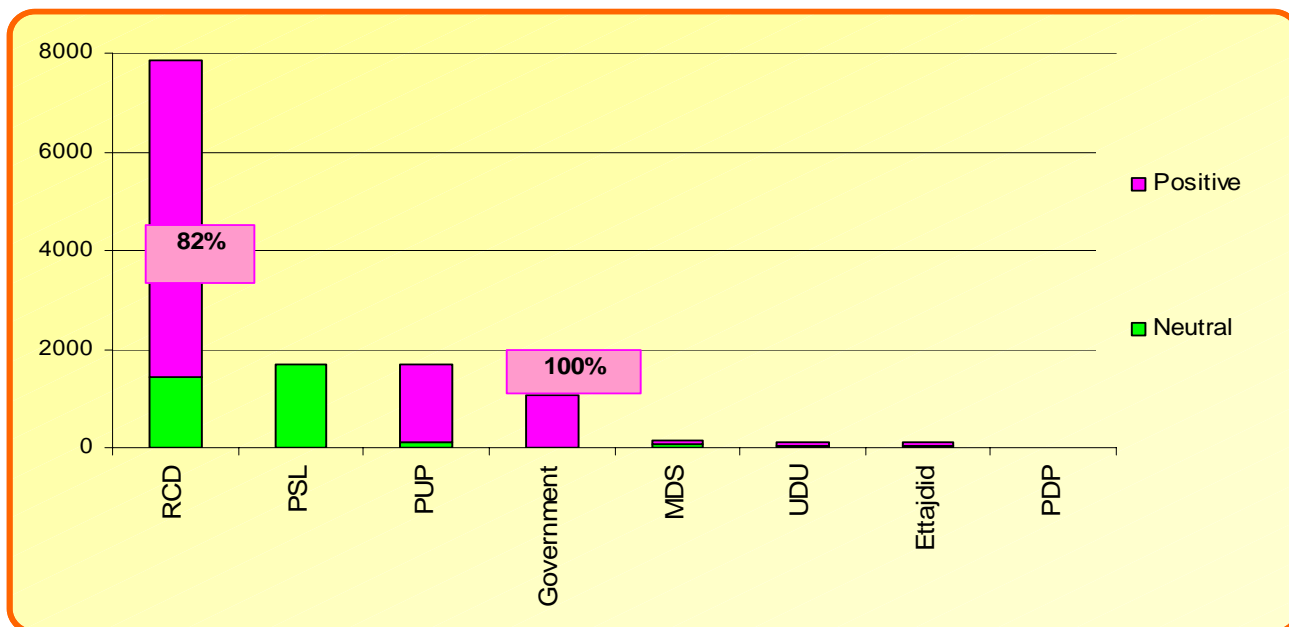
Chart 19: Allocation of time among political groups by programme on Télé 7



In addition to explicit coverage of the president indirect forms of campaigning emerged in a number of cases. On two occasions Télé 7 aired a special programme during prime time: in the course of the programmes interviews with prominent Arab personalities (intellectuals, businessmen, journalists, politicians) expressing their appreciation for the incumbent president supported the candidate. The tone of reporting highlights this tendency to favour RCD and the government that received 82% and 100% respectively, positive coverage. The PSL and the

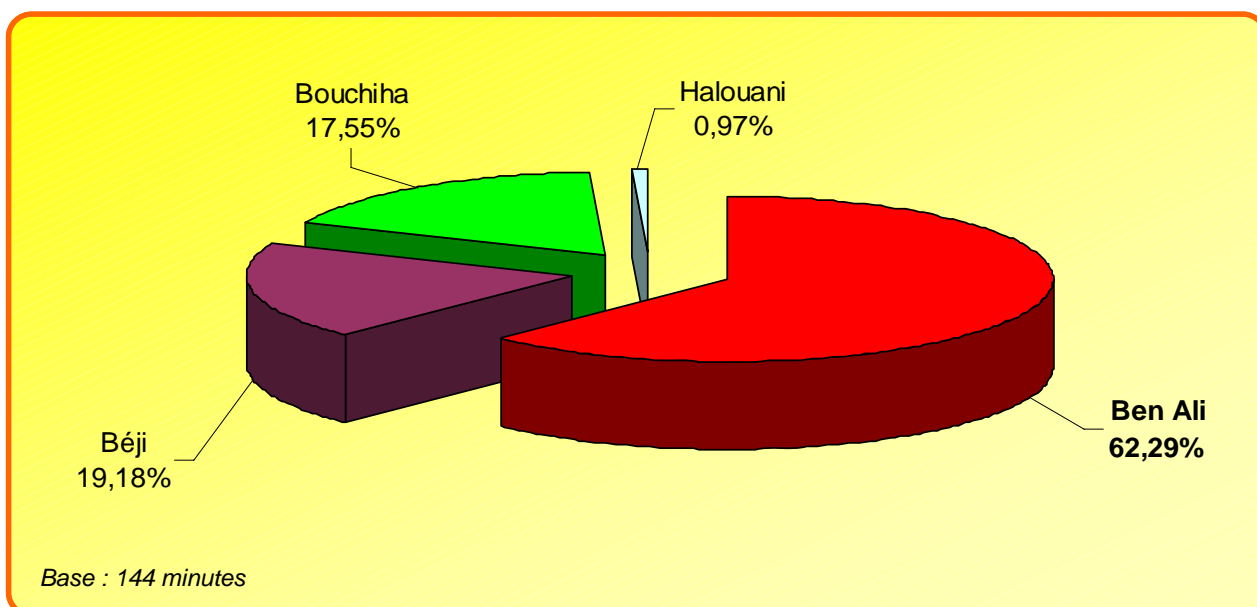
PUP were also provided with some positive coverage. An encouraging element is the lack of any negative tones that reflects the absence of personal attacks and defamatory speeches among candidates and parties.

Chart 20: Tone of the coverage of political groups on Télé 7 (All programmes)



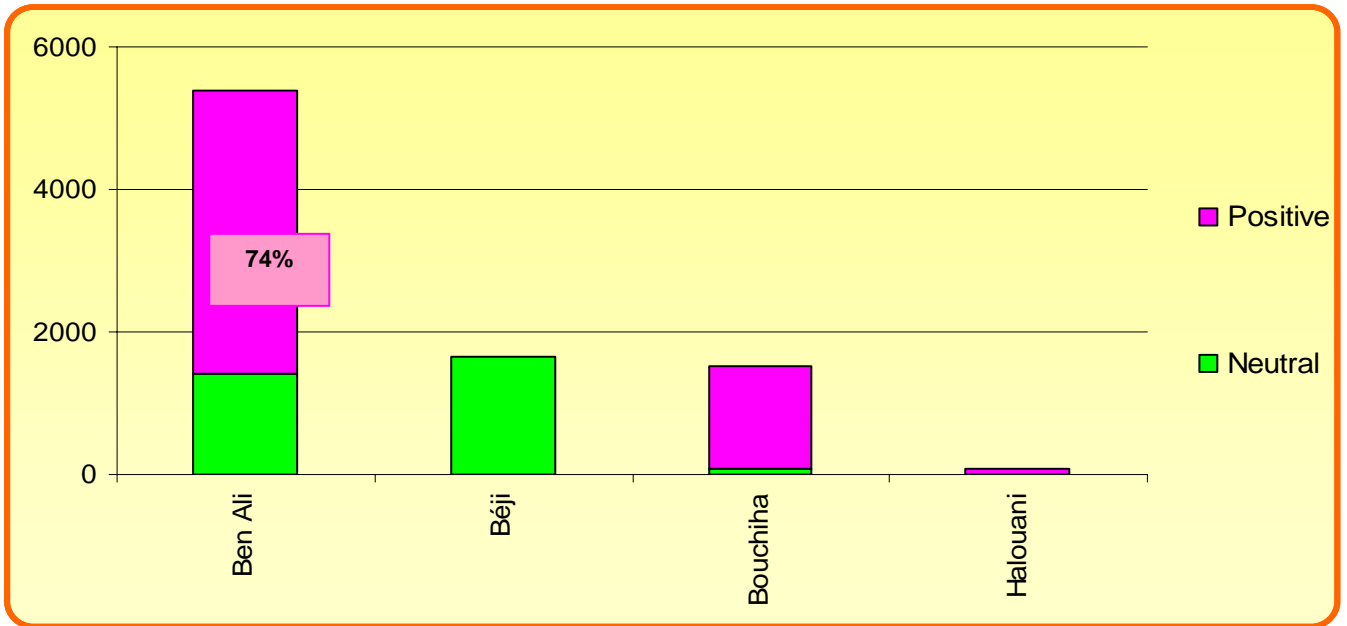
With regards to the allocation of airtime to the four presidential candidates in news programmes, quantitative data shows that there is an extremely high percentage of coverage dedicated to Ben Ali and low coverage of Halouani. The other two candidates received some time, although their coverage concentrated on specific events rather than being regularly distributed throughout the campaign period.

Chart 21: Allocation of time among the four presidential candidates on Télé 7 – News bulletins



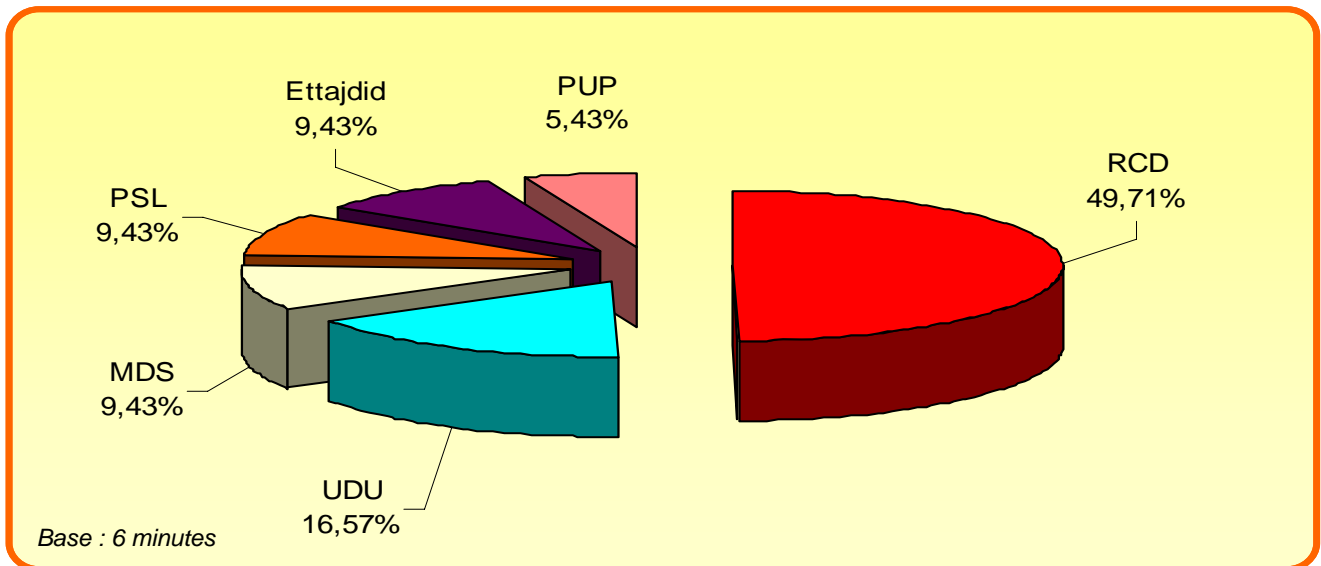
The quality of coverage is another indicator of the advantage enjoyed by the incumbent president whose public portrayal was characterised by a positive tone (82% of his total time of coverage).

Chart 22: Tone of the coverage of the four presidential candidates on Télé 7 – News bulletins



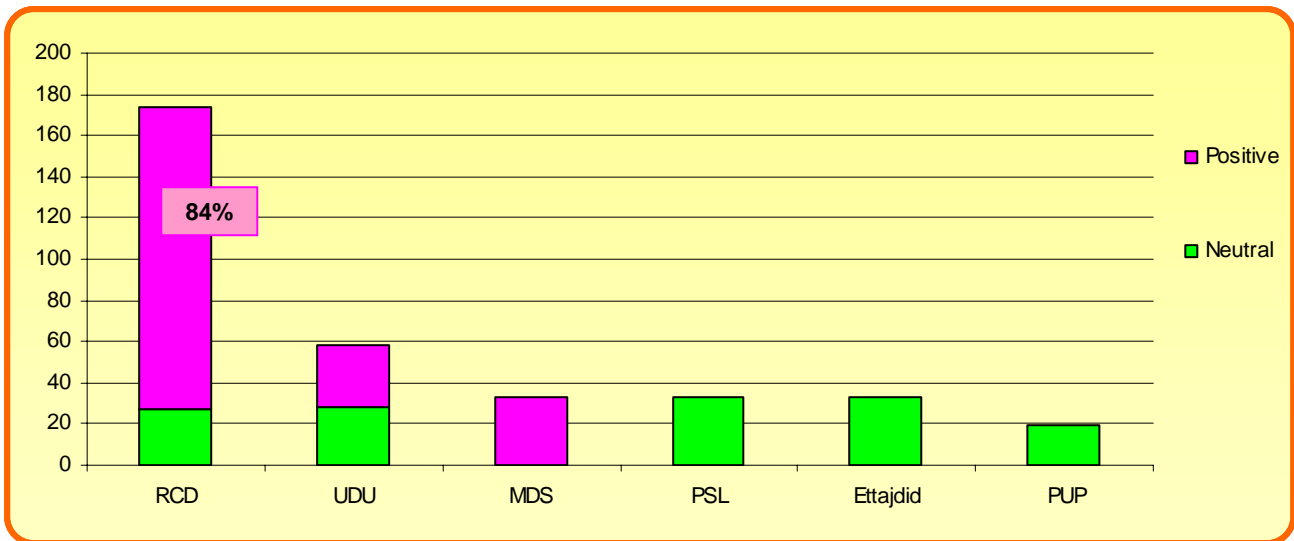
Parliamentary elections received marginal attention devoted to candidates running for this race. However, the distribution of time among political groups showed more balanced coverage than the presidential race even though RCD is still the dominant party.

Chart 23: Allocation of space devoted to candidates for parliamentary elections on Télé 7 – News bulletins



The tone of reporting reveals positive coverage of three parties: the RCD, the MDS and the UDU; the RCD was the party that received the best coverage (84% of its total time), but also other parties were covered with positive tones: MDS received 52% of positive time while UDU 100%.

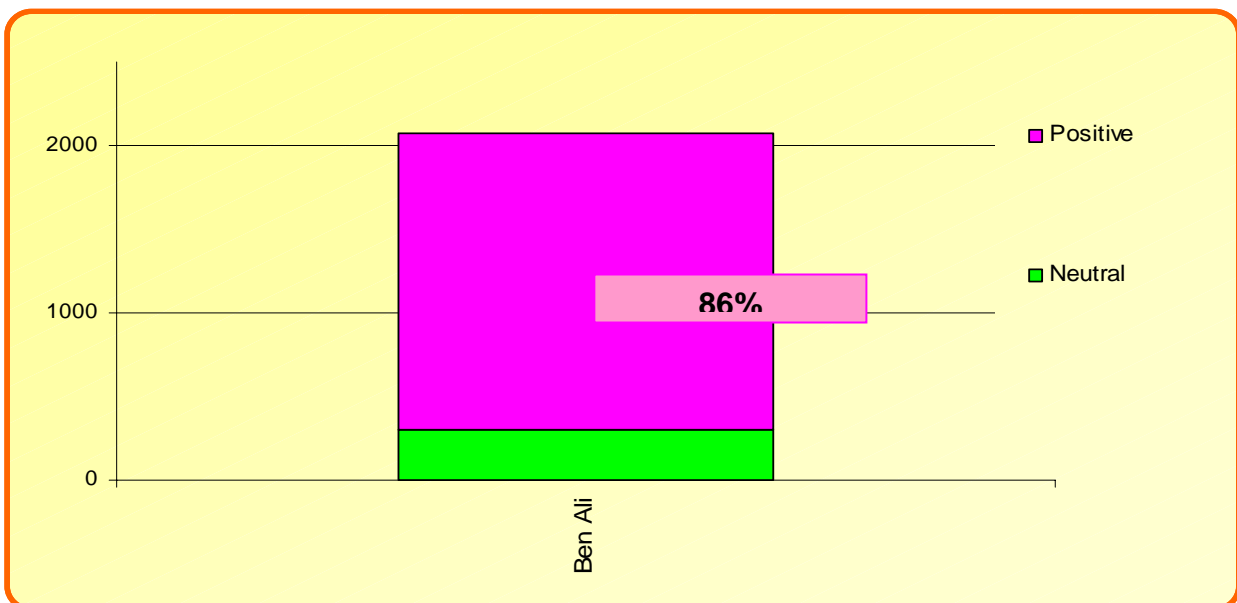
Chart 24: Tone of the coverage for candidates to parliamentary elections on Télé 7 – News bulletins



The other two state channels monitored displayed a more evident partisan coverage.

In its news bulletin, Chaîne 21<sup>5</sup> devoted all of its coverage of the elections to Ben Ali whose coverage was generally framed in a positive manner (86% of the total time of attention).

Chart 25: Tone of the coverage on Chaîne 21 – News bulletin

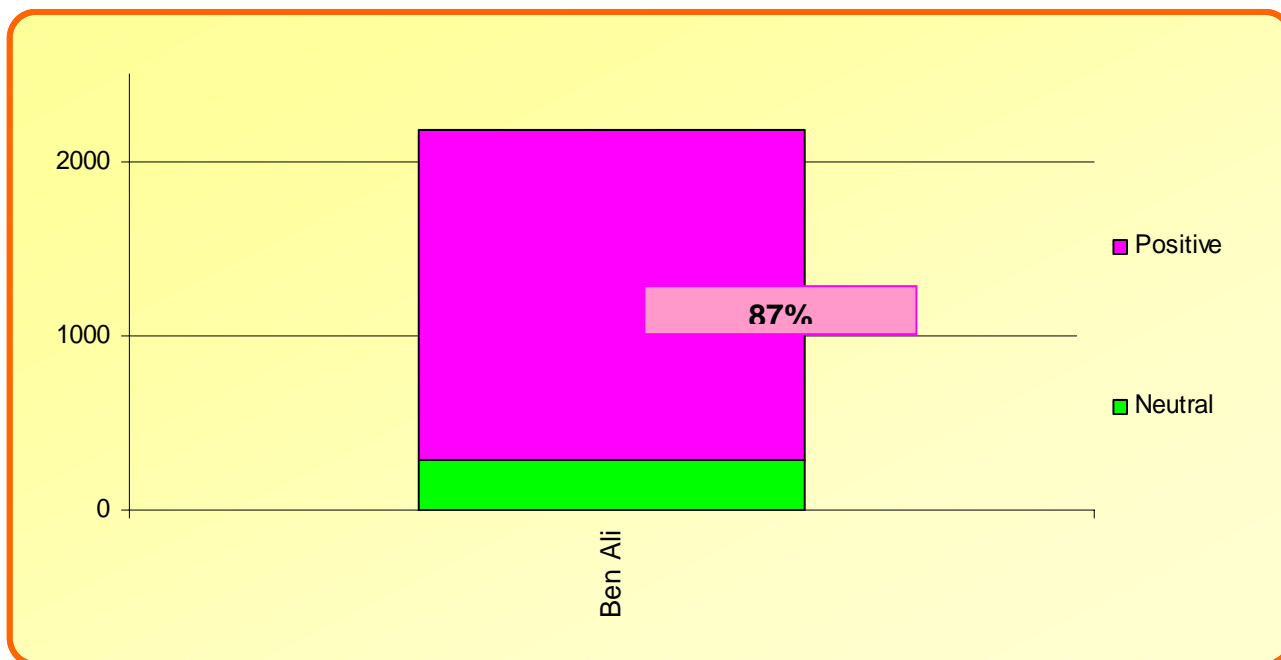


The two television channels regularly broadcast spots promoting economic and social growth in Tunisia. The spots resorted to slogans that were the same as those used by the president’s party, for example “Women are an active partner” was one of the main points of Ben Ali’s programme for this election. It should also be noted that these spots exploit symbolic references to the president’s party such as the colour mauve framing the images.

<sup>5</sup> The sample for Chaîne 21 was from 18.00 to 12.00 pm in the period 15-22 October.

Similarly, in its main news editions<sup>6</sup>, Radio Tunis allotted all its coverage to the incumbent president whose activities and campaign were reported with positive tones (87% of the total time of attention).

Chart 26: Tone of the coverage on Radio Tunis – Main editions of news bulletin



### The moratorium

The Electoral Code states that “The election campaign shall, in all cases, end twenty-four hours before the day of the ballot”<sup>7</sup>. Even though this provision of the Law does not explicitly refer to the media, it is possible to infer that the media should comply with the obligation not to report on candidates or campaign related issues.

Despite this provision, and on the eve of Election Day and during voting all national media covered President Ben Ali’s appeal to voters to participate in the elections and to take into account the national interest when choosing their candidate. In his speech, he also praised the way the electoral process was conducted, thanked opposition parties and applauded Tunisians for their sense of maturity.

Although there is no explicit message that calls for popular support, his speech may raise doubts on the appropriateness of this intervention offering additional coverage and visibility to a candidate that already enjoyed several occasions to access national media. More importantly, on voting day two newspapers (Achourouk and Assariah) explicitly called on the electorate to cast their votes for Ben Ali thus infringing the moratorium.

<sup>6</sup> The sample for Radio Tunis was radio news at 2.00 pm and at 8.00 pm in the period 18-22 October.

<sup>7</sup> Article 37a of the Electoral Code/Law 69 – 25

## Conclusion

The restrictive nature of the Tunisian media was confirmed by the absence of balance and impartiality during the official election campaign. Extensive, preferential coverage was given to the incumbent presidential candidate and the ruling party and little coverage or resources were assigned to opposition parties. The legal framework is poor and has been exploited to the advantage of certain parties at the expense of other parties in the election process. As Mahmoud Ben Romdhan suggested the Law in itself is one weakness, but the manner in which it is exploited by the Administration serves to weaken the instrument even more. It was suggested that the Administration selectively turned a blind eye to overt infringements of the Law especially in respect to La Presse and Essahafa and their coverage of the campaign to suit political rather than democratic ends.

Due to the vague and inadequate provisions of the Electoral Law the allocation of airtime on broadcast media was extremely selective. As the content analysis demonstrates the coverage of the elections, although enjoying a very prominent position in the national news agenda, was overwhelmingly biased towards the incumbent president and the RCD.

All broadcast media monitored failed to comply with the basic obligations of balance and equitable coverage of parties and candidates. State owned media therefore fell short, in particular with regards to two basic rights protected in the electoral process: the right of voters to be informed about political alternatives and matters of public interest and the right of candidates to put their message across.

Although the press sector's coverage overall was not as biased as the broadcast media it too demonstrated a clear leaning towards the ruling party in its coverage. The state owned titles' coverage was clearly, both in terms of space and tone in favour of the ruling party. This being said the private media performed better despite the fact that the RCD and Ben Ali received a majority of coverage.

The range of practices used to restrict the coverage and analysis of the election campaign are clearly a reflection of the poor conditions of journalists in general and the lack of respect from the Administration for independent journalism. These conditions raise serious issues about the freedom of journalists to provide balanced coverage of the election period. Journalists working for both the private and state media were exposed to these pressures. The culture of self regulation that directed journalists to cover the election in a manner that seriously distorted the resources assigned to cover the election and thus distorted the coverage that journalists were able to provide has played an important role in undermining the media's role in supporting the elections by providing a neutral platform.

The fact that magistrates were present at the party political broadcasts is also an anomaly that is not established in the election law and must be assessed as to its role in restricting the right of candidates to access the broadcast media without censorship.

We conclude that the conditions of self regulation in the press sector and the control of certain parts of the print and the broadcast media by the state supported a system of access that was inadequate and it might well be argued against Article 8 of the Tunisian Constitution and the right of the Tunisian citizens to have access to the media under the fundamental right of freedom of speech. This is supposed to be guaranteed by Tunisian Law and according to the opinions of the stakeholders interviewed and the content analysis this guarantee has failed to be protected by the authorities and the Law. Indeed the evidence would suggest it has been openly abused by the Administration for political gain. In this respect the public were not well served by the media and failed to fulfil their role in serving the public. The media largely served the ruling party at the expense of democracy and the public interest. Ultimately, the failure of the media is a failure of the Tunisian political system to comply with international standards in this field.

## Annex

### Annex 1 - Outline of methodology for quantitative analysis of election and political coverage in the media

#### Foreword

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Media monitoring can be defined as:

- A technique of scientific observation producing reliable and rigorous results;
- A way to study the production and the performance of the media in a systematic and impartial way;
- A tool to promote basic rights related to freedom of expression and right to participate in public life.

The monitoring involves not only the time devoted to subjects, but all the factors shaping a campaign on the media. Elections do not only consist of candidates, but also a whole set of dynamics and groups that play a role in the elections and are active in the processes and production of mass communication.

Media monitoring focuses on different aspects and targets:

- The visibility of political actors and groups;
- The quality of their coverage;
- The main bias related to their coverage;
- The issue of the campaign;
- The civic education produced for voters;
- The infringements of the relevant laws regulating and protecting media activity.

If properly conducted, media monitoring is a practical and constructive way to support democratic and fair elections. Findings and conclusions of media monitoring can have an influence on the awareness and behaviour of four main target groups:

- Regulatory bodies controlling media activity;
- Politicians and candidates;
- Citizens, voters and associations of civil society;
- Journalists and media professionals.

Media monitoring constitutes an effort to study and produce reliable information on media performance that are of growing and changing importance both for citizens and the political classes.

For this reason, it is vital to undertake it by employing methodological standards, professional commitment, rigour in data gathering and interpretation. This brief overview is not intended to be exhaustive. Rather it constitutes an attempt to provide media monitoring units with suggestions, pointers and reflections that can be helpful in their activities and that can support or increase the effectiveness of their work.

## **Code of conduct<sup>8</sup>**

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Media monitoring should produce reliable and objective results and conclusions.

It is of basic importance that these findings are not only credible in themselves but also that they are perceived as such.

A mission statement about the goals and the code of conduct of the media monitoring team is to be drafted and always used as a set of guidelines in the observation of the media.

Media monitors should adhere to a code of conduct, written or informal, guaranteeing the rigour and impartiality of their work. Monitors must follow standards of:

- Professional commitment
- Objectivity
- Impartiality

They can have their own political opinions, but they must not let them interfere with their work; data recording and analysis should not be influenced by an individual's personal political preferences.

Monitors should be fully aware that their activity is the basis for a report that will affect somehow not only judgements on the election campaign, but also the credibility of the monitored media and the public trust in them. The responsibility of the monitors is far beyond the act of recording time and space in the media.

In addition, the fact of being perceived as partisan or biased will affect the credibility and the impact of the findings. On the contrary an organisation will receive more credit and the outcome of its project will have more chance to have an impact on the media situation if it is rigorous and objective.

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<sup>8</sup> For a more detailed analysis of codes of conduct :  
European Commission, Handbook for European Union Election Observation Missions, Brussels 2002  
OSCE/ODIHR, The ODIHR Election Observation Handbook, Warsaw 1999  
International IDEA, Ethical and Professional Observation of Elections, International IDEA, Stockholm 1997  
ACE Project, Media and Elections, [www.aceproject.org](http://www.aceproject.org)  
ARTICLE 19, *Guidelines for Election Broadcasting in Transitional Democracies*, ARTICLE 19, London 1994.

## Outline of Media Monitoring Methodology

**Table of the main variables used for media monitoring of TV and radio**

TV/Radio	Description
Name of the media monitor	The media monitor that has made the analysis for the record
Channel	The name of the channel monitored
Date	The date of the day the record is referred to
Name of the programme	The title of the programme
Kind of programme (according to the law of the country). List of possible labels <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o News</li> <li>o Electoral and Political Debate</li> <li>o Special News Edition</li> <li>o Free Airtime</li> <li>o Current Events Programs</li> <li>o Documentary Films</li> <li>o Electoral Tribunes</li> <li>o Paid Airtime</li> <li>o Entertainment</li> <li>o Sport Program</li> <li>o Other</li> </ul>	The genre/format the TV programme belongs to
Time start	The hour and minute the programme started at
Relevant Subject	Individuals or collectives with a political role, a governmental role, a role within parties or within political forces Criteria defining a political subject: Being a party leader/member Being a registered candidate Being a member of the government Being a MP Being a political party Being a coalition Covering an institutional position; for example a President of the Republic elected by qualified majority by the Parliament (as in Greece)
Political affiliation	The party the relevant subject belongs to or the governmental/institutional position the relevant subject covers
Sex	The gender the relevant subject belongs to
Candidate	The candidacy (or not) of a relevant subject
Time	The measure (in seconds) of the coverage received by a relevant subject
Direct Speech Time	The measure (in seconds) of the direct access for a relevant subject
Tone	The measure (+1, 0, -1) of the quality of the coverage received by the relevant subject

**Table of the main variables used for media monitoring of the press**

<b>Press</b>	<b>Description</b>
Name of the media monitor	The media monitor that has concretely made the analysis for the record
Newspaper	The name of the newspaper monitored
Date	The date of the day the record is referred to
Number of page	The number of the page the relevant subject is collocated in
Kind of page List of labels <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o First page</li> <li>o Political page</li> <li>o Chronicles and current events</li> <li>o Foreign Affairs</li> <li>o Gossip and Show</li> <li>o Business</li> <li>o Culture</li> <li>o Paid electoral space</li> <li>o Free electoral space</li> <li>o Special Page on Elections</li> </ul>	The "genre" of the page the relevant subject is collocated in
Kind of article. List of labels <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Reportage</li> <li>o Editorial</li> <li>o News</li> <li>o Features</li> <li>o Mails from readers</li> <li>o Cartoon</li> <li>o Photo</li> <li>o Title</li> </ul>	The kind of article the relevant subject is collocated in
Relevant Subject	Individuals or collectives with a political role, a governmental role, a role within parties or within political forces Criteria defining a political subject: Being a party leader/member Being a registered candidate Being a member of the government Being a MP Being a political party Being a coalition Covering an institutional position; for example a President of the Republic elected by qualified majority by the Parliament (as in Greece)
Political affiliation	The party the relevant subject belongs to or the governmental/institutional position the relevant subject covers
Sex	The gender the relevant subject belongs to
Candidate	The candidacy (or not) of a relevant subject
Space	The measure (in seconds) of the coverage received by a relevant subject
Interview space	The measure (in seconds) of the direct access for a relevant subject
Topic	The argument the Political Subject is talking about. It is related to the presence of GDT and interviews. If there is no GDT or interview put 0 (zero) in the topic column of the analysis form.
Tone	The measure (+1, 0, -1) of the quality of the coverage received by the relevant subject

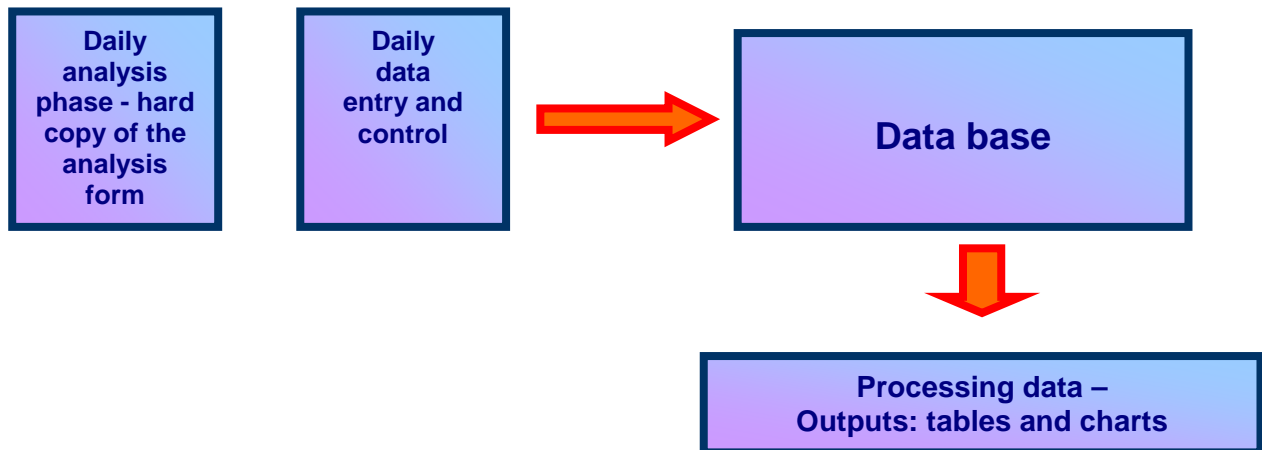
## Flowchart of the Main Activities in a Media Monitoring Unit

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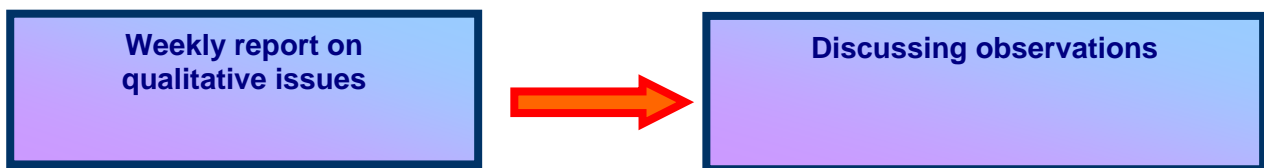
### QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

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### QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

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### QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS + QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

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## Standards for Media Coverage of Elections: International Commitments

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The reports of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression provide basic guidelines to be observed during the electoral campaign<sup>9</sup>. In his annual report for 1999<sup>10</sup>, the Special Rapporteur enunciated a number of principles that should be respected in order to ensure a transparent, open and pluralistic election campaign in the media. Obligations set forth in this document include:

1. "A monopoly or excessive concentration of ownership of media in the hands of a few is to be avoided in the interest of developing a plurality of viewpoints and voices;" (point 16)
2. "State-owned media have a responsibility to report on all aspects of national life and to provide access to a diversity of viewpoints; State-owned media must not be used as a communication or propaganda organ for one political party or as an advocate for the Government to the exclusion of all other parties and groups;" (point 16)
3. "In pre-election periods, and in the interest of ensuring the most fully informed electorate possible, the State must ensure that media are given the widest possible latitude. This can be best achieved when, inter alia:
4. Media inform the public about the political parties, candidates, campaign issues and voting processes; government media are balanced and impartial in election reporting, do not discriminate against any political party or candidate in granting access to air time and ensure that news, interviews and information programmes are not biased in favour of, or against, any party or candidate;
5. Censorship of any election programme is not allowed and the media are encouraged to broadcast and/or publish election-related programmes and are not penalized for programmes critical of the Government, its policies or the ruling party;
6. The media are exempt from legal liability for provocative statements by candidates or party representatives; the right of reply is provided, as well as correction or retraction, in cases where defamation is alleged; the manner and extent of remedy is determined by an independent body;
7. There is a clear distinction between news and press conferences related to functions of office and activities by members of the Government, particularly if the member concerned is seeking election;
8. Air time for direct access programmes is granted on a fair and non-discriminatory basis; the time allocated to parties or candidates is sufficient for them to communicate their messages and for the voters to inform themselves about the issues, party positions, qualifications and character of the candidates;
9. Programmes provide an effective opportunity for journalists, current affairs experts and/or the general public to put questions to party leaders and other candidates, and for the candidates to debate with each other;

9 The Special Rapporteur was established by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in 1993. The Special Rapporteur is in charge of promoting the implementation and the exercise of this right to freedom of expression and protecting media professionals. The current Special Rapporteur is Mr Ambeyi Ligabo (Kenya). In the exercise of his mandate, the Special Rapporteur pays particular attention to: (a) Detention of, discrimination against, or threats or use of violence and harassment, including persecution and intimidation, directed at persons seeking to exercise or to promote the exercise of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including professionals in the field of information; (b) Activities of political opposition parties and trade union activists, whether a group or an individual; (c) Actions against the media (print and broadcast) or impediments to their independent operation; (d) Actions against publishers and performers in other media, including books, magazines, film and theatre and the studio arts; (e) Activities of human rights defenders (e.g. lawyers, community activists); (f) Women's human rights, within the context of obstacles - including laws and practices - which impede the right of women to express their views and be heard, participate in the decision-making process, have equal standing before the law, and seek and receive information on matters of particular relevance to them such as family planning and violence against women; (g) Obstacles to access to information at the local, regional and national levels on projects and initiatives proposed by the Government to advance the right to development and obstacles to participation in the decision-making process, as well as obstacles to access to information on other subjects such as environmental and health impact studies, national budgets, social spending, industrial development projects and trade policies.

10 Report of the Special Rapporteur on the protection and promotion of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Mr. Abid Hussain, UN Doc. E/CN.4/1999/64 29 January 1999.

10. Media, and especially government media, engage in voter education, including by providing information on how to use the voting process, when and where to vote, how to register to vote and verify proper registration, the secrecy of the ballot, the importance of voting, the functions of the offices under contention and other matters; and
11. Print and broadcast media make available reports and programmes that will reach the largest number of voters possible, including in minority languages and for those who may have been traditionally excluded from the political process, such as ethnic or religious minorities, women and indigenous groups." (point 17).

Also, the UN Special Rapporteur pointed out that any regulatory mechanism and body, whether for electronic or print media, should be independent from political parties and autonomous of government<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on the protection and promotion of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Mr. Abid Hussain, UN Doc. E/CN.4/1999/64 29 January 1999.

## Annex 2 Media Landscape in Tunisia

### Outline of the media landscape

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#### Printed press

##### State press

La Presse

Assahafa

##### Party press

RCD (Democratic and Constitutional Rally)

Al Horiya, Le Renouveau

PUP (People Union Party)

Al Ouahda

PDP (Progressive Democratic Party)

Al Maoukef

MDS (Movement of Social Democrats)

Al Mostabel

Mouvement Ettajdid (former CP)

Attarik Al Jadid

PSL (Liberal Social Party)

Al Oufok

UDU (Unionist Democratic Union)

Al Wata

##### Private press

##### Dailies

Chourouk & Le Quotidien

Assabah & Le Temps

Assarih

##### Weeklies

Réalités

Tunis Hebdo

Assabah Al Ousboui

##### Bi-monthly

l'Economiste Maghrébin

##### National organisation's papers (weekly)

Achaab (UGTT, National Trade Union of Workers)

Al Bayane (UTICA, Tunisian Union of Agriculture and Trade)

Al Fallah (UTAP, Tunisian Union of Agriculture and Fishing)

La Femme (UNFT, National Union of Tunisian Women)

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There are also a great number of tabloids of which these are the main titles: Al Akhbar, Akhbar Joumhourya, Al Mousawar, Adhoua, Sabah Al Kheir, Al Hadath, Al Alan.

### Broadcast sector

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#### Television

##### Public channels

Tunis 7 (24/24)

Canal 21 (youth channel in the Capital and suburbs)

##### Public radio (official)

National Radio (24/24)

RTCI (in French)

Radio Jeunes (Radio Youth), Capital and nearby areas

##### Regional radio (official)

Sfax

Monastir

Gafsa

Le Kef

Tataouine

##### Private radio

Radio Mosaiques (no news)

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The first private channel "Hannibal TV" is expected to begin broadcasting at the start of 2005.

## **Annex 3: Evolution of political life & electoral procedures in Tunisia**

### **Key dates**

1956: Independence of Tunisia; election of 1st National Assembly in charge of developing the constitution; promulgation of Personal Status Code which organises family life and recognises the rights of women.

1957: Abolition of monarchy and declaration of the Republic.

1959: promulgation of Tunisian Constitution, and organisation of the first presidential and legislative elections.

1975: Establishment of life presidency for President Bourguiba.

1987: Legal removal of President Bourguiba and President Ben Ali's coming to power.

1988: Amendment of Constitution: suppression of life presidency, restriction of the number of presidential terms to 3, at the rate of 5 years per term.

1989: Presidential and legislative elections; election of President Ben Ali; Parliament dominated by one political party: Rassemblement constitutionnel et démocratique (Democratic and Constitutional Rally).

1994: Presidential and legislative elections; election of President Ben Ali; entry of opposition political parties into the House of Representatives following the modification of the voting system. Opposition occupies 19 seats.

1999: Presidential and legislative Elections; election of President Ben Ali. Opposition parties hold 34 seats.

2002: Referendum on amendment of Constitution, introducing:

- 1- Unlimited number of presidential terms; Presidential candidate's age shifted from 70 to 75;
- 2- Immunity for life for the president;
- 3- Establishment of a second chamber in Parliament, House of Councillors, composed of members nominated by the president, regionally elected members, and members elected at the national level to represent employers, farmers and salary-earners.
- 4- Reinforcement of Constitutional Council role with regard to elections: it receives candidacy applications for presidency, checks their legality, sets the final list of candidates, and announces the presidential elections results. It also decides on cases concerning the election of members of the two chambers of parliament.

2003: Adoption of exceptional measures related to Article 40, regarding the conditions of the presidential candidacy that requires that each candidate has been endorsed by a minimum of 30 elected people (MPs or Presidents of Municipal Councils). However, for the 2004 elections, each political party can nominate a candidate from its executive board who has served a minimum of five years in office, and whose party has at least one MP in the House of Representatives.

This measure seeks primarily to exclude the political parties which are not represented in Parliament.

## Presidential candidates

1. Zine El Abidine BEN ALI: current president of Tunisia; candidate of the political party in power: Rassemblement constitutionnel démocratique, (Democratic and Constitutional Rally)
2. Mohamed BOUCHIHA: Leader of Parti de l'union populaire (People Union Party)
3. Mounir BEJI: Leader of Parti social liberal (Liberal Social Parti)
4. Mohamed ALI HALOUANI: bureau member of Mouvement Ettajdid (Renewal Movement) (former Tunisian Communist Party) and Initiative démocratique (Democratic Initiative)

## Legislative elections

Seven political parties and seven independent lists running for 198 seats in the House of Representatives.

### Political parties' list

1. RCD: 26 lists
2. MDS\*: 26 lists
3. PUP: 26 lists
4. UDU\*: 23 lists
5. PSL: 23 lists
6. Mouvement Ettajdid: 21 lists
7. PDP\*: 16 lists

### Independent lists

1. L'Avant-garde (Vanguardist): 01 in Bizerte
2. Alliance unionists (Unionist Alliance): 01 in Nabeul
3. La Conscience (Conscience): 01 in Zaghouan
4. Pour la Patrie (For Homeland): 01 in Zaghouan
5. Pour la Patrie (For Homeland): 01 in Kairouan
6. Pour la Patrie (For Homeland): 01 in Tozeur
7. Soutien au November 7 (Support of November 7): 01 in Sfax

## Typology of political parties in Tunisia

The organisation and public funding of political parties are governed by Law:

May 3, 1988 Law: states that the creation of political parties is subject to authorisation issued by the Ministry of Interior, published in JORT (Tunisian Republic Official Bulletin).

July 21, 1997 Law: Limits public funding only to political parties with at least one MP in the House of Representatives. Today, only five opposition parties out of seven have access to public funding under this regulation.

### Recognised political parties

1. Rassemblement constitutionnel démocratique, RCD, (Democratic and Constitutional Rally): political party in power
2. Mouvement des démocrates socialistes, MDS (Movement of Social Democrats)
3. Union démocratique unioniste, UDU, (Unionist Democratic Union)
4. Mouvement Ettajdid (former Tunisian Communist Party)
5. Parti de l'union populaire, PUP, (People Union Party)
6. Forum démocratique pour le travail et les libertés, FDTL (Democratic Forum for Labour and Liberties)
7. Parti social liberal, PSL, (Liberal Social Parti)
8. Parti démocratique populaire, PDP, (People Democratic Party)

Non-recognised political parties

1. Ennahdha (Renaissance): (former Islamic Tendency Movement)
2. Parti ouvrier communiste tunisien, POCT, (Tunisian Communist Worker Parti)
3. Parti des Verts (Green Parti)
4. Congrès pour la République, CPR, (Republic Congress)

Parties participating at the elections 2004

1. RCD
2. PUP
3. MDS
4. UDU
5. PSL
6. Mouvement Ettajdid and initiative démocratique

Parties boycotting the elections

1. CPR
2. POCT
3. FDTL
4. PDP
5. Ennahdha