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Key Developments: June 2014 – May 2015

- In September 2014, Tunisia’s first privately owned submarine fiber-optic cable was inaugurated, thus easing the state’s monopoly on the country’s connection to the international internet (see Restrictions on Connectivity).

- Tunisia’s telecoms regulator, the INT, took steps towards greater transparency and accountability through the introduction of new regulations surrounding the licensing of ISPs (see Regulatory Bodies).

- A surge of terrorist attacks has led to calls to block or remove extremist content online. Authorities from the ICT ministry have maintained that the country will not resort to blocking, although the ministry has sought greater cooperation with social media companies to take down content that incites violence or extremism (see Blocking and Filtering and Content Removal).

- A handful of Tunisians were prosecuted for their online activities. Rached Khiari, director of the Al Sada News website, received a three-month suspended sentence for defamation after publishing a video in which a third party insulted a judge (see Prosecutions and Detentions).

- After being sentenced in absentia to three years in prison by a military court, blogger Yassine Ayari was arrested upon returning to the country. In a retrial and subsequent appeal, Ayari’s sentence was ultimately reduced to six months and he was released in April 2015. Ayari was found guilty of defaming the military for Facebook posts in which he criticized the minister of defense (see Prosecutions and Detentions).

- Amid heated presidential elections, the website of the Independent Electoral Commission was attacked, temporarily suspending voter registration (see Technical Attacks).
Introduction

The internet remains partly free in Tunisia. Although the state-controlled Tunisie Télécom (sometimes referred to as TT) maintains a monopoly over the country’s domestic internet backbone, two ISPs inaugurated Tunisia’s first privately operated fiber optic submarine cable. Tunisia’s telecoms regulator, the INT, introduced new licensing regulations and continues to make strides towards ensuring greater transparency and accountability.

As the government grapples with increased terrorist attacks, authorities have resisted calls to reinstitute blocking and filtering. Instead, officials have declared their intention to work together with social media companies to remove content that incites extremism or violence. Digital rights activists have expressed fears over surveillance now that the Technical Telecommunications Agency (ATT) is up and running, despite no clear mandate and oversight mechanisms.

Furthermore, Tunisia’s fragile internet freedom remains threatened by a number of laws dating from the Ben Ali era, including the Telecommunications Decree and the Internet Regulations. The judiciary continues to restrict free speech through the prosecution of users over content posted online, mainly regarding defamation, religion, and insults to state bodies. Blogger Yassine Ayari was tried by a military court and served prison time over charges related to the defamation of the military. The editor of Al Sada News received a three-month suspended sentence for defamation regarding a video published to the website in which a third party insulted a judge. Several other Tunisians were detained or suffered legal harassment on vague charges.

The internet was first launched for public use in Tunisia in 1996, and the first broadband connections were made available by the end of 2003. The online landscape changed dramatically with the ouster of autocratic president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali on January 14, 2011. His repressive censorship apparatus largely dissipated and internet users have started to enjoy an unprecedented level of open access. After the passage of a new constitution last year, Nidaa Tounes emerged as the country’s largest political party in the October 2014 parliamentary elections. The first round of presidential elections followed in November, with a run-off held one month later. Béji Caid Essebsi defeated incumbent Moncef Marzouki in a tightly disputed contest that spilled over into the online media landscape.

Obstacles to Access

Growth in mobile internet subscriptions has underpinned an increase in internet penetration in Tunisia over the past year. Private operators Ooredoo Tunisie and Orange Tunisie inaugurated their own international submarine cable, boosting bandwidth capacity. However, the telecommunications market remains centralized in the hands of three major players, with state-controlled Tunisie Télécom continuing its monopolistic control over the internet backbone. Tunisia’s telecoms regulator has also taken steps towards greater transparency and accountability through the introduction of new licensing regulations.

Availability and Ease of Access

According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), internet penetration stood at 46
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percent in 2014, up from 34 percent in 2009.\textsuperscript{1} The number of fixed broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants dropped from 4.86 to 4.44 over the past year, due to a preference for mobile broadband subscriptions. As of March 2015 there were more than 4.5 million subscriptions to 3G mobile data plans compared to some 500,000 fixed broadband subscriptions. Internet connections through 3G USB keys exceeded 1.1 million subscriptions.\textsuperscript{2}

The number of computers per 100 inhabitants rose from approximately 12 in 2009 to nearly 22 as of March 2015,\textsuperscript{3} while the number of internet subscriptions (fixed and 3G USB keys) is estimated to have exceeded 1.7 million as of March 2015.\textsuperscript{4} The popularity of mobile phones is also on the rise, with over 14 million mobile phone subscriptions and a penetration rate of 127.6 percent as of April 2015.\textsuperscript{5}

Nonetheless, internet access remains beyond the reach of a large segment of the population. According to a World Bank report released in January 2014, “the poorest 40 percent of the population would need to spend over 40 percent of their income to afford high speed internet.”\textsuperscript{6} USB keys used for 3G internet cost at least TND 40 (approximately US$20.5), while the service costs TND 25 (US$13) per month for 10GB of data.

Thus, many Tunisians access the internet at their workplace or at privately owned cybercafes known as “publinets,” where one hour of connection costs at least 1 TND (US$ 0.51). Before 2011, wireless access in cafes and restaurants was not permitted by law, which allowed only licensed ISPs to offer access. Nonetheless, since the revolution it has become common for cafes and restaurants in major cities to offer free internet access without any registration requirements, attracting mainly young social network users. The ICT ministry issued new regulations on the provision of internet access by cybercafes on July 29, 2013.\textsuperscript{7}

Fixed-line internet subscribers must first buy a landline package from Tunisie Télécom (TT), which manages the country’s 130 Gbps bandwidth capacity, before choosing one of 11 ISPs. The TT landline package costs 45 TND (US$23) for per three-month subscription period. ISP prices range from TND 10 (US$5) a month for a connection speed of 1 Mbps to TND 50 (US$25) for a connection speed of 20 Mbps. Although there are no legal limits on the data capacity that ISPs can supply, the bandwidth remains very low and connectivity is highly dependent on physical proximity to the existing infrastructure.

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\textsuperscript{1} “Percentage of individuals using the Internet, fixed (wired) Internet subscriptions, fixed (wired)-broadband subscriptions,” International Telecommunication Union (ITU), 2009 & 2014, \url{http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/stat/default.aspx}.


\textsuperscript{7} Decision of July 29, 2013 on the conditions for the exploitation of public internet centers: \url{http://bit.ly/1PkJ8qQ}. 

www.freedomhouse.org
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Restrictions on Connectivity

The Tunisian government does not impose any restrictions on ICT connectivity. However, Tunisie Télécom remains the sole manager of the country’s 10,000KM fiber-optic internet backbone covering the entire territory. Tunisie Télécom also acts as a reseller to domestic ISPs, granting it an oversized role in the country’s internet governance. However, some positive signs have emerged of late. In September 2014, private operators Ooredoo Tunisie and Orange Tunisie inaugurated their own international submarine cable, thus easing the monopoly of Tunisie Télécom on Tunisia’s international submarine communications cables. The 175km long cable which links Tunisia to Italy is the first privately owned cable to enter into service in Tunisia.

ICT Market

The main providers of internet service are Tunisie Télécom, Ooredoo Tunisie, and Orange Tunisie. The state controls a 65 percent stake in Tunisie Télécom, while the remainder is owned by Emirates International Telecommunications (ETI). In June 2013, ETI announced its plan to sell its Tunisie Télécom shares, citing employees’ strikes over higher salaries as a reason for the move. Ooredoo Tunisie is a subsidiary of the multinational company Ooredoo, which is partially owned by the state of Qatar. Finally, Orange Tunisie has been controlled by the state since 2011, when a 51 percent stake was seized from Marwan Ben Mabrouk, son-in-law of fallen dictator Ben Ali. The remaining 49 percent stake is owned by the multinational group Orange.

Regulatory Bodies

The Ministry of Communication Technologies and Digital Economy (ICT ministry) is the main government body responsible for the ICT sector. The National Instance of Telecommunication (INT) is the regulator for all telecom and internet-related activities and has the responsibility of resolving technical issues and disputes between actors.

The INT’s governance body is made up of mainly government officials nominated by the ICT Minister, which activists argue leads to a lack of regulatory independence. Nevertheless, the INT has initiated some positive changes in internet policy, namely through the introduction of a more liberal domain name chart and an invitation to independent arbitrators from civil society to help develop a new Alternative Domain Name Dispute Resolution Process.

Internet policy is decided by the INT and executed by the Tunisian Internet Agency (ATI), a state body governed by a board of trustees comprised of representatives from the main shareholder, Tunisie Télécom. The company controls 37 percent of ATI shares and the state owns a further 18 percent, while the remaining 45 percent is divided among private banks. The head of the ATI is appointed by the ICT ministry. The INT and ATI manage the “.tn” country domain. Under Ben Ali, the ATI was a government organ for surveillance and censorship. The ATI now manages the internet exchange point (IXP) between national ISPs that buy connectivity from Tunisie Télécom, as well as the allocation of internet protocol (IP) addresses. The agency also provides direct internet access to public institutions.

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In December 2014, the government of then-prime minister Mehdi Jomaa passed decree n°2014-4773 which regulates the granting of business licenses to ISPs, replacing the Telecommunication Decree of 1997.10 Under the new decree, ISPs are subject to prior authorization from the ICT ministry, after consulting with the ministry of interior and the INT. Article 8 established a new advisory board tasked with examining licensing requests and advising on matters related to infractions and sanctions. The board is presided over by the ICT minister or his representative and is composed of representatives from the ministries of defense, interior, ICT, and commerce; the INT; and the Union for Industry and Commerce (UTICA). Businesses wishing to apply for a license need to have a standing capital of at least TND 1 million (approximately US$20,000). Licensing applications must be answered by the ministry within one month.

Limits on Content

As the authorities grapple with mounting terrorist attacks, attention has turned to the fight against online extremism. Government agencies have alluded to plans to block or remove extremist content online, although little action has been taken for now. Blocking and filtering have ceased since the toppling of the Ben Ali regime four years ago. Tunisian users continue to enjoy an open internet in the country. However, in the absence of legal reforms, laws regarding censorship and intermediary liability from the Ben Ali era continue to pose a threat to users. Many remain hesitant to cross red lines on sensitive topics over fears of arrest and prosecution under harsh defamation laws.

Blocking and Filtering

Censorship remains sparse in Tunisia, with no instances of politically motivated blocking over the past year. Popular social media tools such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and international blog-hosting services are freely available.

In September 2014, the country’s telecommunications industry regulator and the ICT ministry denied11 media reports alleging that the three operators would soon be blocking Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services like Skype and Viber for 3G users except under special pre-paid packages.12 In a statement published on September 16, the ministry said that such a move would violate the principle of network neutrality guaranteed under Article 26 of the Telecommunications Law.13

Following several attacks by Islamist extremists, government officials have called for the filtering of web pages affiliated with terrorism. Speaking after an attack that left 15 soldiers dead on July 16, 2014, then-interior minister Lotfi Ben Jeddou reiterated his calls for the monitoring and the filtering of the internet, which he says “remains outside the control of the State.”14 There were no indications

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the authorities proceeded with these calls, however. Telecommunications Minister Noomane Fehri has stated he “will not adopt a policy of blocking websites whatever their danger to us because we believe this solution is technologically useless.”

Content Removal

While authorities admit filtering “won’t solve the problem” of users accessing extremist content, the telecommunications ministry has revealed it is coordinating with social media companies to suspend pages that incite violence or extremism.

According to Article 9 of the 1997 Internet Regulations, ISPs are required to continuously monitor content to prevent the dissemination of information “contrary to public order and good morals.” Laws such as these that impose legal liability on intermediaries have been used to take down political or social content in violation of free speech protections. For instance, in March 2015, the satire news site tounesnews.com was shut down for a few days by the web hosting service OVH following a removal request from the Tunisian authorities for spreading false news. It was reported that the site was targeted over a satirical article accusing Wided Bouchamaoui, head of the industry and commerce union, of tax evasion.

Media, Diversity, and Content Manipulation

Tunisia’s online media landscape is vibrant and open. Since the revolution, numerous online sources of information have been launched alongside new newspapers, radio stations, and television channels, enriching the information landscape through the addition of viewpoints from a diverse range of social actors. In June 2014, a group of journalists and web developers launched Inkyfada.com, a ‘slow journalism’ web magazine. The publication makes use of mapping and data visualization tools to help readers understand complex stories.

Nonetheless, Tunisia’s post-revolutionary vibrancy has not eliminated all self-censorship. Some online activists still avoid crossing red lines over fears of legal prosecution. Still, users are more open to discussing religion, the army, and other sensitive issues on the web compared to traditional media platforms.

The importance of online news sources has been recognized by politicians. In the country’s newfound democracy, partisan groups have used the internet to campaign. The information battle was particularly fierce during the second round of the presidential elections in late 2014, when the respective supporters of outgoing president Moncef Marzouki and current president Beji Caid Essebsi accused each other of spreading rumors. Nevertheless, the unprecedented openness of the Tunisian online sphere in the post-Ben Ali era has greatly diluted the influence of such content.

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18 Nejma Rondelez, “Inkyfada.com, le magazine web tunisien qui prend le temps” [Inkyfada.com, the Tunisian web magazine that takes its time] Al Huffington Post, July 15, 2014, http://huff.to/1QeiuFL
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Candidates also made positive use of social networking sites to reach out to voters and answer their questions.21

Digital Activism

Tunisian youth and civil society organizations have continued to use digital media for initiatives relating to political and social issues. Over the past year, a number of organizations used new technology to monitor the electoral process. The nongovernmental organization (NGO) Cahiers de La Liberté launched “Birrasmi” (“Really?”), a platform to fact-check the veracity of statements made by candidates in the country’s legislative and the presidential elections.22 The election monitoring group Mourakiboun created a quick vote-counting platform to aid in election observation.23 Relying on data provided by its observers, the group visualized figures related to the elections such as turnout rates and results.24

In July 2014, the transparency NGO al-Bawsala launched “Marsad Baladia,”25 a project that collects and publishes data related to local municipalities.26 Published data includes the budget and resources allocated to each municipality, as well as information on the progress of various municipal projects. The data allows the NGO to rank municipalities according to their commitment to transparency.

Violations of User Rights

While Tunisia has taken significant steps to promote internet access and reverse online censorship, the country’s legal framework remains a significant threat to internet freedom. Despite the adoption of a new constitution hailed as “democratic,”27 the absence of legal reforms continues to hold Tunisia back. Most problematically, the judiciary continues to employ laws from the Ben Ali-era to prosecute users over online expression. Criminal defamation remains one of the biggest obstacles to independent reporting, while several users have been charged with insulting state bodies or religious values. At the same time, the creation of a new cybercrime investigative agency has led to fears that technology could once again be misused to perform unchecked government surveillance on Tunisian citizens in a return to Ben Ali-era practices.

Legal Environment

The 2014 constitution, the first to be passed since the 2011 revolution, enshrines the right to free expression and freedom of the press, and bans “prior censorship.” Specific articles guarantee the right to privacy and personal data protection, as well as the right to access information and commu-

24 Mourakiboun, Facebook post, December 22, 2014, http://on.fb.me/1Nfz4qB.
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communication networks. However, the text contains vague language tasking the state with “protecting sanctities” and banning “takfir” (apostasy accusations). Such language could act as a constitutional restriction on internet freedom, where religious issues are currently debated more openly than in the mainstream media or on the streets.

Despite improvements to the constitution, the repressive laws of the Ben Ali regime remain the greatest threat to internet freedom. Article 86 of the Telecommunications Code states that anyone found guilty of “using public communication networks to insult or disturb others” could spend up to two years in prison and may be liable to pay a fine. Articles 128 and 245 of the penal code also punish slander with two to five years’ imprisonment. Article 121 (3) calls for a maximum punishment of five years in jail for those convicted of publishing content “liable to cause harm to public order or public morals”. In addition, Tunisia’s code of military justice criminalizes any criticism of the military institution and its commanders.

Tunisia’s press code does not provide bloggers and citizen journalists with the same protections afforded traditional journalists. Article 7 defines a “professional journalist” as a person holding a BA degree who “seeks the collection and dissemination of news, views and ideas and transmits them to the public on a primary and regular basis,” and “works in an institution or institutions of daily or periodical news agencies, or audiovisual media and electronic media under the condition that it is the main source of income.”

Prosecutions and Detentions for Online Activities

Several users were arrested or prosecuted against international norms of free speech over the past year:

- In October 2014, the primary court of Tunis sentenced Rached Khiari, the director Al Sada News website, to a suspended jail term of three months over the publication of a video deemed defamatory. The public prosecutor filed the court complaint in which Khiari was accused of insulting others through public communication networks under Article 86 of the Telecommunication Code. Although he is the director of a news publication, Khiari was not prosecuted under the 2011 press code. In the video, published in March 2014, a mother cursed the judge who sentenced her son, a controversial Islamist activist, to jail. The mother received a three month prison sentence.

- In December 2014, Tunisian authorities arrested blogger Yassine Ayari as he returned to Tunis from a trip abroad, six weeks after he was convicted in absentia of defaming the military institution. Ayari was sentenced by a military court, under article 91 of the military justice code, to three years in jail. He was found guilty of “defaming army officers and se-

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nior defense ministry officials” in a series of Facebook posts in which he criticized Minister of Defense Ghazi Jeribi for refusing to appoint a new head of military intelligence and for weakening military institutions.\textsuperscript{33} In a retrial held on January 20, Ayari’s verdict was reduced to a one-year sentence.\textsuperscript{34} Ayari appealed his conviction and on March 3 the military court of appeals reduced his jail term to six months.\textsuperscript{35} Ayari was released on April 17.\textsuperscript{36}

- On May 7, 2015, a primary court sentenced in absentia police union leader Walid Zarrouk to one year in jail for “insulting others through public communication networks” over a 2013 Facebook post.\textsuperscript{37} In the post, Zarrouk accused the then-general prosecutor of the Tunis Tribunal, Tarek Chkioua, and minister of justice Nourredine Bhiri of “ politicizing prosecutions”.\textsuperscript{38}

- On September 21, 2014, three members of the collective blog Nawaat were detained for filming without authorization on the premises of a court in Bizerte, in northern Tunisia.\textsuperscript{39} Sami Ben Gharbia, Henda Chennaoui, and Callum were at the court covering the trial of a comedian and were released the same day without charges.

- In early January 2015, the Cassation Court acquitted blogger Hakim Ghanmi of defamation charges for criticizing the staff of a military hospital in a blog post.\textsuperscript{40} The case dates back to May 2013 when Ghanmi stood trial before a military court in Sfax on charges of “undermining the reputation of the army”, “defamation of a public official,” and “disturbing others through public communication networks.” Under the initial verdict, Ghanmi was cleared of two of the charges, but fined TND 240 (US$ 130) for defamation of the army.

- Jabeur Mejri continues to face legal harassment following a March 2014 presidential pardon that saw him avoiding over seven years of prison for publishing cartoons depicting the prophet Mohammed on his Facebook page.\textsuperscript{41} One month later, Mejri was sentenced to eight months in prison for “insulting a public servant” during an investigation into his alleged embezzlement of funds. He stood accused of stealing TND 1,600 (US$870) worth of train tickets while working for the Tunisian national railway company. He was eventually pardoned again and released on October 15, 2014.\textsuperscript{42}

\begin{itemize}
  \item “Tunisia frees blogger jailed for defaming army in Facebook posts,” Middle East Eye, April 17, 2015, http://bit.ly/1L9GAqG.
  \item In 2012, Mejri had been convicted along with his friend Ghazi Beji of “insulting others through public communication networks” under Article 86 of the Telecommunications Code, and publishing content deemed offensive to Islam and “liable to cause harm to public order or public morals” under Article 121 (3) of the Tunisian Penal Code. Beji, who fled the country and obtained political asylum in France in June 2013, was sentenced in absentia to seven and half years of prison for publishing an e-book satirizing Prophet Muhammad’s biography on Scribd.
  \item “Tunisie: Grâce par la présidence, Jabeur Mejri a été libéré,” [Tunisia: Pardoned by the presidency, Jabeur Mejri has been released] Al Huffington Post, October 15, 2014, http://huff.to/11Wj9S.
\end{itemize}
Less controversially, authorities have also arrested several individuals for advocating extremism or cyberattacks:

- On July 25, 2014 the Interior Ministry announced the arrest of a Facebook page administrator who “adopts and spreads Takfiri-Salafi-jihadist ideology” and confiscated his computer.\(^43\) In August of the same year, police arrested six more individuals for “celebrating the murder of Tunisian soldiers” and “incitement to terror acts” on social networking sites.\(^44\) Clear details about the cases were not available.

- On February 10, 2015 police arrested six members of the hacker group Fallaga for hacking national and foreign websites.\(^45\) As part of the #JesenuispasCharlie cyberattack targeting French websites, the group hacked the website of the National Syndicate of Tunisian Journalists for issuing a statement in support of Charlie Hebdo. They also hacked the website of the ATI. The group stated that hacking the ATI website was not “politically motivated” but was rather aimed at highlighting the security vulnerabilities of government-run websites.\(^46\) Though the Interior Ministry had described them a takfiri group, accusing other Muslims as being apostates, Fallaga denied any support for terrorism.\(^47\) Three of the hackers have since been released, while three remained in detention as of mid-2015.

### Surveillance, Privacy, and Anonymity

Surveillance remains a strong concern in Tunisia due to the country’s history of abuse under the Ben Ali regime. While there have not been any reports of extralegal government surveillance in the post-Ben Ali period, the deep-packet inspection (DPI) technology once employed to monitor the internet and intercept communications is still in place, sparking worries that the technology can be reactivated if desired.

The creation of a new government surveillance agency in November 2013 raised concerns among human rights and privacy groups, particularly given the lack of transparency surrounding its duties. The Technical Telecommunications Agency (ATT) was established by decree n°2013-4506 under the former administration of Ali Laarayedh. The decree tasks the ATT with “providing technical support to judicial investigations into information and communication crimes,” but neither defines nor specifies these crimes.\(^48\) Netizens immediately criticized the decision for its lack of parliamentary scrutiny, as well as a failure to provide the body with a clear and limited mandate, with independence from government interference, and with mechanisms to guarantee user rights.\(^49\) According to Article 5 of the decree, the ATT’s activities are not open to public scrutiny.

The ICT minister is charged with appointing the ATT’s general director and department directors. An oversight committee was established “to ensure the proper functioning of the national systems for

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\(^44\) Tunisian Interior Ministry, Facebook post: a statement on the arrest of 6 “takfiris” over incitement to terror acts on social networking, August 12, 2014, [http://on.fb.me/1XqSv2W](http://on.fb.me/1XqSv2W).

\(^45\) Tunisian Interior Ministry, Facebook video post: the arrest of Fallaga hackers, February 10, 2015, [http://on.fb.me/1EFNai7](http://on.fb.me/1EFNai7).


controlling telecommunications traffic in the framework of the protection of personal data and civil liberties.” The committee mainly consists of government representatives appointed from the ministries of ICT, human rights and transitional justice, interior, national defense, and justice.

Despite fierce criticism, the ATT started operating in “full capacity” in the summer of 2014 after the appointment of Jamel Zenkri, who previously served at the ATI and the INT, as general-director. Responsibilities for conducting internet surveillance for the purposes of law enforcement have thus been transferred to the ATT from the ATI, which often assisted the judiciary in investigating cybercrime cases despite the absence of a law requiring it to do so.

Fears over the ATT have been boosted by the fact that Tunisia’s transitional authorities have been slow to initiate any legal reforms that would protect citizens from mass surveillance. Draft amendments by Tunisia’s Data Protection Authority (INPDP) to amend the country’s 2004 privacy law have not been discussed by the constituent assembly or by the new parliament elected in October 2014.

Laws that limit online anonymity also remain a concern in the post-Ben Ali era. In particular, Articles 9 and 87 of the 2001 Telecommunication Code ban the use of encryption and provide a sanction of up to five years in prison for the unauthorized use of such techniques. While there have been no reports of these laws being enforced, their continuing existence underscores the precarious nature of Tunisia’s newfound and relatively open internet environment.

**Intimidation and Violence**

In addition to legal prosecution, users must also be wary of extralegal attempts to silence online activists. While in prison, Jabeur Mejri had reportedly received death threats. In a statement published on September 23, 2014, Mejri’s support committee reported that one prisoner shouted: “He is an atheist [referring to Mejri], and I will kill him just like we murdered Chokri Belaid,” a secular politician assassinated in 2013. In response to these threats, the prison’s administration transferred Mejri to another cell to ensure his safety.

Online threats are also present in the country. On January 5, 2015, liberal blogger Lina Ben Mhenni received death threats from a Twitter user under the handle “@ISIStunisie.” The account has since been suspended. This was not the first time she has been harassed; threats led to Ben Mhenni being placed under police protection in August 2013.

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55 Lina Ben Mhenni Facebook page, Facebook post, January 5, 2015, [http://on.fb.me/11ZubTE](http://on.fb.me/11ZubTE).
Technical Attacks

Since Ben Ali’s fall, there have been no reported incidents of cyberattacks perpetrated by the government to silence ICT users. However, other groups have employed these methods to intimidate activists and organizations with whom they disagree.

- On July 10, 2014, a cyberattack targeting the website of the independent electoral commission temporarily suspended voter registration via SMS and the online registration platform.  
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- On November 17, 2014, the video page of Radio Mosaique FM was targeted by a cyberattack aiming to remove its videos. The attack was reportedly led by group of “revolutionary” hackers targeting sites linked to the Democratic Constitutional Rally (RCD), the former ruling party of Ben Ali.  
  [58]

- On December 31, 2014, the group Fallaga launched cyberattacks targeting government websites such as those of the ministries of culture, transportation, and women to call for the release of blogger Yassine Ayari.  
  [59] One week earlier, the group also targeted the website of the election observer NGO Mourakiboun, accusing the group of turning a blind eye to “gross violations” during the elections.  
  [60]