**UPR Intervention for Tunisia, 13th Session May 22, 2012  
(As Drafted)**

The United States warmly welcomes **[head of delegation]** and the Tunisian delegation to the UPR Working Group.

We salute the Tunisian people for initiating a transition to democracy after 23 years of dictatorship. Tunisia’s example has inspired a wave of democratization across the Middle East.  
  
We commend Tunisia’s decision to release detained journalists, bloggers, and political prisoners, and applaud these important steps toward respect for the freedom of expression.

We also applaud Tunisia’s October 2011 Constituent Assembly election, widely lauded as free and fair.   
  
To account for the crimes of the past, the Tunisian government has launched a Fact Finding Commission on Recent Abuses, and we commend the government’s initial efforts. However, we are concerned that the Commission’s work has not been fully supported by all government Ministries, and that the public – including civil society groups – has not been fully brought into the process.

While Tunisia’s record on media freedom has dramatically improved since the fall of the Ben Ali regime, we are concerned that recent court cases – including one for a blasphemy charge – are having a chilling effect on free speech.

We acknowledge the complexity of defining the role of religion in society and government, and we commend the many statements made by government officials lauding tolerance and peaceful dialogue. We are concerned, however, with several recent blasphemy cases and the on-going controversy surrounding religious attire on public university campuses.

Lastly, we are concerned that recent protests in Tunisia have involved violence, sometimes between police and demonstrators.

Bearing in mind these concerns, the United States makes the following recommendations:

1. Develop and enact a comprehensive public outreach plan for transitional justice processes, including full participation by all relevant ministries in that outreach.
2. Revise remnants of Ben Ali-era legal code that stifle the freedoms of expression, assembly, and religion so as to fully protect those rights, in accordance with international human rights law.
3. Make improvements to the security and justice sectors, including in areas of law, doctrine, training, and equipment, that are necessary to protect demonstrators, bring official perpetrators of abuses to justice, and ensure that force is applied only in a manner that is responsible and consistent with international human rights obligations.

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