



The Arab Spring was a series of pro-democracy uprisings that enveloped several largely Muslim countries, including Tunisia, Morocco, Syria, Libya, Egypt and Bahrain. The events in these nations generally began in the spring of 2011, which led to the name. However, the political and social impact of these popular uprisings remains significant today, years after many of them ended.

The Arab Spring was a loosely related group of protests that ultimately resulted in regime changes in countries such as Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. Not all of the movements, however, could be deemed successful—at least if the end goal was increased democracy and cultural freedom.

In fact, for many countries enveloped by the revolts of the Arab Spring, the period since has been hallmarked by increased instability and oppression.

Given the significant impact of the Arab Spring throughout northern Africa and the Middle East, it's easy to forget the series of large-scale political and social movements arguably began with a single act of defiance.

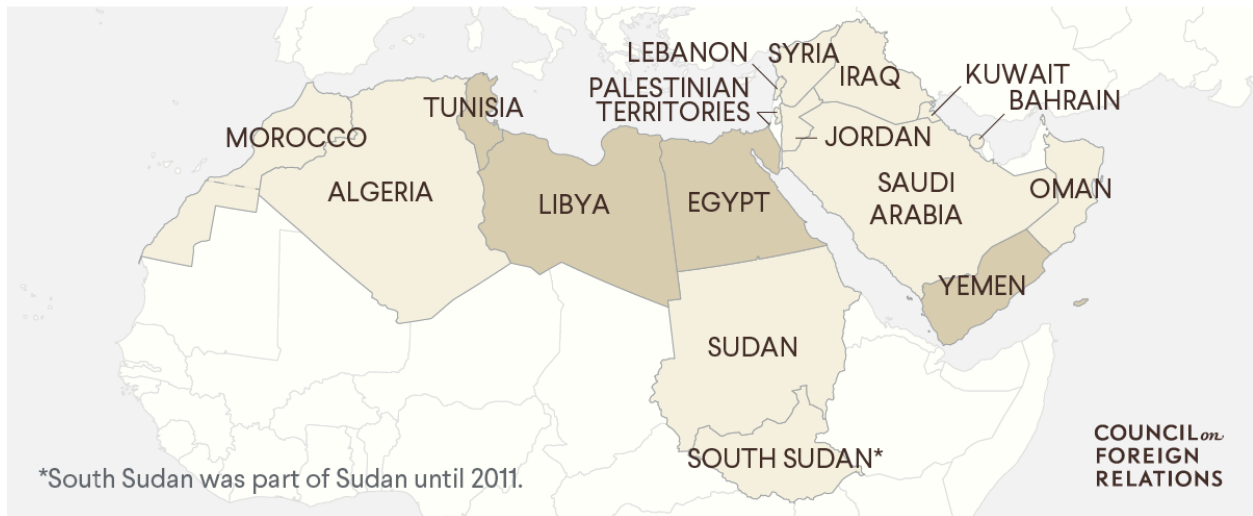
Why the Name 'Arab Spring'?

The name "Arab Spring" is a reference to the Revolutions of 1848—also known as the "People's Spring"—when political upheavals swept Europe. Ever since, "spring" has been used to describe movements toward democracy like Czechoslovakia's 1968 "Prague Spring." Western media began popularizing the term "Arab Spring" in 2011.

Video: [Here's how the Arab Spring Started and How it Affected the World.](https://youtu.be/Fgcd5ZcxDys?si=eZ06nU8dLj9zO97m)
<https://youtu.be/Fgcd5ZcxDys?si=eZ06nU8dLj9zO97m>

Where the Arab Spring Happened

● Leadership change ● Protests but no leadership change



The Jasmine Revolution

The Arab Spring began in December 2010 when Tunisian street vendor Mohammed Bouazizi set himself on fire to protest the arbitrary seizing of his vegetable stand by police over failure to obtain a permit.

Bouazizi's sacrificial act served as a catalyst for the so-called Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia.

The street protests that ensued in Tunis, the country's capital, eventually prompted authoritarian president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali to abdicate his position and flee to Saudi Arabia. He had ruled the country with an iron fist for more than 20 years.

Activists in other countries in the region were inspired by the regime change in Tunisia—the country's first democratic parliamentary elections were held in October 2011—and began to protest similar authoritarian governments in their own nations.

The participants in these grassroots movements sought increased social freedoms and greater participation in the political process. Notably, this includes the Tahrir Square uprisings in Cairo, Egypt and similar protests in Bahrain.

However, in some cases, these protests morphed into full-scale civil wars, as evidenced in countries such as Libya, Syria and Yemen.

Arab Spring Aftermath

While the uprising in Tunisia led to some improvements in the country from a human-rights perspective, not all of the nations that witnessed such social and political upheaval in the spring of 2011 changed for the better.

Most notably, in Egypt, where early changes arising from the Arab Spring gave many hope after the ouster of President Hosni Mubarak, authoritarian rule has apparently returned. Following the controversial election of Mohamed Morsi in 2012, a coup led by defense minister Abdel Fattah el-Sisi installed the latter as president in 2013, and he remains in power today.



Muammar Gaddafi



In Libya, meanwhile, authoritarian dictator Colonel Muammar Qaddafi was overthrown in October 2011, during a violent civil war, and he was tortured (literally dragged through the streets) and executed by opposition fighters. Video footage of his death was seen by millions online.

However, since Qaddafi's downfall, Libya has remained in a state of civil war, and two opposing governments effectively rule separate regions of the country. Libya's civilian population has suffered significantly during the years of political upheaval, with violence in the streets and access to food, resources and healthcare services severely limited.

This has contributed, in part, to the ongoing worldwide refugee crisis, which has seen thousands flee Libya, most often by boat across the Mediterranean Sea, with hopes of new opportunities in Europe.

Bashar al Assad



Similarly, the civil war in Syria that began in the aftermath of the Arab Spring lasted for several years, forcing many to leave the country to seek refuge in Turkey, Greece and throughout Western Europe. For a time, the militant group ISIS had declared a caliphate—a nation governed by Islamic law—in northeastern Syria.

The group executed thousands of people, and many others fled the region in fear of their lives.

Yet, although ISIS has largely been defeated in Syria, the oppressive regime of long-time dictator Bashar al Assad remains in power in the country.

In addition, the ongoing civil war in Yemen can also be traced to the Arab Spring. The country's infrastructure has suffered significant damage, and the conflict has devolved into tribal warfare.

And in Bahrain, peaceful pro-democracy protests in the capital Manama in 2011 and 2012 were violently suppressed by the government of King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa. Officially, the country has a constitutional monarchy form of government, but personal freedoms remain limited.

The plight of the Bahraini people was dramatically portrayed in the documentary *Shouting in the Dark*, which was released in 2012. (It is a 50-minute documentary available on YouTube).

Two key videos that validate the events that took place:-

Lessons learned from the Arab Spring: Are Things Better?
<https://youtu.be/uSCsHqiKNio?si=99CEp5ZSUcyTUNr4>

Arab Spring: Opportunity or Disaster for Women?
https://youtu.be/MVtAQqld3_c?si=CK3Fv3xbYS1F37p4

Arab Spring Timeline

December 17, 2010: Mohamed Bouazizi sets himself on fire outside a local government office in an act of protest after being arrested by police for not having a permit to run a vegetable stall. Street protests begin soon after his death throughout the country.

January 14, 2011: Tunisian president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali resigns and flees to Saudi Arabia.

January 25, 2011: The first coordinated mass protests are held in Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt.

February 2011: Protestors in several predominantly Muslim countries stage “Days of Rage” to oppose authoritarian governments and push for democratic reforms.

February 11, 2011: Egypt’s Mubarak steps down.

March 15, 2011: Pro-democracy protests begin in Syria.

May 22, 2011: Police beat thousands of pro-democracy protesters in Morocco.

July 1, 2011: Moroccan voters approve constitutional changes that limit the power of the country’s monarchy.

August 20, 2011: Rebels in Libya launch battle to take control of Tripoli.

September 23, 2011: Yemenis hold a “Million Man March,” a large-scale pro-democracy protest.

October 20, 2011: Libyan dictator Colonel Muammar Qaddafi is captured by rebels, tortured and killed.

October 23, 2011: Tunisia holds first democratic parliamentary elections.

November 23, 2011: Yemen dictator Ali Abdullah Saleh signs a power-sharing agreement. He resigns altogether in February 2012 and is later killed, in 2017, while the country is still engulfed in a civil war.

November 28, 2011: Egypt holds first democratic elections for parliament. In June 2012, Morsi is elected president, but is removed from power by coup in July 2013.

Sources:

<https://www.history.com/topics/middle-east/arab-spring>

<https://teachmideast.org/the-arab-spring/>