

Classified by DAS, A/GIS, DoS on 02/19/2016 ~ Class: CONFIDENTIAL
 ~ Reason: 1.4(B), 1.4(D) ~ Declassify on: 01/15/2026

RELEASE IN PART
 B1,1.4(B),1.4(D),B5

From: Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>
Sent: Saturday, January 15, 2011 12:32 PM
To: H; Abedin, Huma
Subject: Re: Tunisia

Jeff believes it would be helpful. This is his assessment:

I've been in touch more or less continually with the Tunisian Ambassador here, who suddenly seems as though his own handcuffs have been at least loosened. He in turn is in touch with Morjane. I know they'd welcome a call. Their requests to us have to be handled carefully. They are trying to restore calm, which on the one hand is a good thing -- violent riots and looting aren't inherently good things, especially now that Ben Ali has left -- but on the other hand could be, if we're too aggressive, part of a campaign to establish "Ben Ali Lite." The "system" has an interest in self preservation (and I suspect Ben Ali left because the army and party bosses told him they were jettisoning him). We have an interest in opening up political space.

While the transfer of power to the Parliamentary Speaker puts the interim presidency in more of a gray bureaucrat cog in the system than the PM is, there is a real plus: it acknowledges Ben Ali ain't comin' back. (Constitutionally, the PM assumes the interim presidency for a temporary absence or incapacity, while the Speaker gets it for a permanent departure or incapacity.) We're working with Embassy Tunis on ideas. This is a real opportunity

1.4(B)
 1.4(D)
 B1
 B5

----- Original Message -----

From: H <HDR22@clintonemail.com>
To: Abedin, Huma
Cc: Sullivan, Jacob J
Sent: Sat Jan 15 10:09:28 2011
Subject: Re: Tunisia

I discussed w Jake earlier today and told him I would do if that was still agreed as being helpful.

Also, is there any word on other calls I requested to be scheduled if possible?

----- Original Message -----

From: Abedin, Huma <AbedinH@state.gov>
To: H
Sent: Sat Jan 15 10:01:25 2011
Subject: Fw: Tunisia

Not sure if Jake sent you. I will fax you the call sheet. Let me know if you want to offer call time to Morjane.

From: Sanderson, Janet A
To: Sullivan, Jacob J; Feltman, Jeffrey D
Cc: Gray, Gordon; Schlicher, Ronald L; Abedin, Huma
Sent: Fri Jan 14 22:23:07 2011
Subject: RE: Tunisia

Jake,

Jeff is at the Syrian Ambassador's dinner for Robert Ford, so here is a brief summary of today's events in Tunisia:

President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali left Tunis this afternoon Tunis time following another full day of demonstrations in the capital, some of which turned violent. Neither Ben Ali's extensive political concessions from the previous night, nor his decision this morning to fire his cabinet and call for elections appeared to appease the public. As the situation deteriorated during the day, reports circulated widely that the army had assumed control and surrounded several buildings. Crowds continued to gather in the capital during the day, and there were reports of demonstrations in other parts of the country, as well as additional deaths. (Although the government reports that 23 people have died in protest related violence during the past month, observers believe that figure is considerably higher.)

In a brief appearance on state television Friday evening, Prime Minister Mohammed Ghannouchi announced that he had assumed the powers of the presidency for an interim period in accordance with the Tunisian constitution, pending expedited elections. He was accompanied by the Speaker of the Parliament Mbazza, who constitutionally is in line to succeed the President but who has apparently deferred to the respected Ghannouchi. Ghannouchi, an economic technocrat, has served as Prime Minister for 20 years. Ambassador Gray will seek an appointment with the Prime Minister/Interim President tomorrow; it is unclear when that appointment will be granted..

Despite rumors that Ben Ali would flee to Paris, he and his family have now landed in Jeddah. (Ambassador al Jubeir asked that we not confirm Ben Ali's arrival in Saudi Arabia before the Saudis do so.) According to Embassy Paris, the French President refused to permit him to land in France, fearing a reaction from France's large Tunisian expat population and noting that new French laws might make his stay uncomfortable. It is unclear if Ben Ali sought refuge anywhere else.

Tunis remains under tight nighttime curfew and a government-imposed state of emergency is in effect. According to press reports, scattered demonstrations continued throughout the evening. Additional reports indicate that the military has now been called into parts of Tunis to deal with looting and that it has taken control of the airport. With Embassy personnel in their homes for curfew, we have yet to confirm these reports but the role of the military will be critical in the days to come as the new government attempts to find its footing. The official community is accounted for and the Embassy remains in contact with the small American community resident in Tunisia.

International reaction to Ben Ali's departure has been largely positive, if somewhat cautious. We note that the next days and weeks are critical: the new government faces enormous challenges and how it deals with a society clearly deeply divided and distrustful of authority, while restoring calm, will say much about prospects for Tunisia's future.

Jeff contacted Tunisian Ambassador Tekaya this afternoon to discuss the situation. Tekaya passed along a message from FM Morjane, reiterating the new government's commitment to restoring calm, transparent elections and addressing the needs of the people. [REDACTED]

1.4(B)
1.4(D)
B1

[REDACTED]

B5

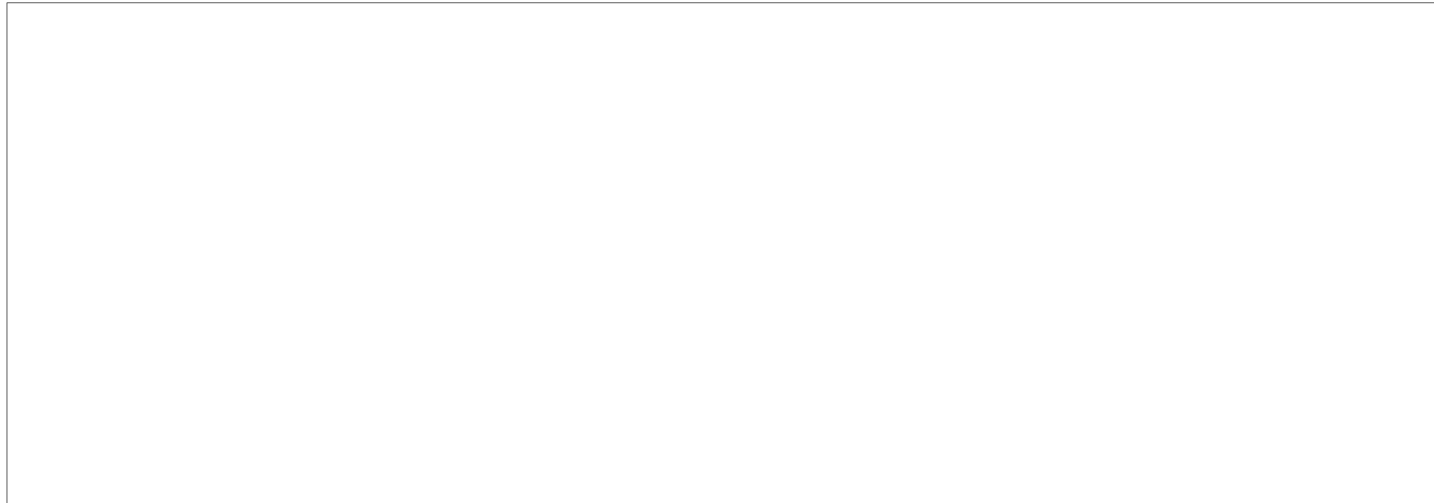
[REDACTED] The White House issued a statement this afternoon appealing for calm and calling for the government to address the needs of the Tunisian people.

Proposed talking points for S call to FM Morjane

Purpose of Call: To discuss the recent constitutional transfer of power, and assure him that the Tunisian government and people have the support of the United States during this difficult time.

[REDACTED]

B5



Let us know if we can provide any further information.

Janet

From: Sullivan, Jacob J
Sent: Friday, January 14, 2011 8:13 PM
To: Feltman, Jeffrey D
Cc: Gray, Gordon; Sanderson, Janet A; Schlicher, Ronald L; Abedin, Huma
Subject: Re: Tunisia

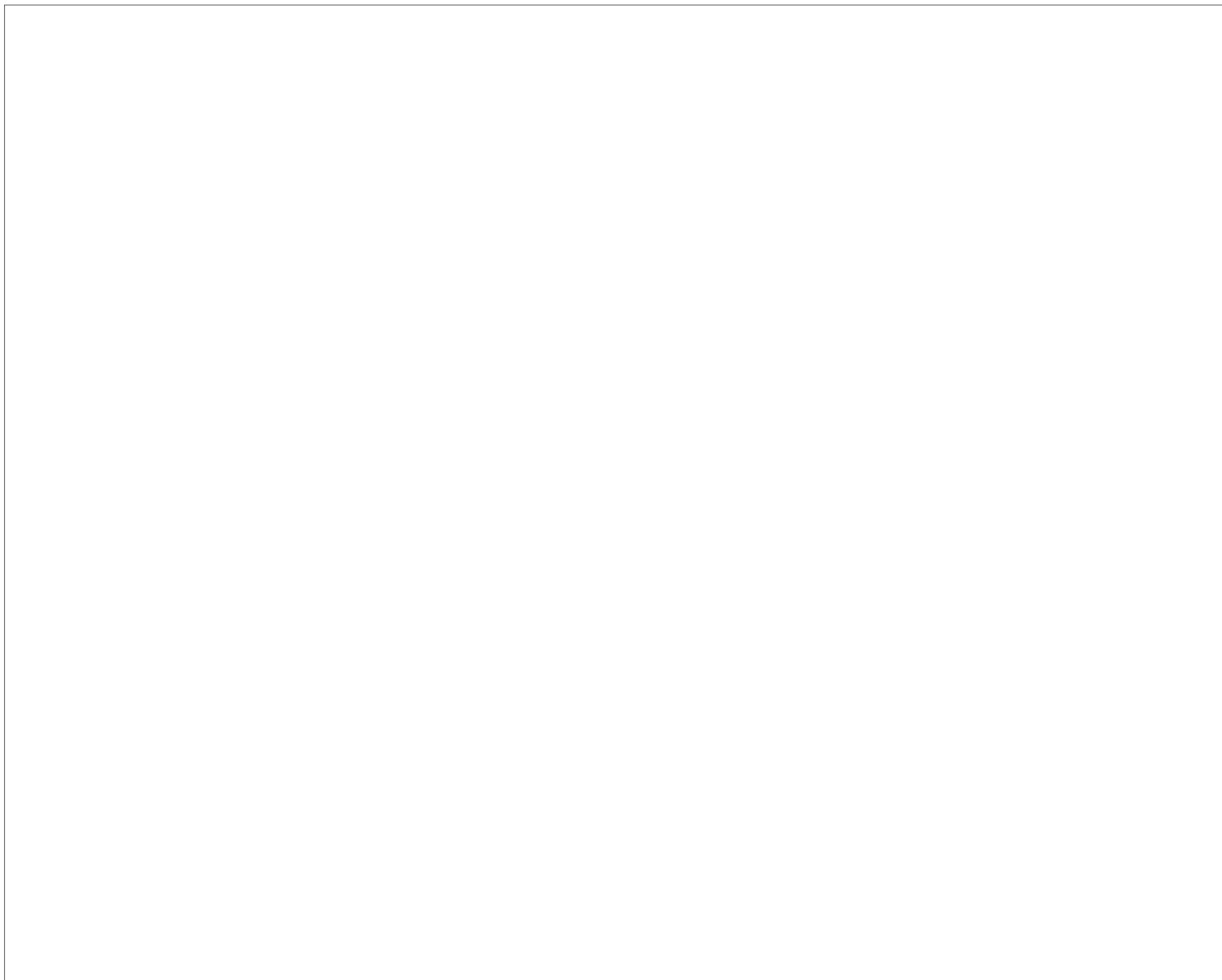
Can you send a low-side email w an full update on situation as well as call pts?

From: Feltman, Jeffrey D
To: Sullivan, Jacob J
Cc: Gray, Gordon; Sanderson, Janet A; Schlicher, Ronald L
Sent: Fri Jan 14 14:36:22 2011
Subject: Tunisia

Jake, a proposed statement on Tunisia is being sent forward now. But given what happened in Tunisia today, we believe it is important for S to reach out to FM Morjane now and express our support. This seismic change is going to be difficult and the US should stand up with them. We are working a memo through the system, but it will take a while - hence my email to you now. As disgusting as we found the Ben Ali regime, it is important that the interim government

gets off to a solid start, acting quickly to restore calm and security to the streets. It then can begin implement long overdue political and economic reforms so necessary to the country's stability. Our support to these endeavors are critical and an early outreach to the FM – and other gestures – will be important in setting the stage.

Suggested talking points for S



B5

Jeffrey Feltman

Assistant Secretary
Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs
Department of State

202-647-7209