

Security in Tunisia Is No. 1 Priority

What will be the long term effects of Tunisia's government sacrifices to ensure greater security?

While the country might be handling domestic security well, there is a lingering threat posed by the apparent permanency of emergency powers.

The 2011 Tunisian revolution originally excited everyone as it seemed to be the only success story in the bleak times but soon their joy was dampened in the realization that there was modern day terrorism to deal with.



In June last year, a lone gunman fatally shot dozens in Sousse only a few months after brutal attacks at Bardo museum in Tunis. These events were a major blow to emerging post revolution security efforts.

The people of Tunisia cannot be blamed for having found freedom from dictatorial rule at the very time when their neighbor Libya was collapsing and ISIL rising like a phoenix. Statistics show that Tunisia has the most people fighting for ISIS with 5000 having traveled to Iraq and Syria to fight from there.

Tourism is at the heart of Tunisia's economy meaning that the government must make it safe if they want to keep the economy stable. **With so many security challenges it can be difficult to attract tourists who bring in most of Tunisia's foreign exchange.**

Visitors to the country will notice that there are CCTV cameras everywhere, police with automatic weapons and bag scanners in every hotel lounge. The security forces agree that this is necessary in the wake of terrorism targeting the tourism industry. Tunisia has dedicated most of its resources into security. However, they have the smallest army in the region.



Due to poor coordination among security forces, the shooting in Sousse lasted hours; claiming several lives but the new city governor says that these mistakes have been addressed. They now have more manpower and more access to intelligence necessary to prevent any future attacks.

There is increased military presence around resorts and places that tourists love to visit. These security personnel have advanced equipment to help them protect the people from terrorists.

The country hopes to attract 5.5 million tourists this year as it has taken necessary measures to keep the visitors safe. All this doesn't put Tunisia in the clear as nations like Britain still warn their citizens against traveling there unless it is necessary. Despite clear efforts to improve the security of tourists, British foreign office travel advice feels that further attacks seem likely in the country.

While these travel advisories are enough to keep tourists away from Tunisia they also make it hard to get any travel insurance. This affects the industry in that tour operators have to cancel trips in a country where youth unemployment is a major issue. Unemployed idle youth are highly likely to be recruited as foreign fighters for ISIL and other terrorist groups.

Ironically, a great amount out of the 5.5 million tourists that visited the country last year were Russian tourists who are avoiding Turkey for political reasons and Egypt due to the latest attack on a passenger plane in November.

This is a sign of the unpredictable near future making it important to measure long term effects of the government's sacrifices to ensure security. **The uncertainty means that if anything goes wrong, tourists will set their sights on a safer place.**



The country is still in a state of emergency after the suicide attack against the police in November. Human Rights Watch believes that the security measures Tunisia is taking could compromise the rights of citizens. This doesn't seem to bother the city governors though, as they believe that security is more important than freedom. A survey showed that many agreed with the statement that given current circumstances in the Middle East, stability is more important than democracy.

What this goes to prove is that a few well planned, high profile terrorist attacks do have a lasting effect on a country. Tunisia's neighbor Libya is burning but she seems to hold it together just fine. The bigger question though, is whether trading off political freedoms for security of visitors is really worth it in the long term. Are they taking things too far or are all the security measures necessary to preserve Tunisia's economy?

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