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Congress of the United States House of Representatives

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July 26, 2021

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2100 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

I am writing with severe concern regarding the actions taken by the President of Tunisia Kais Saied within the past 24 hours. As of this writing, President Saied has announced a state of emergency whereby he has suspended the parliament, lifted parliamentary immunity, dismissed the Prime Minister, and announced that he will rule by decree. In addition, as of this morning, Tunisian military forces have blocked the entry of members of parliament into the parliament building, and security forces have raided news organizations in the country. By all measures, it appears that the actions taken by President Saied constitute, at the very least, an authoritarian power grab.

I was grateful to visit Tunisia last year and see with my own eyes the fruits of the country's democratic transition. In January, Tunisia celebrated ten years since its Jasmine Revolution ushered in the only success story of the Arab Spring and the only democracy in the Arab world. In recent months however, antidemocratic rhetoric has increased by both President Saied, as well as by a number of political parties opposing Saied. An economic downturn the COVID-19 pandemic have also placed extreme stress on Tunisia's democracy.

The success of Tunisian democracy must be a key national security objective of the United States. Tunisia's success has been a beacon of hope exemplifying that democracy, rule of law, and open markets, are possible in the region. The power-sharing between successive Tunisian Presidents, Prime Ministers, and parliaments, over the past decade, have been a model for the region in constitutionally based governance. If Tunisian democracy were to fall apart, it would not only threaten U.S. security and economic partnerships in North Africa, but also provide an argument for authoritarian forces in the region especially Salafi-jihadi terrorist organizations such as ISIS and al-Qaeda, that democracy is a failed system of government.

While the White House has expressed concern, unfortunately, the Administration has yet to issue a clear statement condemning the actions of President Saied. Refusing to act in Tunisia will lead to devastating consequences which will not only destabilize Tunisia but also could lead to further destabilization of North Africa.

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Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

As the Chairman of the Republican Study Committee's National Security and Foreign Affairs Task Force, I am committed to standing for democracy and human rights across the world. I request that you answer the following questions no later than at 5:00 PM on Friday, August 13th, 2021:

- (1) Why has the Biden administration failed to condemn President Saied's authoritarian power grab in Tunisia?
- (2) Does Tunisia continue to qualify for the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) grant announced this month following President Saied's power grab in Tunisia?
- (3) Will the Biden administration pledge to work with Congress to consider conditioning or cutting assistance to Tunisia in response to President Saied's power grab?
- (4) Will the State Department send a high ranking and empowered diplomat in Tunisia to reach a political solution between all sides to reverse the actions taken by President Saied?
- (5) Will the State Department be making a determination as to whether President Saied's actions meet the legal threshold of coup? If so, when will that determination be made available to Congress?

Sincerely,



Joe Wilson
Member of Congress