

Answer to Question

Tunisian President's Step to Suspend Parliament and Dismiss the Prime Minister!

(Translated)

Question:

(Reda Gharslawi took the constitutional oath before President Kais Saied to run the Ministry of Interior, after he held the position of advisor, as in Al-Jazeera's report on 30/7/2021), and Tunisian President Kais Saeed had announced in a speech broadcast on state television on Sunday evening, 25/7/2021, following an emergency meeting with military and security leaders, the suspension of the Parliament's activities and dismissal of Prime Minister Hisham Al-Mashishi from his duties based on Article 80 of the Tunisian Constitution, lifting the immunity of members of Parliament, and announcing his dismissal of the Ministers of Defense and Justice, and his assumption of executive power with the help of a Prime Minister appointed by himself ... Why did the Tunisian president take this step? What is the international reaction? Does this mean that the international conflict has moved strongly towards Tunisia?

Answer:

To clarify the most likely opinion on these issues, we review the following:

1- The crisis between Tunisian President Kais Saied and the government and parliament began at the beginning of this year, as Prime Minister Hisham Al-Mashishi announced on 16/1/2021 a cabinet reshuffle that included 11 ministerial portfolios out of 25 portfolios. The Tunisian President rejected the ministerial amendments, including the dismissal of some ministers close to him. Saied said on 25/1/2021: "The recent ministerial reshuffle made by Prime Minister Hisham Al-Mashishi to the government did not respect the procedures stipulated in the constitution, specifically what was stipulated in Chapter 92, which is the necessity of Deliberation in the Council of Ministers if it comes to introducing an amendment to the government structure, in addition to other breaches (he did not mention them)." He said, "Some of those suggested in the constitutional amendment have cases against them or have files of conflict of interest. Whoever is involved in a case cannot take the oath, and taking the oath is not a formal procedure, but rather a fundamental procedure. And he expressed his dissatisfaction with "the absence of women from the list of proposed ministers..." (AFP, 25/1/2021). The decisions of the President came while Tunisia is suffering from a stifling economic crisis, made worse by the repercussions of the Coronavirus pandemic, hitting the country hard, with warnings of an imminent collapse of the health system, which necessitated receiving urgent medical aid from countries during the past days. The Tunisian Institute of Statistics has published that the Tunisian economy shrunk by 8.8 percent in 2020, (Data from the "governmental" Tunisian Institute of Statistics showed, on Monday, that the country's economy recorded a record decline of 8.8 percent in 2020. The Tunisian economy, which depends largely on tourism, was severely affected by the repercussions of the Coronavirus pandemic... The Statistics Institute said that the unemployment rate rose to 17.4 percent in the fourth quarter of 2020, compared to 16.2 percent recorded in the third quarter of the same year... (Anadolu Agency, 15/2/2021).

2- On 25/7/2021, the Tunisian Presidency published a statement on its official Facebook page, that said: "After consulting the Prime Minister and the Speaker of the Assembly of People's Representatives, and pursuant to Article 80 of the Constitution, the President of the Republic, Kais Saied, took the following decisions, today, 25/7/2021 in order to preserve the integrity of the country and the country's security and independence, and to ensure the normal functioning of the state's institutes: "Dismissing the Prime Minister, Mr. Hisham Al-Mashishi, Suspending the work and powers of the Parliament for a period of 30 days; lifting the parliamentary immunity of all members of the Assembly of the Representatives of the People. The President of the Republic assumes the executive authority with the help of a government headed by Prime Minister and

appointed by the President of the Republic." She added: "And in the coming hours, an order will be issued regulating these exceptional measures that were necessitated by circumstances, and which will be lifted when their causes disappear... The presidency calls on the Tunisian people not to slip behind the advocates of chaos." (Dubai CNN, 26/7/2021). Saied had stressed that his decisions are ("not a suspension of the constitution, and not a departure from constitutional legitimacy" (Al Jazeera Net, 26/7/2021). And Tunisian President Kais Saied announced Friday that he will not turn into a dictator, considering that ("He knows very well the constitutional texts, he respects and has studied them."). Earlier, the official news agency indicated that the judiciary had opened an investigation with four members of the Ennahda party, including Ghannouchi's personal bodyguard, on charges of attempting to carry out acts of violence in front of Parliament, and the representative in the Tunisian Parliament, Yassin Al-Ayari." (FRANCE 24 - AFP - Reuters, 30/7/2021).

3- On his official Facebook page on 26/7/2021, the Speaker of the Tunisian Parliament, Rached Ghannouchi, denied that the President of the Republic consulted him. He wrote: "The Speaker of the Assembly of People's Representatives denies that he was consulted to activate Chapter 80 of the Constitution. He was never consulted by Kais Saied, the President of the Republic about activating Article 80 of the Constitution. Anything else is a false claim." On Monday morning, the army prevented the Speaker and members of the House of Representatives from entering the parliament's headquarters and informed them that they had instructions to close Parliament. Ghannouchi stated, ("I am the Speaker of the Council standing in front of the institution that I head and the army prevents me from entering it." He accused Kais Saied of carrying out a "coup against the revolution." (Al-Jazeera, 27/7/2021), but Saied said: (His recent decisions are not a coup attempt against the constitution and that he does not intend to carry out a coup against the constitution and legitimacy in the country, and that the recent decisions are completely legal and will end as soon as the imminent danger on the country is removed." (Tunisian Presidency Facebook page, 27/7/2021). Then, on 30/7/2021, Reda Gharlawi gave the constitutional oath before President Kais Saied to run the Ministry of the Interior, after he was a consultant, as Al-Jazeera published on 30/7/2021.

4- As for the reactions of the major active countries in Tunisia, they were as follows:

a- America: America does not have an effective political influence in Tunisia. The existing political class is originally affiliated with Britain, then France was able to enter with its influence as well, and thus the politicians are within the European influence; i.e. Britain and France. America has tried to intervene to some extent through military aid and civil society aid. As for military aid, the United States has tried this method to gain influence in Tunisia. For decades, under the pretext of terrorism, the United States has been arming, training and working with the Tunisian army. The United States funded the Tunisian military under the International Military Education and Training (IMET) framework and through the Counterterrorism Fellowship Program, U.S. assistance amounted to approximately \$2.7 billion between 2012 and 2016. Tunisia was then designated a non-NATO ally in 2015. On 1/10/2020, US Secretary of Defense Mark Esper signed a 10-year military cooperation agreement with Tunisia. Esper explained in a speech after his meeting with President Kais Saied, ("We look forward to expanding this relationship to help Tunisia protect its seaports and land borders, deter terrorism and keep the destructive efforts of authoritarian regimes away from your country." (Africa News, 1/10/2020)

As for the method of civil society assistance, it is undertaken by the US Embassy in Tunisia within the framework of the Good Governance and Anti-Corruption Support Program in Tunisia funded by the US Embassy with a value of \$5.6 million.

"The National Center for State Courts (NCSC) has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Relations with Constitutional Bodies and Civil Society to develop an electronic platform for civil society organizations. This platform will contribute in enabling civil society organizations to register remotely, in addition to preparing the financial and literary reports of the organization in order to enhance efficiency and accountability mechanisms.." (US Embassy in Tunis, December 20, 2020)

But these methods may serve as an entry point for influence in a country if there is a political vacuum and not one that has the influence of a veteran state such as Britain, in addition to the European Union, especially France and Germany, which are rising to catch up with Britain... Therefore, these American actions do not constitute a violation of British or European influence in Tunisia at present. The army is very small and plays a secondary role in the country's politics. Therefore, it still needs more time to find loyal agents for it and build the capacity of the army to play an influential role in Tunisia, and this may take time... meaning that the American role is not effective in Tunisia so far, but rather it is a general role under the pretext of calling for democracy and human rights! However, America will not abandon its attempts to penetrate Tunisia...

b- Britain: It was completely in control of matters before the revolution. It ran the country behind a curtain through its agent Zine El Abidine and before him Bourguiba completely, and it did not have an international competitor in the true sense on the Tunisian scene, but rather sponsored opposition parties openly, such as hosting Rached Ghannouchi, the leader of the Ennahda movement, to absorb the "Islamic" opposition and use this important card when needed... Britain was wandering in Tunisia. In 2015, the British Embassy in Tunisia invited Adam Smith International Consulting Company to provide advice to the government in Tunisia, train senior officers and formulate policies and the introduction of new laws. Likewise, Aktis Strategy Ltd was brought to Tunisia, a development contractor managing multi-million pounds contracts for the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Moreover, Britain was in control of the political class from Habib Bourguiba to Ben Ali to Beji Essebsi, who founded the Nidaa Tounes party in 2012. He was one of Habib Bourguiba's companions and an ally of Ben Ali, so he gathered all the old secular forces that the British used to collaborate with, and thus Britain maintained influence in the country by controlling the political class. However, with the departure of Zine El Abidine from the presidency in Tunisia, it has lost her strong agent but not losing the regime, because it has many agents in the state in Tunisia as well as outside the state.

But its political influence has become weaker than before, it was not strengthened by Ghannouchi's return from Britain, who is loyal to it, because the members and leaders of the Ennahda Party are not united over the leadership of Ghannouchi, especially since he has become secular. In Ennahda there are the sincere who have trust in Turkey and its president Erdogan, this created an obstacle to Britain in uniting the ranks of its followers, and even opened a way for American linked Turkey to influence Ennahda party from within and threatened Ghannouchi's leadership of the movement from within. In order to settle this matter, Ennahda movement began to reduce its "Islamism" to enhance the acceptance of secularists in it, so it separated the "Dawah" from the "political" and allied itself with Nidaa Tounes in 2014 to form a broad parliamentary front to support the British agent Beji Essebsi, but his party did not continue with its strength but rather it cracked. By examining Britain's position, it becomes clear that the events in Tunisia have shocked it.

British newspaper *The Guardian* published, according to Al Jazeera Net, on 27/7/2021, an article titled "The Guardian view on the coup in Tunisia: Spring turns into winter" and stated that Tunisia is witnessing a counter-revolution, considering that, ("The Security's storming of television stations is not a good sign at all" and stated that "citizens act indifferently and accept illiberal concepts because freedom and democracy did not achieve political stability and a prosperous economy. Instead, corruption, inflation and unemployment persisted, a third of families in Tunisia feared that they ran out of food last year after the outbreak of the Coronavirus epidemic, and that the government, according to leaked documents, was ready to cancel bread subsidies in negotiations for a \$4 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund, which is the fourth in 10 years, and the anger at the government's handling of the epidemic only worsened due to the level of the national debt, as loan payments are now six times the size of the country's health budget." That is, the regime was under American pressure through the International Monetary Fund. America is working to strengthen its presence in Tunisia through these pressures.").

With all this, it is clear that Britain's influence in Tunisia has actually weakened, and with the continuing circumstances that weaken it, France has found a door for it to enter strongly into Tunisia. Britain thought that French influence was not dangerous because it had always coordinated with France, especially against American influence, the two countries agreed on this.

However, Britain's Brexit has caused a major rift between them, and neither of them has made any effort to bridge it. Indeed, a number of European Union countries, especially Germany, have had a similar position to that of France, as they did not describe what happened in Tunisia as a coup as the British media did, (German Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Adebahr said today, Monday, that Berlin is concerned about the escalating political turmoil in Tunisia and calls for the country to be returned to the state of the constitutional legal order, however, it believes that what happened is not a "coup"...) (Sputnik, 7/26/2021).

C- France: As for the French position, it is the most striking:

- The new president, Kais Saied, was a great anti-colonialist, and his revolutionary proposals were acceptable to the Tunisians who elected him in the hope of eliminating the old guard that had been leading the state in the post-revolution period in one way or another. When President Saied took office in November 2019, the president of Tunisia became independent, at first, but since his mentality and his ilk were nestled in that he should rely on an international force, he found France's arms open to him and France dreamed of returning Tunisia as an active member of its Francophone system. From the evidence that France has indeed succeeded in making Kais Saied its agent is the following:

- With the Tunisian parliament divided into two parts; supporters of President Kais Saied, and those who are against him, which is the larger part. The Dignity Coalition (Karama) allied with the Ennahda movement within the parliamentary section against President Kais Saied and the most hostile to France within the Tunisian Parliament has begun working to disrupt French relations with Tunisia, so it proposed the idea of "France's apology" for its colonization of Tunisia for a parliamentary vote, and this was not raised during the presidency of Essebsi or Marzouki, which indicates that the opponents of President Saied want to embarrass the president and embarrass France in its relations with Tunisia, and to remind of its colonial enmity. But the Tunisian president has taken a position in which he is almost in defence of France contrary to his Electoral campaigns, Saied said: ("He who apologizes condemns himself," adding, "Let's look toward the future." France committed crimes in Tunisia, but under the protectorate system, not direct colonialism, as is the case for Algeria. He added that the Tunisians paid dearly the price of their independence and they deserve an apology, but announcing an apology is not enough. He continued, "Maybe an apology with projects and perhaps a new cooperation," considering that the list of apologies was not innocent, and wondering, "Why after 60 years do we ask for apologies?" (UltraTunisia website, 23/6/2020).

- ("In June 2020, Saied chose France as his first European destination after assuming his duties, thus consolidating the stability of relations with Paris." (Anatolia, 4/6/2021), and before the Tunisian President's visit to Paris and near it, senior French officials flocked to Tunisia what indicates the special relationship after Kais Saied assumed power (from this angle, the president's invitation to France may be a prelude to military cooperation projects between the two countries, especially as this visit preceded the visit of the French Defense Minister to Tunisia in May 2020 and before that the visit of the Chief of Staff of the French Land Army, there were no leaks of any news about the content of the two visits other than the usual statements about issues of common interest (Al-Jazeera, 18/6/2020).

- France continued to send its senior officials to Tunisia whenever the crises in Tunisia intensified and the need to support France intensified with it (French Prime Minister Jean Castex arrived in Tunisia on Wednesday evening on a visit accompanied by six ministers and will continue until Thursday, with the aim of strengthening relations with the African country, which is witnessing several crises and suffering from the Coronavirus pandemic...the talks will deal with the files of "economic partnership", "support" and "the health crisis", and the visit will include the signing of agreements, a tour of a workshop to build a network of high-speed trains in Tunisia, and a meeting on the digital field organized by Tunisian and French businessmen. (France 24, 2/6/2021).

- The President of Tunisia participated in the African Economic Summit organized by France in Paris (Russian Sputnik, 22/5/2021) and he did not announce any external results for Tunisia, except for the promise of some Corona vaccines, and this indicates that the visit was aimed at

discussing the Tunisian internal situation with the President Macron, where Saied talked at length about the internal situation in Tunisia in the French media. Perhaps the visit was in response to Ghannouchi's visits to Qatar, which he called "parliamentary diplomacy", meaning that each of them is strengthened by his masters and peer agents.

- France pledged 1.7 billion euros to support Tunisia in the form of aid and loans until 2022, to finance projects in the health sector and create job opportunities. French President Macron announced a 350 million euros loan during Tunisian President Kais Saied's visit to Paris in mid-2020... (The New Arab, 2/11/2020).

- Al-Jazeera Channel reported on 28/7/2021, in the clearest official statement issued by France, what French Foreign Minister Le Drian said: "France is following developments in Tunisia with the greatest interest." He was quoted by RT on 28/7/2021: (and according to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in a statement issued on Wednesday, that Le Drian spoke by phone today with his Tunisian counterpart, Othman Al-Jarandi. Le Drian stressed, according to the statement, "the importance of appointing, as soon as possible, a Prime Ministers, and the formation of a government that can meet the aspirations of the Tunisian people in light of the crisis the country is going through."

In conclusion: All indications of the raging international conflict in Tunisia indicate that it is a conflict between Britain, the one with former and great influence in Tunisia, and France, the new and unstable influence in it, and that America is still far from the main center in this conflict, despite that France and its agents want to be strengthened by America and its agents in the region, against Britain's agents in Tunisia. So you see it pushing its agents in Tunisia to America's agent in Egypt, but Egypt's influence in Tunisia is much less than the influence of the British agents in Algeria, which is directly adjacent to Tunisia. The Algerian president alluded to Tunisia and its relationship with France when he said: (Tebboune said that France takes Algeria seriously, addressing his words to the journalist, who asked him if France still views Algeria as a French province, correcting this by saying, "No, no" And continued: "You mean another country that they give orders to, it keeps quiet about and implements them". Some understood that the words of the Algerian president refer to Tunisia, especially after the statements of the President of the Republic, Kais Saied, during his visit to France, in which he said that Tunisia was not under colonialism but was under the protectorate... (El-Hosary website, 8/7/2021).

From all these international positions, it is clear that France is in conflict with Britain to seize power in Tunisia, but the dispute is within Europe, and America is not involved in the conflict. This is why in terms of terminology, we do not classify what is happening as an international conflict, due to the absence of America's effective role in it, but rather it is, as we said above, a conflict within Europe; especially France and Germany on one side, and Britain on the other... Therefore, it will not take the shape of a long conflict. Rather, the consensual formula will return, and it is likely that Britain's influence will not leave Tunisia. Britain has mastered the political cunning that France lacks... However, we pray to Allah, Al-Qawi Al-Aziz, to make the conflict between them severe, and to honour us by establishing the Khilafah (Caliphate) by our hands, so He honours Islam and the Muslims, and humiliates the Kufir and the Kuffar:

﴿وَيَوْمَئِذٍ يَفْرَحُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ * بِنَصْرِ اللَّهِ يَنْصُرُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ﴾

"...And that day the believers will rejoice * In the victory of Allah. He gives victory to whom He wills, and He is the Exalted in Might, the Merciful" [Ar-Rum: 4-5].

22 Dhul Hijjah 1442 AH

1/8/2021 CE