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## **Political Crisis in Tunisia: U.S. Response Options**

by [Sarah Feuer](#) / Jul 27, 2021

As the fragile Arab democracy faces its most serious test in nearly a decade, Washington should oppose any unconstitutional centralization of power, urge President Saied to clarify his roadmap for ending the impasse, and consider additional economic and medical assistance.

On July 25, following a day of anti-government demonstrations across the country, Tunisian president Kais Saied informed the public that he would be dismissing Prime Minister Hichem Mechichi, freezing parliament for thirty days, stripping its members of their legal immunities, and assuming all executive power alongside a new prime minister of his choosing. According to Saied, these extraordinary measures were required by the country's dismal situation and were fully in keeping with the constitution. The next day, the military blocked the entrance to parliament. In response, Speaker Rached Ghannouchi—who heads the main Islamist party, Ennahda—joined his fellow legislators outside the building to hold a parliamentary session via online video. Afterward, they announced their complete rejection of Saied's moves.

The president appears undeterred for now, dismissing the interior, justice, and defense ministers and decreeing a cessation of work in all public administrations except the military, security organizations, health services, and schools. The dramatic developments are putting Tunisia's fragile democracy under enormous strain, and the coming days will likely determine whether the country is headed for a temporary blip in its democratic transition, a deeper consolidation of power, or violence.

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