Research Report

Special Conference on Peace and Justice 1
Peace and Justice amongst the Arab States

Promoting Political Stability and Transparency in Arab States
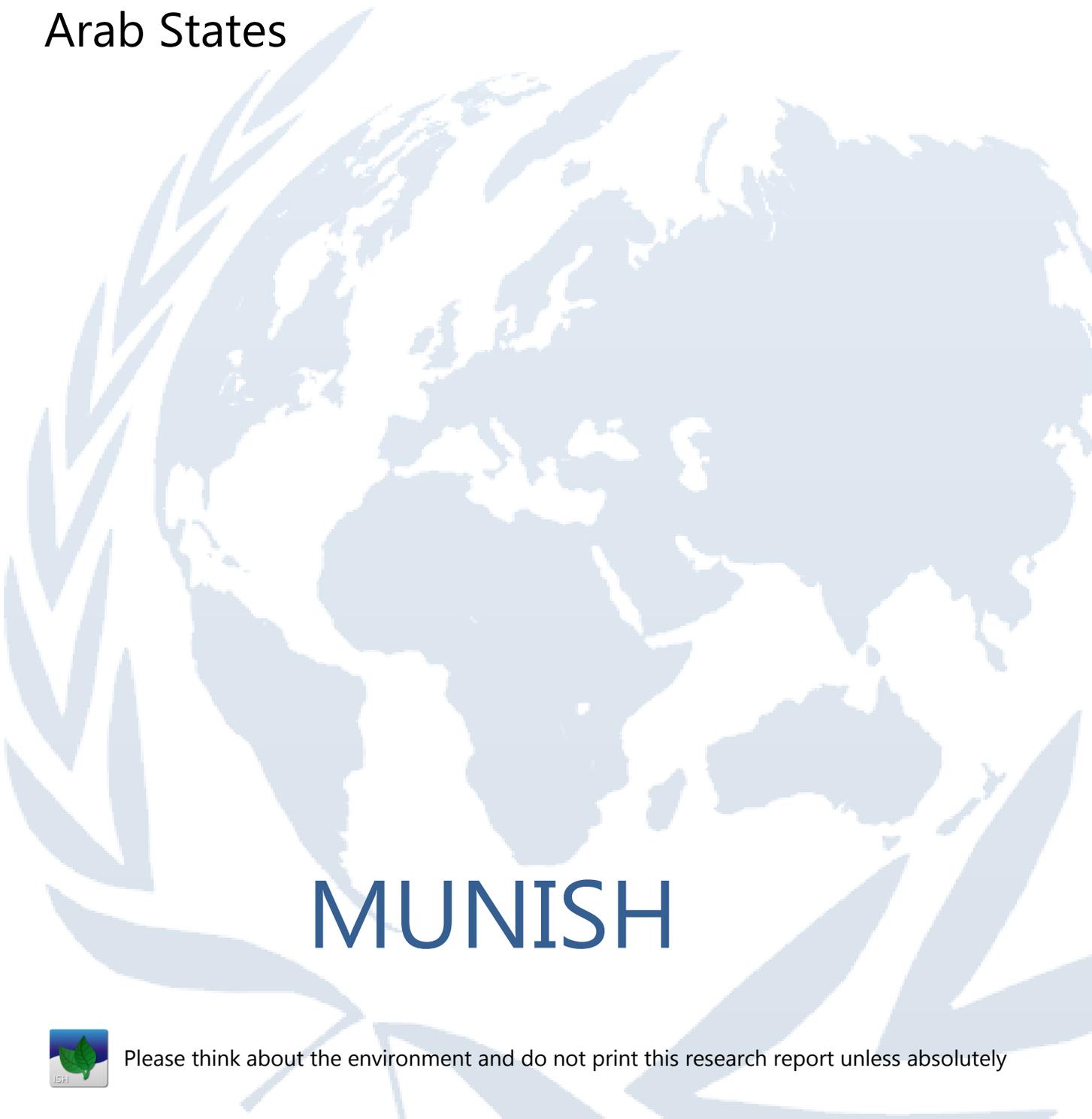
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Introduction

In recent times, the Arab States have undergone drastic social and economic changes along with changes in government. All these factors have brought about political instability in most if not all of the Arab States, namely Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Yemen. In light of recent events brought about by the Arab spring, the governments of some Arab countries have been overthrown such as the governments of Tunisia and Yemen whereas, other Arab countries are gradually moving towards democracy and modernization like Egypt and Iraq. Moreover, riots and protests still continue to cause havoc throughout the Arab States.

It is not only internal factors within the country that affect its stability but pressure from other external sources such as demands from powerful countries and organizations like the United States of America (USA) and the European Union (EU).

Despite the structural change in many Arab countries, some are still using the strategy of political Islam to rule their country as opposed to the secular government. Although the military threat posed my political Islam has taken a down turn in the recent years, the ideological threat is very dangerous as its revival is a defining feature of Arab societies today. This research report looks at the political instability in two major countries and then goes out to outline the common causes of political stability between them.

As well as political instability being critical to the Arab states. The lack of political transparency whether internal or external is also a fundamental concept that is linked to the political instability of a country, in the case of Arab countries for example some media outlets are viewed as controversial and inaccurate when reporting news regarding political situations. These confuse the citizens of the country and at one point can even make them

do the wrong things based on inaccurate reports due to lack of transparency. Furthermore, the corruption which is lack of transparency is a huge problem in Arab states which needs to be attended to and curbed immediately.

Definition of Key Terms

Arab Spring

This refers to the revolutionary wave of demonstration and protests (both violent and non-violent), riots and civil wars in the Arab world that began on 18 December 2010. The reasons of this uprising are that locals had been repressed by authoritative governments and had their human rights violated. Their goals are to achieve human rights, democracy and a regime change.

Political Islam

This refers to a political ideology that favors a return to Islam as a source of political guidance with Allah as the highest authority figure. This includes groups who directly seek control of the state as well as those whose activisms indirectly affect it through preaching and communication.

Secular

This is a principle that involves two basic propositions. The first is the strict separation of the state from religious institutions. The second is that people of different religions and beliefs are equal before the law.

Transparency

Transparency in politics is used as a means of public officials being accountable and held liable for corruption.

General Overview

The Arab spring catalyzed the protests and violence in the Arab States. The magnitude of the Arab spring and civil unrest has affected each of the Arab States tremendously, however, some Arab States such as Syria and Egypt have been affected more severely than others.

Syria

After gaining independence from France in 1946, Syria has undergone many regime changes ranging from its merging with Egypt to the Ba'athist control of Syria. However this inconsistent change of government has brought about an increase in political instability mainly because of the disparate styles of ruling.

The Baath government controlled Syria for around 44 years (1970-2011) and has used an authoritarian and anti-secular approach to rule the country. During the uprising in the 1970s instigated by the Muslim brotherhood in Hama, the government responded using violence, crushing the opposition, killing tens of thousands of people.

In 2000 after the death of Hafez-al-Assad, Syria underwent a brief state of instability which was because of demonstrations due to illegal detentions of political prisonerswhere the political prisoners were released by the Basher-al-Assad who replaced his father as the leader of the country. However the peace was short lived and demonstrations by pro-reform movements began. The government responded by arresting intellectuals responsible for the demonstrations. This is a sign of dictatorship which although not present in all Arab states, is present in Syria. This is further supported by the oppression of the press which is a fundamental part of secular governments.

The stability of the country was further threatened when tension between the USA, EU and Syria increased due to Syria's alleged ties with the Hezbollah terrorist groups. Despite Syria's attempts to improve international relations with the EU, the air strike from Israel against northern Syria ignited a dispute to whether Syria was building a nuclear facility. This conflict led USA to renew its previous sanctions against Syria reasoning that Syria supported terrorist activities.

The consistent unrest in Syria was then catalyzed by the event of a Tunisian man namely Mohamed Bouazizi burning himself. This event marked the start of the Arab spring which encouraged many activists in Syria to start rioting and demonstrating. The Baath government responded with violence which soon spread nationwide. In June 2011, the army defectors on the border brought individuals and groups together to form the free Syrian army. The aim of free Syrian army in the civil war against the Baath government is for the population to achieve political freedom, free elections and regime change, amongst many other things.

The social unrest caused by the civil war and the accumulated protests has worsened the state of the economy. The gross domestic product (GDP) has decreased by 18.8% in

2012. Moreover, human rights have been violated in the civil war. The government imposed bans on social media and allegedly detained activists in arbitrary torture centers. The sanctions imposed by the USA, EU and the Arab League thereby refusing to buy crude oil had a disastrous effect on the Syrian economy which decreased exports and reduced the GDP. These economic crises further led to social unrest which worsened the economy. The instability in Syria is therefore caused by dictatorship and change in regimes which accumulated during the years leading to the outbreak of a civil war affecting important social and economic factors of the country.

In the case of transparency for Syria, the oppressive government not allowing any voting for a fair president shows the very lack of transparency in the country. Furthermore, the government of the Assad's starting from the early 1980s have emphasized on corruption where they gained financial benefit and power. In addition, after the death of hafeez-al-assad, his son managed to curb corruption at a lower level however it still remains at large at a higher level. Moreover, the ruling family also intervenes in the country's economic situation making it worse. For example, in 2008 the assad family dominated almost 85% of the revenue from the oil industry. As well as that, the very citizens of the country also agree that the institutions of the government are running on the very fundamental concept of corruption.

Another form of intransparency is that the Assad government promised the citizens of syria a democratic and fair process of elections and further more promised them human rights. Not implementing the above changes can also be noted as a lack of transparency.

Egypt

Although Egypt did not experience a vast number of regime changes and maintained political stability for a significant period, there was no democratic reform in the country until 2005 where the then president, Hosni Mubarak, asked the parliament to constitute multi candidate presidential elections where Hosni Mubarak was re-elected. However, those elections were rigged and, Ayman Nour, his rival was thrown in jail with alleged false charges of forging. Under Mubarak's rule, corruption increased drastically and activists were thrown into prison without trial and illegal detention facilities were set up.

In the beginning of 2011, mass protests were launched against Mubarak and in February he was forced to resign. Soon after that, military took power of the country. They dissolved the parliament and the constitution. In March 2011, a temporary constitution was created in order to maintain stability in the country. However, this temporary constitution created a gap between the secularists and Islamists. Soon thereafter, violence and protests followed. Legislative elections took place and the Islamists won majority of the seats.

On June 2012, Mohamed Mosri won the presidential elections and attempted to bring back the dissolved parliament. This angered many citizens which brought about more demonstrations. Mosri's attempts to remove high ranking military officials and to bring about change in the judicial system further ignited protests. The 28th of November 2012 marked an important day where Mosri gave himself all powers and denied all appeals in order to quicken the process of writing the constitution. This on the other hand, brought about a case of intransparency as he gave himself all power and was not answerable to any questions asked by members of the public. However this brought about a rage of public violence and protest where protesters were violently killed. These ongoing protests threaten the political stability of the country, where the tourism and investments are badly affected, which diminishes the economy. Mubarak's reign has been a dictatorial, where the country was under a state of emergency law, giving absolute power to the government. The start of Morsri's reign began to show signs of dictatorship when he unilaterally empowered himself.

In addition, the police carried out illegal torturing and detention and used violence against the citizens of Egypt. Economic factors also incited the civil disobedience in Egypt. There is wide spread poverty in Egypt where 40% of the population survives on $2 per day. Demographics of the country also showed high rate of unemployment where the population of 30 year old men and women and younger are having difficulty finding a job. It is these problems that encourage the locals to fight and cause unrest. The response from the government makes things worse where locals are killed and even tortured illegally.

Transparency seems to be at an all time low even after the revolution. In fact, there has been a decline in the transparency after the revolution. In the mubarak regime, corruption was a common occurance where even the presidential elections were rigged. In addition, individuals were detained without trials and tortured illegaly as stated above. Government wages were low and this is where the corruption started.

However in a post mubarak era, corruption has spread to many more areas. The financial budget is not being shared with the public, as well as government officials not being charged with corruption until mass protestations and demonstartions occur. But the most controversial form of intransparency is concerned with the decision making of the revolution leader Mohammed Mosri. His decisions in appointment of members of his cabinet have surprised the world and his decisions have lead to the continuous demonstrations around the country.

Other Arab States

Other Arab countries such as Jordan, Sudan, Iraq, Bahrain, Kuwait, Mauritania and Palestine are witnessing ongoing protests. The root cause of these problems is the governing style where the rulers of these countries deny political freedom and the government lacks democratic policies. These factors, along with other problems such as unemployment, insecurity and other economic factors are the cause of social unrest. Citizens of these countries are fighting their government for a regime change. They also hope to protect human rights and freedom as most of these countries with ongoing riots are in a state of emergency where the government has full autocratic power.

As outlined above, the common factor amongst unstable Arab States is the rule of law which is dictatorial and it is these dictatorial principles that are directly linked to the stability of a country. Dictatorships have proven to maintain stability for a brief period of time, however, the accumulated pressure caused by the locals, ends up causing social unrest. This social unrest causes deep rooted damage to the economy of the country making it virtually irreversible. Additionally macroeconomic factors such as unemployment, poverty and other negative demographic factors have provoked locals to demonstrate and riot for their rights. Furthermore, conflicts with neighboring countries and past civil wars have been detrimental to the countries' stability. For example the struggles between Syria and Israel, Egypt and Israel have led to poor quality of life and a declined standard of living. Events such as these have far reaching, long term, detrimental consequences to the countries' economy which makes stability of the country even harder to achieve.
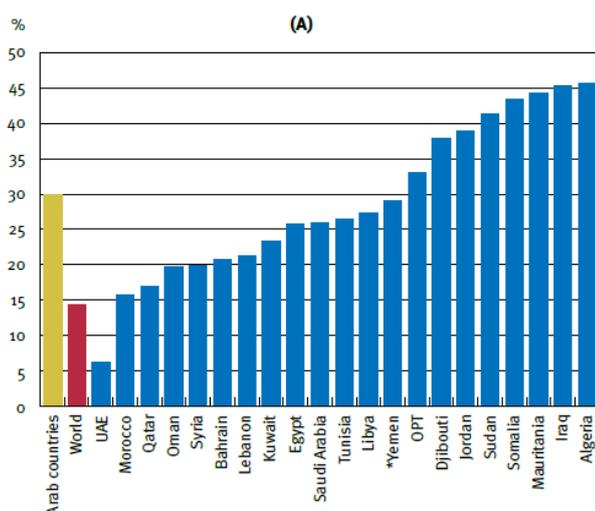
The above bar graph shows the high amounts of unemployment in Arab States, which is one of the major causes of civil uprising which destroys the stability of a country

Most, if not all, of the Arab countries have overthrown their governments and implemented a regime change mostly opting for democracy and political freedom. However the transition from dictatorship to democratic government has oftentimes been disastrous and brought about an even worse social disturbance. As a matter of fact, different types of demonstrations have led to different courses of actions by authoritarian governments, but eventually violence usually prevails harming the countries' economy, citizens and almost takes the country to the point of no return.

As stated above the Arab states have some form of dictatorship which leads to the lack of transparency. In most of the above countries, citizens are being held and tortured illegaly. Information is being withheld from the public and most if not all arab states have low ranking on the transparency index.

Country	Score	Ranking
Qatar	6.50	28
UAE	5.90	35
Bahrain	5.40	43
Oman	5.50	41
Jordan	5.10	47
Kuwait	4.30	65
Tunisia	4.40	62
Morocco	3.50	80
Saudi Arabia	3.50	80
Algeria	3.20	92
Lebanon	3.00	102
Djibouti	3.00	102
Egypt	2.80	115
Mauritania	2.80	115
Comoros	2.50	134
Libya	2.60	126
Yemen	2.30	141
Syria	2.10	147
Sudan	1.60	173
Iraq	1.30	178
Somalia	1.00	180

The above table shows the corruption scores of arab countries where 10 is the lowest being the least corrupt and 1 is the highest being the most corrupt.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

The League of Arab States (Arab League)

The Arab League is an organization setup after the Second World War which includes Arab States around the Middle East and North Africa as its members. The aim of this organization is to strengthen cooperation amongst members, to provide a platform for debating concerning issues surrounding the member states and to allow member states to promote their social, cultural and economic activities. Although the Arab League has proven to be unsuitable for implementing peace in Arab States, it played a significant role to promote education, women rights and preserving culture.

United Kingdom (UK)

The United Kingdom aims to attain long term stability of Arab States however their efforts have not been emphasized by the media. The UK has provided financial aid which is used to train human right lawyers in order to improve the judicial system of Arab States. They also cooperate with other organizations like the European Union to improve the economy and governance of struggling Arab societies.

The European Union (EU)

The European Union was one of the first organizations to react to the uprising in Arab countries especially during the Arab spring, releasing its first press statement proposing a partnership of democracy and shared prosperity with southern Mediterranean countries. It did this by providing money, improving markets and providing educations for citizens in many Arab countries.

The United States of America (USA)

The USA plays a significant role in establishing stability in Arab States. The USA has sent military troops to many of the Arab States either through NATO or their own troops. The USA is also in strong support of some Arab governments especially those supporting democracy sending troops to support these causes. Whereas the USA have also imposed sanctions on other Arab States that are not in support of certain principles.

Timeline of Events

Since the topic includes Arab States, there are several key events which are different and unique that mark the complete start of the instability in Arab States, however the major event that sparked major concern between Arab States was the start of the Arab spring which began on 18th December 2010 and it still continues to cause havoc in many Arab States such as Syria, Jordan and Egypt amongst many others.

Date	Description of event
18th December 2010	Start of the Arab Spring
14th January 2011	Government of Tunisia is overthrown
11th February 2011	President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt Resigns
15th February 2011	Protests against Gadafi begin
3rd March 2011	Prime minister of Egypt, Ahmed Shafik resigns
20-28 august 2011	Captial of libya was captured and gadaffi was over thrown
20th October 2011	End of the libyan civil war
27th February 2012	Yemeni Pressident officially resigns
2nd June 2012	Hosni mubarak sentenced to life in prison by egyptian court
24th June 2012	Mohammed Mosri won presidential run off of egypt
12th July 2012	Syrian uprising declared civil war
22nd November 2012	Mohammed Mosri gives himself unlimited power. Riots and demonstrations
July 2013	Mohammed mosri is removed from power due to coup d'etat

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The UN has played a considerable role in promoting political stability in Arab States. Namely, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Department of Political Affairs (UNDPA) have made efforts to promote peace in Arab States. Moreover, the UN has set up special observation programs in Arab States with consistent instability such as in Syria. Also resolution in the past have been set up to promote peace in Middle East region

- United nations security council resolution 242, 22nd November 1967 (**S/RES/242**)

- Cooperation between united nations and league of Arab States (**A/RS/67/11**)

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

In spite of the Arab league's persistent attempt to promote peace in Arab States the conflict within the organization has made the process difficult. The protest awakened by the Arab spring received a slow response from the Arab state. However in some cases, such as that of Libya, the Arab league supported the UN's decision against Gaddafi's forces. Never the less, in most cases the lack of decisiveness caused by fragmented view of Arab States failed to promote peace and stability of the region. This lead to treaties and bodies, such as the one of joint defense, and economic co-operation to be ineffective. For example the reason for the demise in monitoring operation in Syria was due to the division between Arab States who supported the UN resolution against those who avoided making the Arab problem an international issue.

Regardless of the assistance provided by EU some Arab countries still remain politically instable. The matter of the fact is that the situation in individual Arab States is similar to their fellow Arab nation yet they have different issues that ignite their problems. The EU has provided financial assistance, jobs, humanitarian assistance and stress the importance of peace. This in fact, has improved the situation of some countries such as Morocco whereas in other countries such as Syria efforts to improve the situation of the country seem to be futile.

The USA has supported Arab countries such as Iraq from times such as the 1970s, however right now; USA's actions have been condemned by critics worldwide. The USA has supported the Arab spring and change in regime in order to provide a democratic approach to lead the country however this is seen to be ineffective where dictators are being overthrown and problems are still being encountered. The actions of the USA lead critics to believe that its support towards the Arab States is only for its own purposes; to encourage a pro-USA alliance, which the USA can benefit from.

The continuous support from the above countries and communities seem to show that there is no constant factor that help a country attain short-term stability.

In regard to transparency, most of the Arab states have set up new laws to fight corruption for example in the case of Egypt, an anti corruption commission has been formed in the government and provisions have been made to allow the public to be aware of the government's decision. However, due to the continuous chaos and lack of consistency the government of the Arab states are still fighting corruption.

Possible Solutions

The first situation that should be improved is the political freedom in the Arab States; therefore the United Nations could set up a special organization, the United Nations observation committee of Arab States. This organization could look at Arab States as a whole, rather than individual countries, to try and find the common source of problem between them. In addition, this organization will work closely with the Arab league to create an international legal framework on which a common constitution can be implemented in all the Arab States that will promote political freedom, human rights and democracy amongst other things.

Cooperation from international communities could be emphasized and an international summit could be set up biannually so as to evaluate the progress made by Arab States and provide a platform where international communities can debate on issues on Arab States and provide different perspectives and different solutions. With the implementation of democracy in Arab States, meetings could be set up with the public and different government organizations in the country so as to meet the demands of the public. This in turn will lead to political stability, as demands of the public are heard and hopefully met, therefore there will be no reason to riot.

As outlined in the general overview, tension between borders of Arab countries can cause a lot of violence which can aggravate the citizens. The panic stricken citizens spread the panic virally and this causes unrest. In order to avoid this, strict border patrol could be set up on the border of every Arab country. This will give the citizens a sense of security and will also avoid illegal infiltration through the borders.

Infrastructure also plays an important role in bringing out stability of a country. Effective and adequate infrastructure spurs economic activity, promotes the general well-being of the population, and instills an increased amount of confidence the people. This in turn averts civil unrest and catalyzes political stability.

To make Arab governments more transparent, international observers should set up commissions to monitor, gather and analyze data from the governments. They should also have a set of actions to implement incase the data gathered shows serious repercussions due to corruption. For example, summoning the leaders of the specific governments and setting up special task forces to eradicate corruption.

Moreover, laws should be set up in all Arab states explaining that all government work, meetings, relations and departments have to be of public record. This ensures that transparency is always kept at a level such that the citizens of a country know what is happening. If these laws are not followed, there will be serious consequences. On top of that, every decision made by any department of the government and by any official must be followed by detailed explanations.

In order to make the public aware of corruption and transparency, they should be sensitized using flyers, radio programs and seminars. This will help ensure that the citizens are fully aware of their right to knowledge of the government and they are not being fooled by the government.

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