

Arab Spring

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The Arab Spring (Arabic: **الربيع العربي**, romanized: ar-rabīʿ al-ʿarabī) was a series of pro-democracy anti-government protests, uprisings, and armed rebellions that spread across much of the Arab world in the early 2010s. It began in Tunisia in response to corruption and economic stagnation. From Tunisia, the protests initially spread to five other countries: Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Syria and Bahrain. Rulers were deposed (Zine El Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia, Muammar Gaddafi of Libya, and Hosni Mubarak of Egypt all in 2011, and Ali Abdullah Saleh of Yemen in 2012) and major uprisings and social violence occurred, including riots, civil wars, or insurgencies. Sustained street demonstrations took place in Morocco, Iraq, Algeria, Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman and Sudan. Minor protests took place in Djibouti, Mauritania, Palestine, Saudi Arabia and the Western Sahara. A major slogan of the demonstrators in the Arab world is ash-shaʿb yurīd isqāṭ an-niẓām! (Arabic: **الشعب يريد إسقاط النظام**, lit. 'the people want to bring down the regime'). The wave of initial revolutions and protests faded by mid to late 2012, as many Arab Spring demonstrations were met with violent responses from authorities, pro-government militias, counterdemonstrators, and militaries. These attacks were answered with violence from protesters in some cases. Multiple large-scale conflicts followed: the Syrian civil war; the rise of ISIS, insurgency in Iraq and the following civil war; the Egyptian Crisis, election and removal from office of Mohamed Morsi, and subsequent unrest and insurgency; the Libyan Crisis; and the Yemeni crisis and subsequent civil war. Regimes that lacked major oil wealth and hereditary succession arrangements were more likely to undergo regime change. A power struggle continued after the immediate response to the Arab Spring. While leadership changed and regimes were held accountable, power vacuums opened across the Arab world. Ultimately, it resulted in a contentious battle between a consolidation of power by religious elites and the growing support for democracy in many Muslim-majority states. The early hopes that these popular movements would end corruption, increase political participation, and bring about greater economic equity quickly collapsed in the wake of the counter-revolutionary moves by foreign state actors in Yemen, the regional and international military interventions in Bahrain and Yemen, and the destructive civil wars in Syria, Iraq, Libya, and Yemen. Some referred to the succeeding and still ongoing conflicts as the Arab Winter. A new wave of protests began in 2018 which led to the resignation of prime ministers Haider al-Abadi of Iraq in 2018 and Saad Hariri of Lebanon in 2020, and the overthrow of presidents Omar al-Bashir of Sudan and Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria in 2019. Sometimes called the Second Arab Spring, these events showed how the conditions that started the Arab Spring have not faded and political movements against authoritarianism and exploitation are still ongoing. Continued protest movements in Algeria, Sudan, Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt, and Syria have been seen as a continuation of the Arab Spring. As of 2025, multiple conflicts are still continuing which might be seen as originating in the Arab Spring. A major shift in the Syrian Civil War occurred in December 2024 when a rebel offensive led to the fall of the Assad regime, after over a decade of warfare. In Libya, a major civil war concluded, with foreign powers intervening. In Yemen, a civil war continues to affect the country.