

You've been following the extraordinary events in Egypt. What reading do you make of the Egyptian revolution? Can you compare both the Tunisian and the Egyptian uprisings: what's their common denominator (if any)?

They are both *one* uprising. One World, One Revolution :) Often people think of it in terms of "contagion" or something. But in reality we've been ready, we, people of the internetz, for a revolution to start in any part of the Arab world. We've been supporting each other and trying hard since long time, and you know how important Internet was for the revolution. Egyptians *actively* supported the Tunisian Revolution as any Tunisian national did: they launched DDoS attacks, they've been demonstrating for Sidibouzzid, they shared information, they provided technical support... etc. And now Tunisians are doing the same for Egyptians. It's really a new citizenship. Egyptians are de facto Tunisian citizens.

Do you have a message or advise for those young people who have been protesting in Egypt?

No :)

Do you think the revolution in Tunisia, and now in Egypt, will spread across the Arab world?

It is already spreading, or more precisely it's already there. My only worry is Internet control. I've been fighting here in Tunisia against censorship because I knew that infrastructure is the key for change. In some parts of the Arab world Internet access is maybe still not enough developed to be a lever for change. So maybe it's just not the right time, and maybe it's more effective to focus on having internet infrastructure ready and free right now.

Would you be willing to offer help and share experience if asked by activists in other parts of the world?

Yes, once I get my assignment here sorted :) (in about 6 months when we'll finally get fair elections I can say like Wael Ghonim : Mission accomplished :)

Can you talk about the main reasons that led to your arrest? To what extent your activities online and your alleged connection with the *Anonymous* group have contributed to your arrest by the regime?

I was arrested because of the attacks of Anonymous on government websites. It was state security (Tunisian NSA) and they thought there was a plot or a conspiracy, and that I was Dr. No. It took them 5 days to understand how all of what led to Anonymous attacks worked, and that if there was a conspiracy it was too complicated, and people were so loosely tied that you can't even call it conspiracy. And you GV, were part of the conspiracy :) I was interrogated about this.

There's no doubt that it's the struggle of the Tunisian people that forced the regime to release you from detention in the late days of Ben Ali. During your arrest, a campaign was launched online to help keep your name and that of other bloggers in the spotlight. To what extent do you think the online campaign has played a role in your release? Were you aware while you were detained that it was actually taking place?

In my opinion the campaign not only got us out of detention, but also contributed in taking down the Ben Ali regime. During detention, I was not aware of what was happening outside. The only bits I got is the press release from RSF (Reporters Without Borders) the second day. The interrogators were surprised how fast alert was publicised and they showed me the press release and asked me about the involvement of RSF in the conspiracy :) But to be honest I was counting on the internet community support whatever I did. I would have never imagined such a huge support (I mean Hillary Clinton asked Tunisian government to free us if I'm not wrong).

Some say the Internet was a catalyst, others contend it has played only a marginal role in the uprising. Do you think, had the events of Sidi Bouzid or Cairo happened, say, in the 80s, when the Internet was not available yet, it would have achieved the tremendous rallying we've witnessed?

You don't have to go back to the 80s. In 2008, there were uprisings in Redeyef, similar to what happened in Sidibouazid. But back then it seems that the internet community did not reach a critical mass. And then at that time, Facebook got censored for a week or two. I don't remember if it was related. But it was like a training for this revolution. People think that this revolution happened out of nowhere but we, on the Internet have been trying for years, together and all over the Arab world. The last campaign that mobilised people was for Khaled Said in Egypt, and we Tunisians participated. And you have to remember that Egyptians (and people all over the world) participated in the Tunisian revolution: they informed, they participated in *Anonymous* attacks and they even were the first to demonstrate for Sidibouazid in Cairo.

So, yes Internet was *very* important.

Along the same lines, there's a controversy over calling those Revolutions, Twitter/Facebook Revolutions. What's your take on that debate? What role, do you think, social media has played in helping sustain and disseminate the uprising?

When people begun demonstrating in Sidibouazid, part of the rage they were feeling was because media did not talk about them. They felt ignored and that their voice will never get through to stake holders. At that time all media was controlled by the government. The only media that took on itself to talk/report about Sidibouazid was us, Internet users. Hence the importance that social media took. In a few weeks people were compulsively following and sharing information in social media and censorship could not follow: they've been overwhelmed and information was getting through and everyday more people were rallying the cause.

You can't do a revolution without a working Information System. And since "old" media was dysfunctional, Internet Social Networks played that role.

You've decided, in what many considered a controversial move, to join the interim government. Your decision has raised much criticism, not least among your friends who blamed you for participating in a government that includes members and symbols of the old guard. Your friend Yassine Ayari published a video addressing you personally, where he says "you are being used to weaken the youth movement." Others commented on Twitter saying: "he's sold his soul"; "why has he accepted a post under a farce government?" Your friend Sami Ben Gharbia tweeted: "don't accept to collaborate with those who killed Tunisians, stay clean stay citizen." What's your response to those who criticize your decision?

My answer is : It feels good to have finally different opinions expressing themselves freely in Tunisia. We were one voice against government and we took it down. Now what? Chose a leader and follow

him? I prefer variety and multiple views that would make a strong society.

I've always followed the adage : “be the change you want to see in society.” I was offered the opportunity to be the change I want to see in government. I, logically, accepted. And I am the government that accepts criticism and take it into account.

Some are still calling for the parliament to be dissolved and for the resignation of the current interim government. What's your response to them?

My answer is, since those critics are a minority (unlike those for the first version of the government), I'm switching to *camera ready copy mode*: if you want to change something provide a camera ready copy of the changes you want, especially with the alternative you are proposing for what you want to change.

You said in an interview with French radio that you stepped in, in order to help building your country. Can we read into this that you intend to be involved in the political life in the future? Are you going to run for an office in the next elections?

Absolutely not. I'm here just to set the ground for the new democracy. To ensure that everything is made so we can't go back to a regime such as the one we've been enduring before, and most importantly ensure that all conditions for free and fair elections are provided for next elections.

Can you talk about your work now within the government? As someone who has been involved with the Internet, have you been asked to contribute in your field of expertise?

Actually, I was not asked to do anything related to my field of expertise. But I took on myself the issue of internet censorship and I worked with Secretary of State for IT to solve the problem. We're also modernizing the government Information System and pushing towards providing direct connection to the government through social networks. Mr. Secretary of State for IT can be followed on Twitter: @samizaoui

What do you want to achieve during the interim period? Can you talk us through your goals and dreams as a minister?

During interim period I set up one goal : next elections. Just to be sure I won't miss my goal. But my dream is that political and legal reforms (there is an independent commission working on it) will include *Access to Knowledge* as a constitutional right (censorship would be constitutionally forbidden then).

Some are seriously contemplating the possibility of applying for the Tunisian nationality. Can you give a word to the Prime Minister about that? I, for one, swear I will be a good citizen :)

You are already a Tunisian citizen ;) You're welcome. I'll talk to prime minister and do my best to support your application.