

January 4, 2012

Mr. Barack Obama  
President of the United States  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington D.C., 20500

Dear Mr. President,

On December 17th 2010 in Tunisia, Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire to protest police treatment. His act of self-immolation was the spark to the fire that is Arab Spring. Since this act, Egypt and Tunisia have had revolutions, Libya has had a civil war, and numerous countries, including Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Algeria, Morocco, and Bahrain, have had civil uprisings and major protests. However, though Arab Spring is entering its second year and celebrated its first anniversary recently, we must support a coordinated international response to Arab Spring. First, Mr. President, I will establish why it is essential for the Arab Spring countries to receive assistance. Then I will propose what the United States should do to ensure that the authority of the United Nations is employed to help the people of these six countries as well as to ensure the stability of this crucial region.

The US, and the world as a whole, have a vital stake in the ultimate outcome of Arab Spring leading to stable and successful countries. According to the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, there are an estimated 1.2 billion Muslims on the globe that make up the Arab World. With a population sector this large, the UN has a moral obligation to play a role by assisting in the growth and development of this movement. In addition, the United States in particular has a specific vested interest in Arab Spring due to the abundance of oil in the region. In the region, there are several major oil production and shipping points. Specifically, the Suez Canal, controlled by Egypt, transits nearly 3 million barrels of oil daily, largely aimed for the US. Another major shipping point is the Straits of Hormuz, which was responsible for about 35% of the world's seaborne trades oil in 2011. We as a nation rely on this Persian Gulf oil to

support our economy; in fact, the US consumed 6.99 billion barrels in 2010, 22% of total world petroleum consumption. Should oil shipments be interrupted, there will be an energy shortage even more devastating than the Arab Oil embargo of 1973-4. Events in Egypt have already affected oil prices worldwide, and analysts say that oil prices could quickly rise to \$130 a barrel. Lastly, the outcome of Arab Spring will greatly impact the outcome of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, events that have become well publicized on a global scale. Thus, for these points of analysis, Mr. President, it is critical that the UN, the US, and the rest of the world form an assertive and efficacious response to Arab Spring.

The United Nations alone is unique in that it is the only organization with universal trust, adequate resources, and international credibility that can effectively assist these Arab nations as they undergo their historic transformation. The UN lacks a colonial legacy in these nations, a fact that will inspire trust in the UN from these Arab people. Many developed nations have colonized these nations before; for example, France was a strong force in Tunisia until 1956. However, because the UN has no colonial history with these nations, the organization is a nonpartisan, neutral force that the people can trust to have no ulterior motives. In addition, the UN has strong institutional resources to aid these countries. One such resource is the World Food Programme, an organization that works to eliminate hunger and therefore decrease the resultant social unrest. On a more social level, the UN Women Programme promotes the full civic and economic rights of women in society, especially in societies of developing countries such as the ones involved in Arab Spring. By using these existing programmes and institutions, the UN can provide immediate assistance to the people in the Arab Spring. Finally, the UN has a history of successfully helping new nations build stable societies. For example the newly formed nation of East Timor relied heavily on UN support during and after independence. One of the major grievances of the Arab Spring protestors is government corruption. The UN, with its history of building functioning institutions, has the proven ability to help these nations successfully build fair and just governmental structures.

Mr. President, what should the United States do to ensure that the authority of the United Nations is employed to help the people of these six countries and the region? First and foremost is monetary support. By allocating money to established UN Programs, these programs can

quickly expand further into this region in order to aid the people of Arab Spring. Also important in this turmoil is diplomatic support. You, Mr. President, must ask other nations to provide money and human resources to support UN efforts on the ground in the Arab Spring nations. Modern communications, such as Twitter and cell phones, have been said to have lit the fuse for Arab Spring. UNESCO can support grassroots reporting to ensure that new governments remain accountable to the people. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Arab Spring would not have happened without the courage of many individual people who took a stand and spoke up in the face of government repression. You, Mr. President, have the unique ability to focus global attention on these courageous individuals. Your support could make the difference between their well-deserved freedom or unjust imprisonment. It is vital that you speak up for these men, women, and children who risked their lives for new civil society in the Arab world. Only you can do this.

This letter to you, President Obama, ends on a personal note. Recently, I was fortunate enough to visit a wonderful part of the southern coast of Thailand, a country with a female Prime Minister. This region, Koh Lanta, is majority Muslim populated. While there, I observed that women in veils or hijabs had full participation in the social and economic life of the island. They rode their own motorcycles, walked alone through the streets, and spoke with native Thais and foreigners alike. Women in brightly colored head scarves held jobs ranging from restaurant workers to market women to laborers on construction sites, pouring concrete and bending rebar. With the support of the United Nations, countries of the Arab Spring could build a future like this, in which men and women alike can pursue their dreams of happiness.

Mr. President, I would like to ask you to use every tool you have to help the United Nations support this vision for the nations of Arab Spring.

Sincerely,

JC

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