



EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

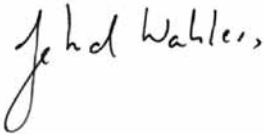
Most of us have found the violent images emanating from Homs and the suburbs of Damascus over the last few weeks both horrifying and frightening. The regime is unleashing seemingly random acts of violence against often defenceless civilians, and it is to be feared this will just lead to yet more violence. One year on, these impressions are diametrically opposed to those afforded by what became generally referred to as the "Arab Spring". Indeed, very little remains of the joy and euphoria that swept across North Africa and the Middle East, but also Europe, when the first authoritarian regimes fell and the first dictators in the shape of Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak were forced to stand down.

What began with calls for "freedom", "dignity" and "justice" has now turned into a process that is not straightforward and certainly not consistent or immune to setbacks. This has also become clear in the results of the first free elections in Tunisia and Egypt, which have led to some new political players from the successful Islamist parties taking up positions in government. In this edition, Klaus D. Loetzer reports on the election successes of Islamist parties in Tunisia and the effect this is likely to have on the country's process of transformation.

The uprisings in the region have also had a direct impact on the work of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. Anyone who has been following the events surrounding our Cairo office and the accusations made against our staff by Egyptian prosecutors will ask themselves how seriously the new rulers are taking the task of building a new system that is both democratic and constitutional. Apart from the fact that the allegations made against us were totally absurd, we have to wonder what political goal is being pursued here. Their actions affect us as a foundation, but above all

they serve to target the partners we are openly working with in order to promote democracy, freedom and justice.

It has always been a basic principle of our work that we do not want to impose anything. We are there to offer help and expertise because, as Germans, we have also experienced – and indeed are still experiencing – how necessary it is to fight constantly in order to defend basic democratic principles. Our own history also gives an understanding of regions that are experiencing upheavals. We know there is no reason to allow initial euphoria and subsequent disillusion to slide into pessimism or even to talk about an “Arab Winter”. The changes are more complex and perhaps more difficult than was first anticipated, but they have given millions of people in the region freedom for the first time since their countries’ independence. There is still much more to do, but an important step has been taken on the path towards creating a new political culture in which there is respect for human rights.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gerhard Wahlers". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'G'.

Dr. Gerhard Wahlers
Deputy Secretary General

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