

## Introduction

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Since the eruption of the Arab Spring, Arab countries have been facing major challenges that can almost be described as existential challenges. On the one hand, the past decades have shown us that states ruled by dictatorships without any sort of accountability have failed to provide basic needs and protect the individual and collective rights of their citizens, and on the other, transition from dictatorship towards democracy has not been easy and even more complicated than expected. Arab revolutions have erupted in protest against dictatorships that have excessively silenced and suppressed their peoples and violently annihilated political diversity. However, social and economic demands were by far the most prominent demands as economic, social, geographic, gender, ethnic, and religious inequalities widened. Perhaps, increasing poverty, unemployment, and marginalization were the factors that led to the eruption of anger and revolutions throughout the Arab region.

Moreover, countries going through the experience of peaceful transition towards democracy, namely Tunisia, but also countries where no Arab spring erupted, also affected by it like Morocco, Jordan, Lebanon, and some Gulf states, have all faced the challenge of maintaining political stability, threatened by the lack of social justice and dormant popular anger, occasionally expressed by groups of people demanding to obtain their economic and social rights. The lack of some of the major rights, like the right to work, social protection, fair taxation, distribution policies, and many other rights, is considered one of the main factors affecting stability. Even before the eruption of the Arab Spring, economic and social policies were considered a challenge to be highlighted and addressed, as successive UN reports covering the Arab region since 2002, followed later by international financial institutions reports, namely the World Bank, had highlighted the importance of addressing these issues as they threaten political stability and do not protect tyrants from people's anger in the event that this anger erupts at the surface. Civil society has contributed to this dialogue. ANND had issued several reports about the relationship between democracy and social justice, and the connection between fulfilling development goals, public liberties, and democracy. Civil society organization keep on emphasizing the importance of this balanced relationship between creating a state and its institutions on the one hand, and achieving social justice and development on the other. The UN Millennium Declaration and the sustainable development action plan subsequently approved by the UN in 2015, both confirm this relationship, particularly in Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals. The causal relationship between social justice and democracy on the one hand, and building a state on the other, is the main concern of organizations working on achieving development and prosperity. However, the approaches proposed to address economic and social imbalances are very different from one another. Some consider that structural reforms implemented in the past decades, in accordance with the vision adopted by the Washington Consensus, with programs of international financial institutions, were the right ones to make. Thus, their implementation should follow the same course it was set to take after introducing minor amendments to improve them based on past experiences. Those consider the lack of democracy and accountability as the main reason behind the crisis that led to the Arab Spring. Others consider that structural adjustment policies had contributed to the dismantling of public institutions, had set market economy and its mechanisms free, and had created a group of people

benefiting from the international economic, financial, and commercial ties that led to the emergence of the crony economy. As a result, corruption and tax evasion spread everywhere around the world, aggravating the situation even more. People subscribing to this point of view consider that the problem lies in the adopted structure and leads to all these morbid social phenomena; therefore, it widens the gap between different social classes. Both sides agree that it is important to adopt a different development model; however, they disagree on the elements constituting this model. Those of the first stance tend to propose more liberalism and liberation as they believe that the state is a failed state and that the market economy mechanisms, with some control, can achieve growth rates that can address the social issues such as poverty and unemployment, while those opting for the second stance reiterate that the state should play an essential role in the development process, especially that they clearly differentiate between development in all its forms as a human right based on freedom and right to self-determination, and growth as one of the factor supporting development among many others. ANND subscribes to the second position, which considers that the shifts occurring in the Arab region should be based on a new social contract addressing the issue of the state, its nature, and its relationships with its components, thus promoting human rights, secularism, and separation of powers. The economic and social aspects also have a share in this contract, thus promoting citizenship in its three dimensions: civil, political and social. Since the eruption of the Arab Spring, ANND's publications have criticized all statements still considering that achieving higher growth rates should solve all development issues. ANND seeks to build, with its members and partners, an alternative vision addressing the basic components of the desired development model. Therefore, it launched two research projects, one on tax justice and the other on social protection systems, and before that it issued a report on labor policy in relation with education, in addition to research on a variety of Public Private Partnerships (PPP) experiences and on international business ties, focusing on investment policies and service agreements and how they could be transformed into effective tools to achieve development and not just growth as per the prevailing classical theories. All of these research projects tackle the main components of the desired development model, which relies on addressing the structural defect and sets the foundations of social justice.

### The Arab Watch Report on Economic and Social Rights – Informal Labor

Informal labor is considered as one of the main causes of instability faced not only by countries of the region, but also by the whole world. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), Informal Labor constitutes between half and three quarters of the non-agricultural workforce in developing countries. "Perhaps the widening share of informal labor in Arab countries in non-agricultural sectors is mainly the result of policies of 'Openness', neo-liberal globalization, youth boom, rural migration in great numbers as a result of neglecting rural areas in general and the agriculture sector in particular, in addition to large waves of incoming migration." Based on all of the aforementioned, ANND worked in the last two years on writing a report on informal labor as part of the Arab Watch on Economic and Social Rights. It approaches