

Tunisia national day

Even as nation reforms, friendship with Japan is strengthened

Elyes Kasri
AMBASSADOR OF TUNISIA

On the auspicious occasion of the 57th anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Tunisia, it gives me great pleasure to address the distinguished readers of The Japan Times.



As the Japanese government and people commemorated a few days ago the second anniversary of the March 11, 2011, earthquake and tsunami that devastated the northeastern region of Japan and triggered a terrible nuclear accident, I would like to restate Tunisia's solidarity and sympathy with the Japanese people and recall that the entire world was truly impressed by the resiliency, endurance and dignity demonstrated by the Japanese people as they overcame this cataclysmic disaster.

Even when our country was going through a revolution and receiving hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing armed hostilities in a neighboring country, the Tunisian government and people did not hesitate to express their friendship and solidarity with the people of Japan, both in Tunisia and Japan.

In this framework and to reiterate our solidarity with the Japanese people, the Embassy of Tunisia in Tokyo is celebrating the Tunisian National Day and a Tunisia-Japan Solidarity Day on March 20, 2013, in Ishinomaki, Miyagi Prefecture, a city among the most seriously affected by the 2011 disaster and with which Tunisia has built strong bonds of friendship. This celebration is held with the collaboration of the city of Ishinomaki and the Tunisian-Japanese incorporated organization Humanist Organization for Peaceful Evolution — HOPE.

I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to make a brief statement about the situation in Tunisia.

Through its revolution for freedom and dignity, coined by some the Jasmine Revolution, Tunisia has started since Jan. 14, 2011, a wave of democratic aspirations in the region called the Arab Spring.

After the free and fair election on Oct. 23, 2011, of the constituent assembly with the presence of many foreign observers, including from Japan, the political process has been making steady progress toward drafting a new constitution and setting the required conditions for holding free and fair legislative and presidential elections that would conclude the

current transitional period.

During a plenary session held on March 12, 2013, the new Prime Minister H.E. Ali Larayedh submitted to the National Constituent Assembly his new Cabinet that includes several independent figures and stated the following priorities of his government, namely:

- submission of a political and electoral timetable that gives clear indications about the future stages and allows the organization in the best conditions of the upcoming elections;
- achieving security and stability in the country, to safeguard the citizens' rights and freedoms;
- intensification of job creation programs;
- continuing the reforms already introduced by the previous government in the areas of security, justice, administration, banking and finance, and investment.

On his part, the speaker of the National Constituent Assembly indicated that the legislative and presidential elections will be held between October and December 2013 and will undoubtedly reinforce Tunisia's stance as a model for peaceful and democratic transition in the Arab world and Africa.

I would like to express our gratitude for Japan's steady support to Tunisia's democratic transition and its efforts to meet the social and economic aspirations of its people for better governance and a more transparent business environment conducive to higher productivity and better job prospects.

Such a remarkable support from a leading democracy like Japan was illustrated bilaterally and within the multilateral institutions and mechanisms such as the Group of Eight Deauville Partnership. In this regard, I would like to pay a vibrant tribute to the government and people of Japan for their unwavering support to the aspirations of the Tunisian people for democracy, freedom and dignity.

While several Japanese government agencies were instrumental in supporting the reforms in Tunisia, I would like to pay a special homage to the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for the readiness it has been demonstrating in seeking innovative solutions to the social, economic and even climatic challenges Tunisia is facing. The Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) on its part was instrumental in facilitating Tunisia's access to the Samurai bond market.

The year 2012 witnessed the meeting of the eighth Tunisian-Japanese Joint Commission and the exchange of several high-

level visits. We look forward to the continuous intensification in 2013 of the Tunisian Japanese consultations on issues of mutual interest and Japan's prominent role in supporting the success of the democratic transition and reforms in Tunisia, the epicenter of the Arab spring.

Tunisia and Japan cooperation go beyond the bilateral relations. In this context, after having hosted successfully the second edition of The Japan-Arab Economic Forum in 2010, Tunisia reiterates its commitment to contribute to the success of the third session of the Japan-Arab Economic Forum and the fifth summit of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), both to be held in Japan later this year.

While expressing our most sincere appreciation and deepest thanks to The Japan Times and all our sponsors for making possible this media initiative, I would like to convey my heartfelt gratitude to all the friends of Tunisia in Japan for their continuous support and valuable good will to further enhance the excellent relations between our two countries.

In conclusion, I take this opportunity to wish the readers of The Japan Times and all the people of Japan a wonderful spring and a lovely "sakura" season.

Long live the Tunisia-Japan friendship.



Cultural exchange: A replica of an ancient mosaic-tiled mural decoration from the El Jem Museum will be offered to the city of Ishinomaki on Tunisia-Japan Solidarity Day on March 20. The mosaic depicts African and Asian ladies. EMBASSY OF TUNISIA

Tunisia-Japan Solidarity Day in Ishinomaki

The best of Tunisian culture will be showcased in Ishinomaki, Miyagi Prefecture, during the special event titled Tunisia's 57th National Day Celebration and Tunisia-Japan Solidarity Day in Ishinomaki on March 20.

Organized by the Embassy of Tunisia in Tokyo in collaboration with the city of Ishinomaki, Ishinomaki-shi International Friendship Association and Humanist Organization for Peaceful Evolution (HOPE), the event will provide opportunities to learn more about Tunisia

through lectures and workshops as well as a reception that offers a variety of Tunisian food.

At the opening ceremony, a mosaic-tiled mural decoration will be presented from the Tunisian Embassy to the city of Ishinomaki.

There will be also a concert featuring Tunisian and Japanese musicians as well as students of Nakatsuyama No. 2 Elementary School. The performers include Tunisian composer and oud player Riadh Fehri, Japanese violinist Sayaka and Japanese pianist and

psaltery player Miki Sakata.

The friendly relations between Tunisia and Ishinomaki started in 1992 in the former Monoucho and have further developed in the city of Ishinomaki since the municipalities' merger in 2005.

Tunisia's 57th National Day Celebration and Tunisia-Japan Solidarity Day in Ishinomaki takes place on March 20 from 12:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. at Yugakukan in Ishinomaki, Miyagi Prefecture.


Tunisia's 57th National Day
Celebration & Tunisia-Japan Solidarity Day in Ishinomaki

Appreciation for aiding Ishinomaki through friendly ties with Tunisia

Hiroshi Kameyama
MAYOR OF ISHINOMAKI

On behalf of the people of Ishinomaki, may I extend my congratulations on the occasion of Tunisia's 57th National Day Celebration and Tunisia-Japan Solidarity in our city.

I am deeply grateful for your support in the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami in 2011. And today, I really appreciate your hosting this special event in Ishinomaki, Miyagi Prefecture, in conjunction with the Tunisia Independence Day celebration.

Our exchanges with the Republic of Tunisia started in the former Monoucho in 1992, and our friendly relations have further developed in the city of Ishinomaki after the merger with the neighboring municipality took place in 2005.

It is our pleasure that we have built such a special bond with each other and I would like to thank you so much for organizing an excellent project including performances of Tunisian music, so that Ishinomaki people, who have been much affected by the disasters, could enjoy themselves and get peace of mind for a moment.

Although it should be a long journey until we fully achieve the earthquake disaster reconstruction, we will do our best, step by step, and try to make big strides, so that Ishinomaki people can come alive and become cheerful. I believe that the energy of the Ishinomaki people would be our repayment for your generous assistance.

In conclusion, I would like to extend my sincere wishes for further development of friendly relations between the Republic of Tunisia and the city of Ishinomaki and the further prosperity of the people of Tunisia.



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Congratulations to the People of the Republic of Tunisia on the 57th Anniversary of Their Independence

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