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An Arendtian Articulation of the Revolutionary Uprising in Tunisia

*The Power of Action and Vindication of Social
Justice*

Supervisor: Prof. **Paolo De Stefani**

Candidate:
Kathryn Marie Allison

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ABSTRACT

The current thesis asks the question ‘how can the revolutionary uprising in Tunisia be interpreted through the lens of Hannah Arendt’s political thought, and what can these historical events offer in terms of insight and critique into Arendt’s theoretical premise on the human condition, on revolution, and on articulation of the public realm?’ To answer this question, this thesis employs Arendt’s political thought as the foundation of the analysis, to which the theoretical inputs of other scholars form a comparative viewpoint in which to add depth to Arendt’s political theory in light of the events that have unfolded in Tunisia. In reading the Tunisian revolutionary uprising through an “Arendtian lens”, this thesis reveals that Arendt’s political thought on power and the human capacity for political action remains prophetic in explaining the revolutionary events, however this thesis also reveals fundamental shortcomings in Arendt’s dismissal of social and economic matters as constituting both a revolutionary force and an essential element of the public realm. This thesis concludes that through expanding Arendt’s narrowly defined conception of the public realm to be inclusive of issues of social justice, a more holistic image of the public realm can be reached that corresponds to the emerging political culture in Tunisia.

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