

## Inside Tunisia's al-Nahda

In the wake of the Arab uprisings, the Tunisian Islamist movement al-Nahda voted to transform itself into a political party that would for the first time withdraw from a preaching project built around religious, social, and cultural activism. This turn to the political was not a Tunisian exception, but reflects an urgent debate within Islamist movements as they struggle to adjust to a rapidly changing political environment. This book reorientates how we think about Islamist movements. Drawing on extensive fieldwork with grassroots activists of Tunisia's al-Nahda, Rory McCarthy focuses on the lived experience of activism to offer a challenging new perspective on one of the Middle East's most successful Islamist projects. Original evidence explains how al-Nahda survived two decades of brutal repression in prison and in social exclusion, and reveals what price the movement paid for a new strategy of pragmatism and reform during the Tunisian transition away from authoritarianism.

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# Inside Tunisia's al-Nahda

*Between Politics and Preaching*

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Rory McCarthy

*University of Oxford*



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## Note on Transliteration

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In transliterating from Arabic, I follow the guidelines of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (IJMES). Thus, ‘ denotes the letter ‘ayn and ’ denotes the *hamza* glottal stop. I do not use diacritics for personal names, place names, names of political parties and organizations, or titles of books and articles. Therefore, the movement I write about is al-Nahda and its members are Nahdawis, rather than *al-nahḍa*, An-Nahda, Ennahda, Ennahdha, or Nahdaouis. For words that are more common in English I keep to the simplified IJMES version, thus the shari‘a, not *al-sharī‘a*. I do, however, stray from these stylings to use commonly accepted Tunisian spellings for personal and place names (which are often themselves derived from French transliteration conventions) so that those public figures and places I write about may be more easily recognizable. That means I write about Rachid Ghannouchi rather than Rashid al-Ghannushi, and, for example, the district of Kalaa Kebira rather than the more formal al-Qal‘a al-Kubra.

# Abbreviations

AISPP	International Association for the Support of Political Prisoners
AKP	Justice and Development Party (of Turkey)
CPR	Congress for the Republic
FJP	Freedom and Justice Party (of Egypt)
GEAST	Group of Studies and Socialist Action in Tunisia
IAF	Islamic Action Front (of Jordan)
ISIE	Independent High Authority for the Elections
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
LTDH	Tunisian Human Rights League
MDS	Movement of Socialist Democrats
MOUPAD	Movement of Democratic Patriots; also known as WATAD
MPDC	Popular Democratic and Constitutional Movement (of Morocco)
MTI	Islamic Tendency Movement
MUR	Movement of Unity and Reform (of Morocco)
PCOT	Tunisian Workers' Communist Party
PDP	Progressive Democratic Party (previously the RSP)
PJD	Party of Justice and Development (of Morocco)
PSD	Destourian (Constitutional) Socialist Party
PSP	Social Party for Progress
PUP	Popular Unity Party
RCD	Democratic Constitutional Rally
RSP	Progressive Socialist Rally (later the PDP)
UDU	Unionist Democratic Union
UGET	General Union of Students of Tunisia
UGTE	Tunisian General Union of Students (associated with al-Nahda)

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UGTT	Tunisian General Labour Union
UTICA	Tunisian Confederation of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts
WATAD	Movement of Democratic Patriots; also known as MOUPAD