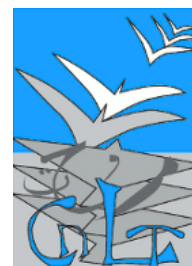


MEDIA MONITORING OF THE PRESIDENTIAL AND LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS

TUNISIA: 2009 Report



TUNISIA OCTOBER 2009

Media Monitoring of the Presidential and legislative elections

Final report December 2009

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Executive Summary

This is the second report submitted by a coalition of NGOs on the Tunisian media performance during the elections. Compared to the 2004 report, we note that the trends in 2009 have been confirmed by emphasizing those in 2004 on two points: the hegemony of the RCD and its candidate on the media space on the one hand, and the marginalization of the democratic opposition on the other hand. This is illustrated by the fraction of space (0.22%) allocated in the print media to Tajdid candidate, Ahmed Brahim.

On other points the trend is declining. The public space is increasingly delivered to the police who became the sole partner, replacing the administration and political actors. Furthermore, we cannot fail to note the emergence of a new actor who is neither a candidate nor institutional; The wife of the president candidate is getting more and more space in the public field, blurring further the institutional game.

This second edition of the monitoring of media coverage of legislative and presidential elections of October 2009 has provided its organizers a real challenge as the intimidations and obstacles were numerous, sometimes escalating to the level of police brutality and physical aggression. The challenge was to produce on time and in spite of these obstacles, a documented report to make proposals for reform in the field of freedom of expression and the right to information.

The challenge has been to broaden the coalition with other partners and take this monitoring work to the feminist University Ilhem Marzouki of ATFD. However, unlike 2004, the monitoring team was unable to complete their training or monitoring in the same premises under police pressure. The Italian expert and trainer Manuela Malchiodi, was, meanwhile, expelled on the third day from Manu military without legal justification.

Last, the electoral moratorium has not been respected. The outgoing president gave a public address October 24, the eve of the poll, which was widely covered by all media. This discourse stigmatized those who "did not respect the sanctity of the homeland or the integrity and pushed the audacity to use false allegations and inciting a desperate campaign with some foreign journalists to challenge the election results even before the counting". Five days later, the journalist Taoufik Ben Brik, who had published critical articles in the foreign press during this campaign, was arrested and sentenced to 6 months in prison after an unfair trial.

Findings

The monitoring team was based in Tunis at the offices of the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women (ATFD). The team used quantitative and qualitative methodological tools which meet international standards for media monitoring.

The quantitative monitoring of media coverage was undertaken over a period of 13 days from the start date of the campaign, October 11, until October 23, the official closing of the campaign.

The observation unit of the media has sought to assess:

- If the political parties have equitable access to media;
- If the activities of political parties and candidates are covered in an unbiased manner;

- If the media and authorities have complied with the rules relating to their conduct during the campaign, both at national and international level;
- If people have sufficient information through the media to formulate an opinion on election day

Quantitative analysis revealed:

1. The predominance of the presidential elections campaign, which has received significant coverage in relation to legislative elections (70.20% against 29.80%).
2. The dominance of the ruling party and the outgoing president who has the lion's share of media (97.14% in print, 75.83% in radio and television), making a visible and undeniable imbalance and bias that characterized the elections.
3. The low visibility of women candidates for legislative posts who benefited from a small space allocated by media (0.73%).

Qualitative analysis yielded the following:

1. The elections of 2009, the fifth term election since 1987, were shaped by locking policy and the renewal of an authoritarian regime. The latter is based on a constitutional re-registering the presidential power in the long term as well as on "special" and transient electoral laws. Promulgated in 1969, the Electoral Code has been amended to "change the rules according to the interests of power." The latter are characterized by increased media censorship and the gap between the electoral law and electoral fact.
2. Journalists working in public and private media have been pressured and faced various forms of harassment, including assault and imprisonment during the election campaign.
3. Despite its plural appearance with more than 250 newspapers, 3 radio stations and 2 private TV channels, the Tunisian media landscape is poor and subject to the will of the administration and the Tunisian Agency for External Communications (ATCE), whose mission is to "coordinate all promotional activities to raise awareness of Tunisia to the outside." In reality, It is dedicated to the control of foreign journalists during their visits to Tunisia. The public news agency Tunis Afrique Presse (TAP) is the only news agency that supplies all the official information media and almost all of them are forced to accept their dispatches.
4. In the absence of transparency and especially the lack of a public regulatory body truly autonomous from political power, the wave of liberalization in Tunisia can be summarized in a new form of subordination to the state.
5. According to candidates and political opponent leaders, further restrictions were exercised during this election campaign against the opposition press during this campaign.
6. The opposition candidates have undergone a systematic censorship in their airtime. The President of the High Council of Communication, Abdelbaki Hermassi, abused his authority and exercised political censorship on the content of candidate speeches, demanding the lifting of all content relating to "general amnesty" or "the mining area of Gafsa" or "the journalists' union," for example.

I - Methodology

Quantitative Analysis

On 11 October, the unit began observing campaign on three types of media (including television and radio). The choice of the sample used for media monitoring is based on three main criteria: ownership, penetration and audience. This observation concerned the public channel TV7 and Hannibal TV (private). The unit also monitored 7 daily newspapers;: La Presse and Essahafa (public);: Le quotidien, Achourouk, Le Temps, Assabah, and Assarih (private); the main news broadcasts on Radio Tunis, Radio Mosaïque FM, and Radio Kalima were also monitored.

The weeklies have not been monitored since the narrowness of the sample (2 copies for the entire campaign). The party organs have also been excluded from the sample because they are not required to be impartial.

Television programs have been categorized into sections: news, free time, special programs on elections, news and "other" (entertainment, religious programs, and so on). Units measured not only the time slots allocated to political actors, parties and candidates, but also the quality of media coverage on three criteria (positive, negative and neutral) to assess the tone of the media in relation to candidates from different political parties. The items are ordered in news and information, editorials, forums, and other advertising. The pages are ranked front page, national, economy, international affairs, regional affairs, culture and entertainment, sports, special supplements. The coverage is considered positive or negative if the unit finds that it is clear and unequivocal. The unit also looked at the gender perspective and noted the space allocated to women and their media visibility.

Outline sample

Newspapers monitored

<i>Name</i>	<i>Ownership</i>	<i>Language</i>	<i>Period</i>
Essabah	Private	Arabic	11 – 23 October
Achourouk	Private	Arabic	11 – 23 October
Assarih	Private	Arabic	11 – 23 October
Essahafa	State owned	Arabic	11 – 23 October
Le Temps	Private	French	11 – 23 October
Le Quotidien	Private	French	11 – 23 October
La Presse	State owned	French	11 – 23 October

Broadcast media monitored

<i>Name</i>	<i>Ownership</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Period</i>
TV 7	State owned	17.00 – 22.00	11- 23 October
Hannibal TV	Private	17.00 – 22.00	11- 23 October
Radio Tunis	State owned	17.00 – 22.00	11- 23 October
Mosaïque FM	Private	17.00 – 22.00	11- 23 October
Radio Kalima	Private	17.00 – 22.00	11- 23 October

Qualitative Analysis

Analysis consisted of interviews with key stakeholders to identify practical problems arising from implementing the law during the campaign and document facts related to these issues, particularly in regard to access to media and freedom of expression. Three groups of people were interviewed: journalists, candidates and political party leaders.

II – Recommendations

1. • The Tunisian legislation on the media should be revised to allow the Tunisian public to be better informed by pluralistic media practicing far from any political affiliation or allegiance.
2. • The current electoral code does not allow a balanced coverage of the entire spectrum of political representation. It is urgent that the electoral code incorporate the principles of free access and balance in dealing with the media for all political parties. In this respect, the law should be revised to ensure transparency and free access for all parties and candidates. The law should promote an appropriate structure to ensure consistent implementation of the legal framework and regulate the coverage and equal access to media.
3. • Despite the fact that equal access to media is important, other means and formats should be developed to encourage good coverage of elections. To ensure public access to detailed information on candidates and political parties, initiatives should be taken to provide a greater range of information to voters.
4. • Public Broadcasting and newspaper should respect their obligation to serve the public, not political forces. For this, the editorial and financial independence must be guaranteed.
5. • The free airtime allocated to candidates should be allowed during primetime, a time slot where they are more likely to target a larger audience. This is particularly important when the allocation of that airtime is the only opportunity for candidates to have access to the media.
6. • There should be a clearer separation between the programs related to elections and other program formats. Programs that are not directly related to elections should not be used to promote political parties
7. • The paid advertising should be clearly identified and regulated. We should ensure financial transparency for both the financing of political parties and campaigns to ensure fairness between competitors.
8. • Self-regulatory guidelines for journalists and the editors should be developed to ensure compliance with professional journalistic standards, codified in a charter of conduct that would be respected by all parties.
9. • The measures from public authorities to restrain and prohibit the alternative media that support the democratic development of Tunisia, as well as foreign media, should be lifted, as these are serious breaches of the provisions of the Tunisian Constitution and international instruments.
10. • The government should encourage the audiovisual sector to develop initiatives for private television and radio to provide a range of independent programs; licenses should also be granted with greater transparency.

III - Institutional and Legal Framework

The 2009 elections, the fifth term election since 1987, were held like its predecessors in a climate of political blockage and the renewal of an authoritarian regime. The latter is based on a constitutional re-registering the presidential power in the long term, as well as on "special" and transient electoral laws. If the deadlines come and go like the 2009 elections, it does not mean they are "elections like the others." For 2009, the challenge is 2014, the last constitutional obstacle to the candidacy of President Ben Ali for his own succession as the age limit imposed by Article 40 of the constitution.

A - The constitutional election rule

Two features characterize the constitutional election.

- The first is the fragile barrier to extending the mandate of the presidential candidate. Adopted on the basis of a constitutional referendum (99% of the votes), revision of 2002 (SC 2002-51) removes the limitation on the number of mandates and reelection to an age limit of 75 years. Since the rule is that the "President of the Republic can be reelected" (new Article 39). The only limitation that remains is the age requirement: 40-75 years years. Thus, ensuring that responsibility since 1987, the current president and candidate has been able to pass unhindered all elections by winning 99.27% in 1989, 99.91% in 1994, 94.49% in 1999, and 94.49% in 2004.
- The second feature is the filtering mechanism that regulates the nomination for the presidential race on the basis of special laws, humorously called the "disposable" these laws allow, at regular intervals, to override the rule of sponsorship (Article 40), and in the same time to maintain the ability to subject opposition individuals to a sort of filtration process. This mode of inclusion-exclusion was promulgated through the recent constitutional law of July 28, 2008. This "made on measure" law allows the head of the party (the president, the secretary general or first secretary) to run, provided they are elected and have been in this position at least two consecutive years. On this basis, the candidature of Dr. Mustapha Ben Jaafar, secretary general of the Democratic Forum for Work and Freedom (FDLT legalized in 2002), was invalid, and Nejib Chabbi, figurehead of the Democratic Progressive Party (PDP), withdrew without making a formal application.

B -The Electoral Code

Promulgated in 1969, the Electoral Code undergoes regular changes to the rules "according to the interests of power." There are nine since 1987, in 1988, 1990, 1993, 1998, 2000, 2003, 2006, and 2009.(FIDH/CNLT Report, Tunisia, the presidential and legislative elections, the environment of the election campaign in October 2009, p. 5).

This code is characterized by:

The quartering of the opposition in the chamber. In 1993 (Law No. 93/118), the rule of "quota" and assignment of office seats to the opposition in the House of Representatives was introduced. Combining the ballot majority list with a trip to the proportional representation is used to operate a "controlled pluralism." The House count at the end of elections was 214

members. A quota of 25% is allocated to opposition for proportional representation, with 53 seats allocated in advance by the authority.

The strengthening of media censorship.

Two methods are implemented:

The latest is the creation of the High Council of Communication on January 30, 1989. This was originally an advisory body to the President of the Republic. In 2008, it was endowed with legal personality. Since 2009, the power of its president has increased. Article 37 of the Election Code requires his presence at the recording of television programs of the candidates, allowing him to require immediate removal of programs on the terms he considers contrary to the law. This code also gives him the power to prevent the broadcast of the show, if necessary.

The second method was introduced in 2003 (Act 2003-58). Ambiguously worded, it opens the door to a large punitive purpose. Yet prohibits "any person" during the election period the use of a radio station or television station or foreign private or broadcasting from abroad "for the purpose of incentive to vote or refrain from voting for a candidate or list of candidates. "Any violation of the prohibition is punishable by a fine of 25,000 dinars."

The gap between the electoral law and electoral fact.

The whole election process - registration as voters, the nomination requirements, campaign, voting, counting, checking results, litigation and appeals - is carefully defined in code. In practice, this election process is under observation-mediation by a "National Elections Observatory," which has no legal existence, no formal duties, nor power of decision. It is through simple "presidential determination" that it was created during the 1999 elections, renewed in 2004, and again in 2009.

C -The legal regulations pertinent to freedom of speech, press and publishing

The legal level

The field appears to be "saturated" by a large body of legislation locking a field that is heading to its peak development in terms of technology and computing. Three main instruments are involved:

The Press Code, enacted in late 1975 and changed regularly in a spirit of repression and censorship (1988, 1993, 2001, 2006)

The Telecommunications Code, enacted in 1977 and amended in 2001, 2002, and 2008. The new legislation includes the ICT Act of 2000 on electronic exchange, the 2004 law on information security, the Act of July 27, 2004 on the protection of personal data.

Legal provisions blocking freedoms operate masked or disguised through two main mechanisms: The declaration system modified into authorization/license requirement, and the system of penalization and criminalization (over 50% of the code of the press is under prosecution, punishment and repression).

Institutional level

Despite the abolition of the Secretary of State for Information in 1999, the landscape remains highly checkered. New actors occupy the stage and play his role. The mission of the Ministry of Communications (Decree No. 2005-2602) is to ensure, among other administrative supervision, the Tunisian Radio and television, the Agence Tunis Afrique Presse (TAP), the National Documentation Center (SSC), the African Center of journalists and communicators (CAPJC), and new printing press and publishing companies.

Specialized structures have been introduced and are practicing censorship. Some advisory bodies, such as the Superior Council of Communication 1989, are regulators with disciplinary and quasi-judicial responsibilities. This also includes the National Telecommunications agency and the National Personal Data Protection. Finally, there are "unnamed" organizations for censorship, known to all as the Tunisian Agency for External Communications (ATCE, Act of August 7, 1990) and the Agence Tunisienne d'Internet (ATI Act 2003).

IV - Qualitative Analysis of the media environment

A - Media Scene

The media landscape in Tunisia is characterized by a paradox. It gives the feeling of being diverse and varied, with over 250 newspapers, 3 private radio stations and 2 private TV channels, but in fact it is subjected to the will of the administration which decides who is authorized to publish a newspaper or broadcast in radio or television, and who is deprived of this right.

Although the press is governed by the rules of declaration, the denial of the administration to issue the receipt of submission transforms the system into unnamed prior authorization.

In May 2005, the formality of "legal deposit" previously diverted to act as a censorship procedure, was abolished for Tunisian periodicals.

However, opposition newspapers such as El Mawkif and Mouatinoun continue to suffer severe financial strangulation. They have no access to the public funding granted to newspapers, they are deprived of public advertising and private advertising refrain from giving their ads for fear of reprisals, and their circulation is sometimes hampered by a series of pernicious measures to limit distribution.

The so called "independent" private press has openly aligned. The group called Dar Essabah, which has changed ownership in April 2009 and was bought by the son in law of President Ben Ali, released on September 2 a statement declaring support for candidate Ben Ali. Assabah also published October 21 an additional 228 pages of propaganda for the candidate Ben Ali; President of the private group Achourouk. Saida Amri also said on September 13 that the group supported the candidate Ben Ali, and Achourouk published on October 21 a special issue devoted to Ben Ali.

Moreover, the Tunisian Agency for External Communications (ATCE), a public institution created in 1990 whose mission is to "coordinate all promotional activities to raise awareness of Tunisia to the outside," manages all state advertising, redistributing it to Tunisian media according to criteria of allegiance. The ATCE also controls foreign journalists during their visit to Tunisia.

The audiovisual landscape continues to be monopolized by the government. Radios and private TV channels are granted to relatives of those in circles of power, and licenses are granted in total opacity, outside any regulatory framework.

In this highly-controlled media landscape, Tunis Afrique Presse (TAP) is the only news agency that supplies all the official information to media and almost all media are forced to refer to this agency.

The only truly independent radio station is Radio Kalima, who covered the elections, yet is not authorized to use frequencies. It broadcasts on satellite from abroad and its premises are still sealed. Free Webradio broadcasting through the internet on Radio 6 was also raided, and its office was also placed under seal.

The lack of a public regulatory body, truly autonomous from political power, changes the wave of liberalization in Tunisia, into a new form of subordination to the state.

B - Pressure on journalists

Journalists working in public and private media have been intimidated and subjected to various forms of harassment during the campaign.

Pressures on the Tunisian Journalists

- The journalist Hanen Belaifa was arbitrarily prevented from joining her workstation ERTT (public TV). She made a sit-in protest at headquarters of SNJT (the journalists' trade union) on October 15. According to the journalist, it was a measure to punish her involvement in the 10-day strike conducted by 150 journalists from national radio and TV on January 2009, and it had a successful outcome for journalists.
- The administration of the government newspaper La Presse has ordered all journalists not to cover the election campaign and use only the headlines of TAP. Similarly, a team of journalists has been requisitioned to write "volunteer" in the Ben Ali's website campaign.
- On October 15, Moez El Bey, a correspondent in Sfax of radio Kalima, was prevented by force from approaching the RCD's village election while trying to cover the campaign. Previously, the police assaulted him on two occasions: on October 8 in Sfax while covering an event at the Faculty of Letters, and again October 5 in Tunis. The police confiscated his recorder, mobile phone, and ID.
- On October 15, Zied El Hani, a leading member of the legitimate Union of Journalists (SNJT), was beaten outside his home in Carthage by a person he suspects to be sent by the police. October 8, while he was returning from a mission abroad, he suffered a humiliating body search and customs officers confiscated all his books. These acts are the result of harassment faced by members of the SNJT board since the coup organized by powerful journalists against the trade union.
- On October 16, several journalists from various private and governmental media were "invited" to the campaign headquarters of Ben Ali by their directors. They arrived at headquarters and were asked to write their names on a sheet. Ultimately they learned they were among the signatories of a petition supporting Ben Ali and issued by journalists. According to these journalists, Abdelwahab Abdallah, Minister of Foreign Affairs and campaign manager of Ben Ali, has been coordinating this operation.
- On October 17, a team from Radio Kalima who tried to cover the campaign in the northwest was arrested for 4 hours outside the town of Tabarka by a score of police officers from various departments who confiscated their phones, a memory stick, and a camera. They accused the journalists of not having permission from ATCE and not informing the police of their arrival in the city.
- On October 20, Zuhayr Makhoulf, correspondent from Assabil Online (a website based abroad) and legislative candidates on the list of PDP, was arrested and sentenced to three months in prison and a fine of 6,000 dinars. He was detained for having produced a video report on pollution in Nabeul.
- On October 22, the police raided Radio 6, an independent Webradio station, and confiscated all the equipment. The team had been conducting a sit-in since October 17 to demand their right to a license to broadcast on the airwaves.

- Throughout the election period, independent journalists have been targeted by newspapers close to the administration (Slim Bagga, Bensedrine) through a smear campaign publicly defaming them.

Pressure on foreign journalists

- A journalist from the French daily Le Monde, Florence Beaugé, was expelled from the Tunis Carthage airport October 20 after spending a night on a chair at the airport and has been targeted by a campaign of defamation and insults.
- A German journalist from Berliner Zeitung, Thomas Schmid, was thoroughly searched at the Tunis Carthage airport on arrival. His books, newspapers and all printed materials were confiscated and no certificate has been given by customs officers.
- Several journalists who tried to interview people in the street have been prevented from doing so by the police. One reporter of the Belgian daily Le Soir was interrupted while interviewing university students in Tunis 2. A student, Mohamed Sudani, was jailed October 22, following interviews he has done with reporters from RFI and Radio Monte Carlo.

C - Dominant role of Leila Ben Ali

What is also striking is the sharp distinction between the space allocated to Mrs. Leila Ben Ali and the other presidential candidates by the media. All public demonstrations of the wife of the outgoing president made the headlines. Immediately after opening the campaign, she has increased her public appearances (five in total). With ceremonial meetings and interviews, she occupies airtime, stumping for Ben Ali. She chaired the ceremony docking the boat "Loyal to Ben Ali" in La Goulette, which brought together 400 "special needs" young people, she delivered a keynote speech at meeting for women, she has given interviews and organized a caravan to the south, and other activities to benefit the candidate. All this has enabled her into position in the political chess game, despite that she has no institutional role.

Leila Ben Ali's position was strengthened by a reference to the presidential campaign made by the Interior Minister, Mr Rafik Belhaj Kacem. At the closing meeting of the campaign in Nabeul on the place of women, symbolized by Mrs. Leila Ben Ali as an example of authenticity and modernity, Kacem praised electing her to the presidency of the Organization of Arab women.

If the president has benefited from the activities undertaken by his wife, he has not campaigned as much for himself outside of the opening campaign and closing. The various appearances of the candidate does not fit directly into the program of the campaign but rather as part of his duties in presidential meetings, including regional councils, compounding the confusion of registers to its advantage.

D - Obstacles to freedom of expression of opposition candidates

According to candidates and political leaders belonging to the opposition, additional restrictions have been perpetrated against the opposition press during this campaign:

- An undeclared restoration of “depot legal” abolished in May 2008 for the national newspapers, has been observed for two newspapers: Attariq al Jadid, mouthpiece of Attajdid Movement, and Mouwatinoun of the FDTL. According to leaders of both newspapers, printers said that relevant departments of the Ministry of Interior have made them sign a commitment not to return the copies to their publisher before receiving the green light from these services; this may take 24 to 48 hours. "The instructions appear to have been given to the printer to submit a copy of the issue before its exit and await the reply of the Ministry of Interior. The last issue of October 7 was released two days late," said Ben Jaafar, director of Mouwatinoun.
- **Seizure of newspapers:** The issue 149 of Attariq al Jadid was seized on Saturday October 10th the pretext that the election manifesto of the movement was published inside before the launch of the campaign which was starting the same day at 00.00H !
- **Seizure of election manifestos:** The election manifesto of many candidates was seized at printing without any written notification from the Ministry of Interior. For Attajdid movement, whose general secretary complained in a press conference on October 20 of the absence of a competent partner in the administration, it is through the elections observation that they learned of the reproach of their manifesto. An official of the Ministry of Interior then reported their five paragraphs to be cut back to allow them to circulate. Five days before the end of the campaign, a “cleaned” election manifesto was finally allowed to be released.
- **Airtime censored for opposition candidates:** The opposition candidates have undergone a systematic censorship in their airtime. The candidate of Tajdid/Moubadra for president, Ahmed Brahim, had his airtime robbed of 22 minutes and broadcasting to public TV and radio was unexpectedly advanced. When it was announced at 20.30 he learned that it was changed to 18.30, and he received the notice only 15 minutes earlier to the actual broadcast time. His airtime was also interrupted by the call to prayer.

The opposition candidates have been entitled to 3 minutes of airtime per list and their broadcast time has been programmed to meet the poor viewership hours between 17h and 18h, at a time when people are just leaving work. The order of appearance was decided by lot, only some are not passed at scheduled intervals, such as Tajdid and FDTL candidates.

The broadcasts were recorded in the presence of President of the High Council of Communication, Abdelbaki Hermassi, who had the right to demand the immediate withdrawal of the terms he considers contrary to law. The latter has abused its authority and exercised political censorship, according to statements by the parties, demanding the lifting of all content relating to “general amnesty” or "the mining area of Gafsa" or "the journalists' union,” for example. Those candidates who have refused to run, having seen their delivery "narrowed" after the fact, and some of their speeches censored. Others have not been released at all, as was the case for Rauf Mahjoubi candidate for Tajdid/Moubadra of Beja.

- **Media blackout:** Some parties have been outright shunned by the public media. "This access to the media comes down to us to zero, as secretary general of a recognized party, the official media during elections have never solicited nor made known to the public our activities,” said Maya Jeribi, SG of PDP party.

E – Moratorium

The electoral moratorium has not been respected. The outgoing president gave a public address October 24, the eve of the poll, which was widely covered by all media. This discourse stigmatized those who "*did not respect the sanctity of the homeland or the integrity and pushed the audacity to use false allegations and inciting a desperate campaign with some foreign journalists to challenge the election results even before the counting*". Five days later, the journalist Taoufik Ben Brik, who had published critical articles in the foreign press during this campaign, was arrested and sentenced to 6 months in prison after an unfair trial.

V - Findings of quantitative analysis of media coverage

These elections were marked by:

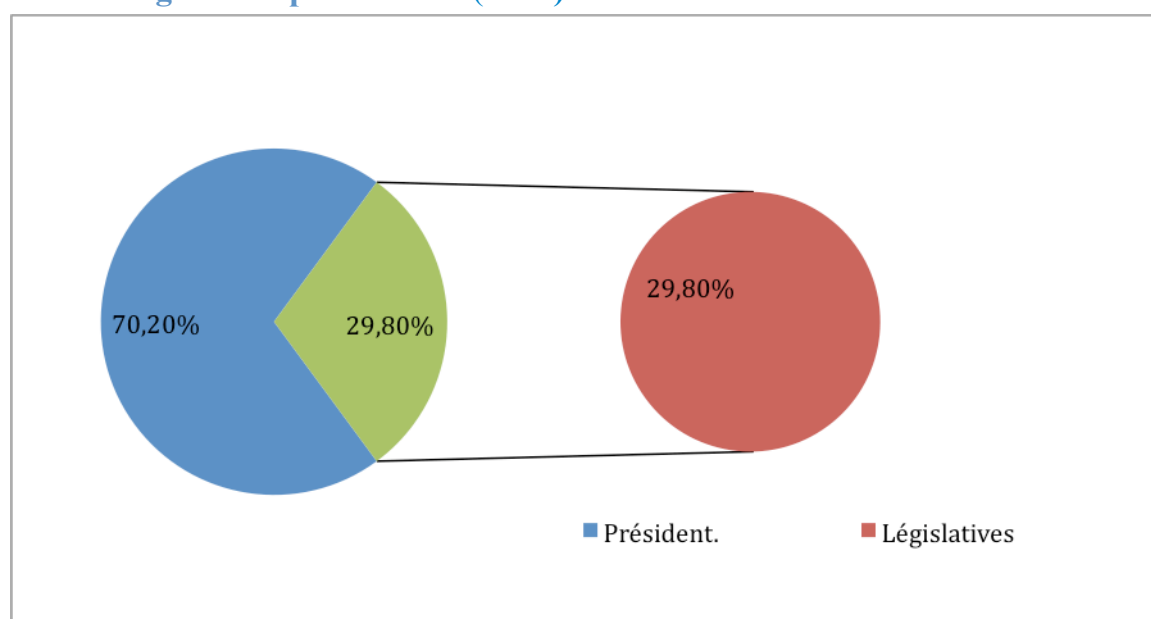
- The dominance of the presidential campaign; arguably the newspaper has reserved a special place for presidential campaign which received a significant coverage in relation to legislative campaign (70.20% against 29.80%).
- The dominance of the incumbent president, who has the largest share (97.14% in print, 75.83% in radio and television), making a visible and undeniable imbalance and bias that characterized these elections.
- The dominance of the ruling Constitutional Democratic Rally (RCD) in all media.
- The strong presence of Mrs. Leila Ben Ali, investing the political field and its involvement in the campaign for the outgoing president.
- The low visibility of women candidates for legislature, which benefitted from very small media coverage (0.73%).
- The new methods of engagement have invested public space (using SMS). These methods are innovative in getting involved in the campaign. Associations close to power have sent messages on mobile phones such as the UTOJ, “The Tunisian Union of Youth Organizations greets you and invites you to send an SMS to support President Ben Ali to 77777.(which is free)”

A - General Coverage

Print media

It is clear from reading the tables and charts, a clear predominance of presidential campaign (70.20%) on legislative (29.80%) with a dense and diverse information relating directly or indirectly to the campaign of incumbent President.

1- Coverage in the print media (cm2)



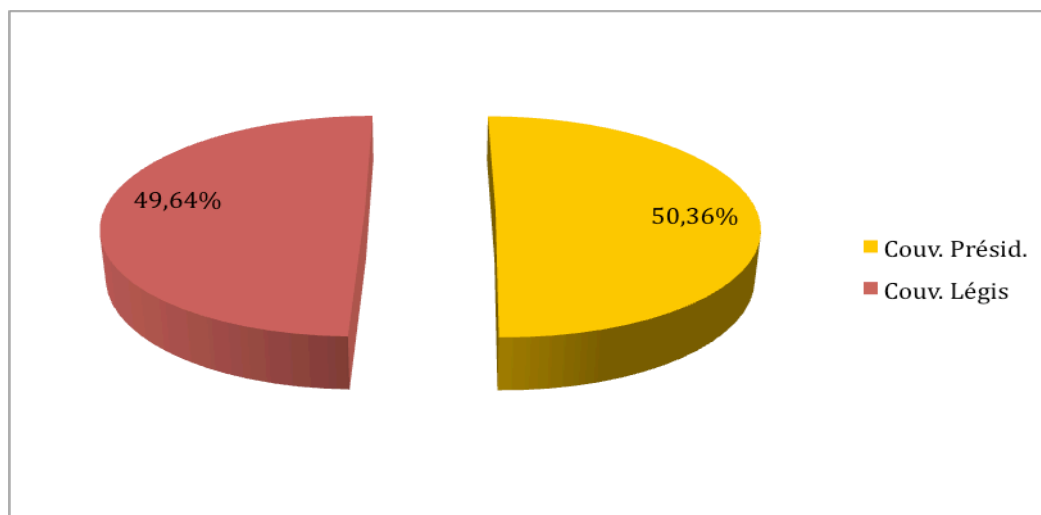
All activities of the candidate Ben Ali and those who campaign for him, first those of his wife, those government members and those members of the RCD have occupied a prominent place in the press. The candidate has been presented throughout the country as the savior of the country, the man of the future that has been the source of progress in all areas.

The high degree of personalization of the President was characterized by identification of the candidate with the country, involving the emblem of Tunisia Ben Ali portrait of the Tunisian flag and by having invested all public and private spaces by all kinds of displays relating to the presidential candidates and the RCD.

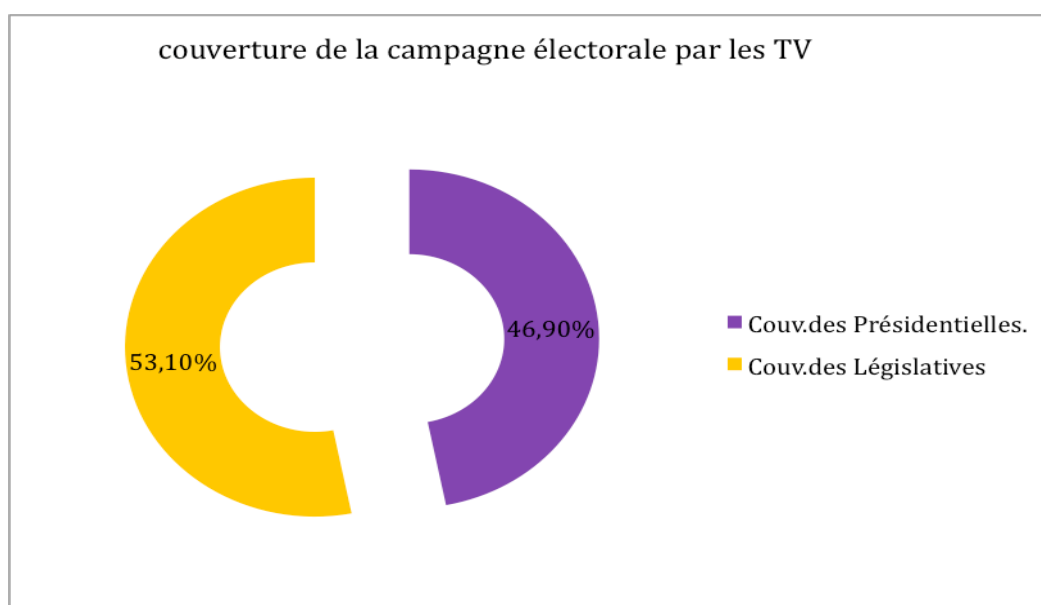
Coverage in the audiovisual media

Unlike print, radio and television stations have a balanced space allocated to presidential and legislative elections, although in a slightly better radios has been registered for presidential elections.

2-Coverage in Radios



3- Coverage in Télévisions



It should be noted that it is difficult to identify clear lines of demarcation between the presidential and parliamentary elections, as both the RCD to legislative candidates and even some of the opposition close to the government campaigned in favor of the incumbent and their platform. Moreover, confusion was reinforced by the status of the president, who is confused with that of ruling party. Thus, the apparent balance of spaces allocated to presidential and legislative campaigns was somewhat distorted.

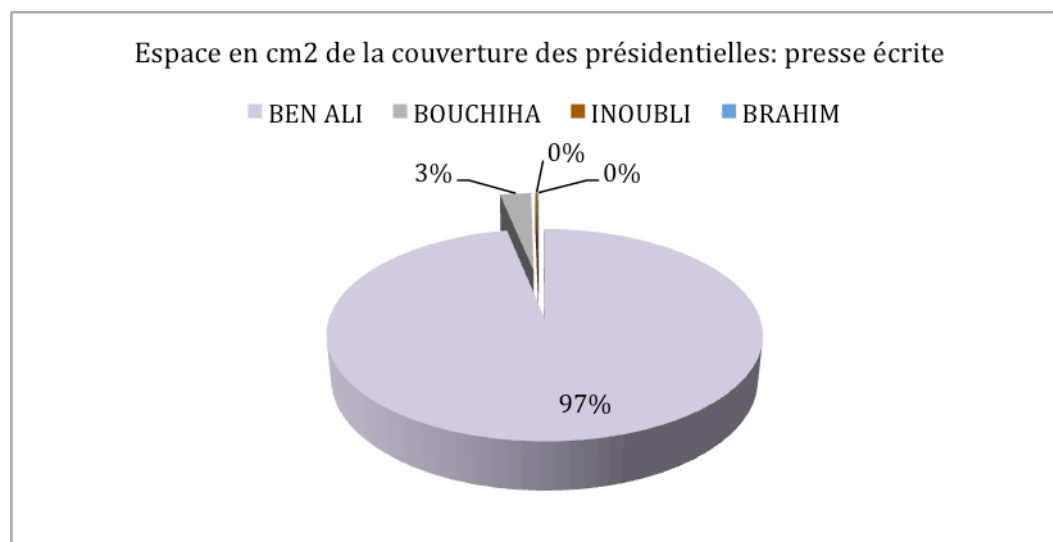
B - Coverage of the presidential campaign

Allocation of space in the print media

What is striking is the advantage enjoyed by the incumbent president. 97.14% of the media space has been devoted to his campaign, marginalizing its competitors who shared unfairly less than 3% remaining. The candidate of the PUP party, close to power, was entitled to 2.59%, while the Ettajdid candidate was virtually nonexistent with 0.10%.

The strong dominance of the incumbent president in the campaign was also marked by the appearance of his wife, who has been omnipresent and made many public appearances as the press has extensively covered. The presidential couple made the headlines daily and color photos have been reserved for them. The first pages were allocated by those who were campaigning for the incumbent president, for example members of government and the RCD. The other candidates are far from having received the same treatment, they are found in the middle pages if there is any interest at all.

4-Space allocated by print media (cm2) to Presidential candidates



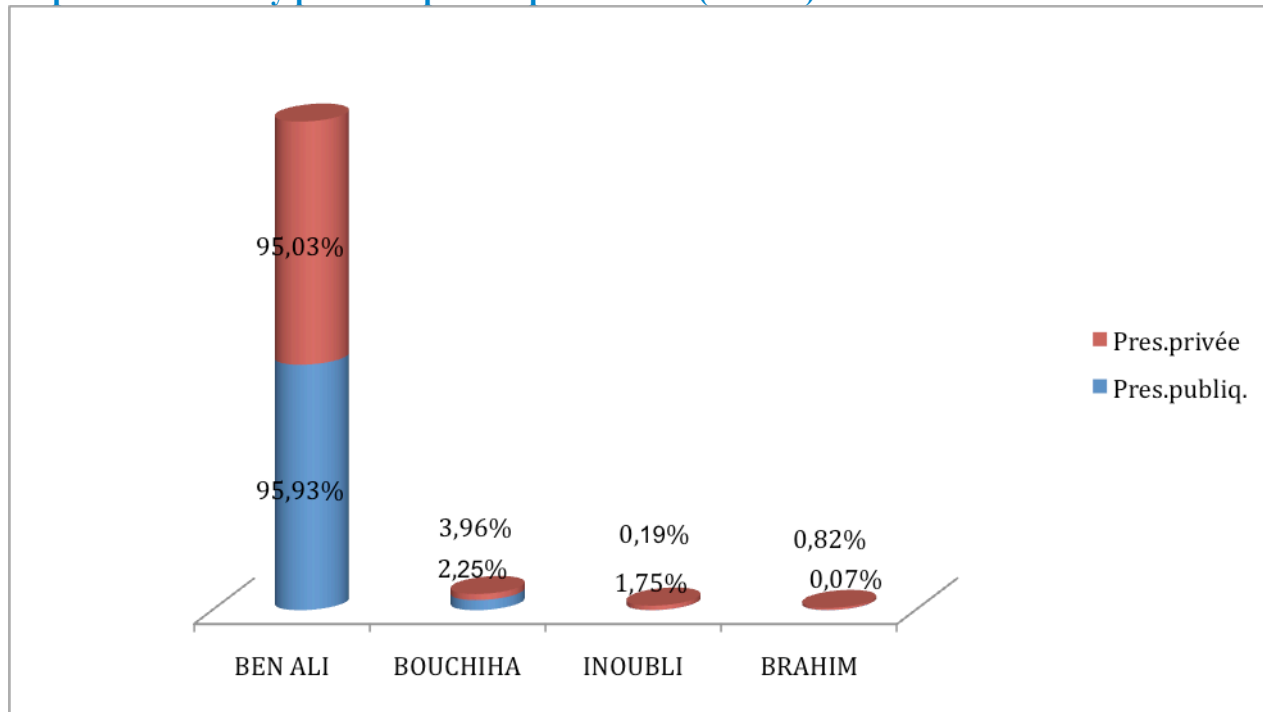
If you add up the time allocated to both Mrs. Ben Ali and that allocated to her husband, outgoing president receives 97.14% of the coverage of the presidential campaign by the print media.

Allocation of space in daily private and public

The presidential elections have been treated equally by the two newspaper groups that have spent respectively 95.93% (Public Service) and 95.03% (private press) of the total space

allocated to President Ben Ali; the comparison thus becomes irrelevant and insignificant. Only 5% has been allocated to other candidates; the candidate Ahmed Brahim, was almost completely absent (0.07% against 0.83%). Unlike 2004, when the private press was given greater coverage to opposition candidates (23%).

5-Space allocated by public & private print media (en cm2)



It is difficult to significantly differentiate the 2 groups of press due to the absence of independent private press in the media environment in Tunisia especially among newspapers; as the son in law of President Ben Ali acquired group Essabah recently. Usually this group benefit from a margin of freedom to cover a minimum activity of opposition parties, departing somewhat from the official press.

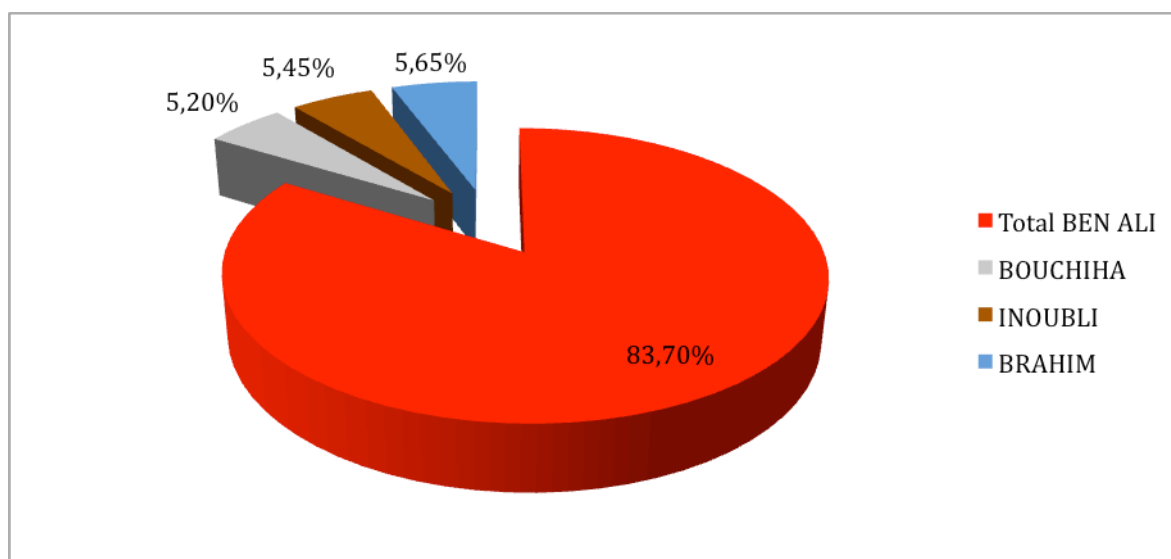
Allocation of space in the audiovisual media

The first conclusion to be drawn is that of unequal treatment of presidential candidates. An obvious advantage was given to President Ben Ali in terms of tone and space. This advantage concerns both the president himself and his wife who has seen his appearances and activities, retransmitted more than once and amplified in the audio-visual landscape. Front pages of newspapers were reserved almost exclusively to him. He was the only candidate to have a repeated transmission of his speeches and rallies, and benefit from a positive tone in almost all broadcasts.

Radio

Although regulated, time allocated to presidential candidates has been neither fair nor equal. The outgoing president has totaled up 83.70% of transmission time. This covers the candidate himself and those who campaigned for him, including Mrs. Leila Ben Ali, who was entitled to 15.52%. This was the equivalent of time allocated to the other three candidates combined, who were given equal time, just over 5% each.

6- Global time allocated to candidates in radio



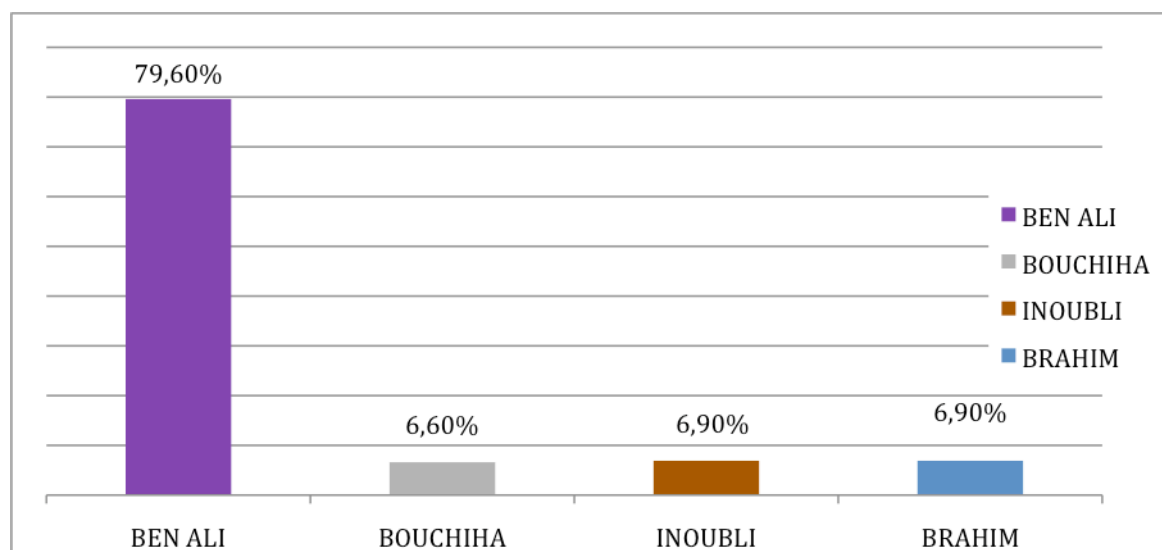
Discrimination was recorded and concerned mainly Ettajdid candidate Mr. Ahmed Brahim, who was kept uninformed of the time of his speech broadcasting, with changes come in the last minute. It was programmed in a time of low listening (5 Pm) and was interrupted by the call to prayer. All opposition candidates, including those close to government, have not used the entire regulation time, given the unfavorable conditions in this type of service.

Time allocated by public and private radio to the presidential candidates

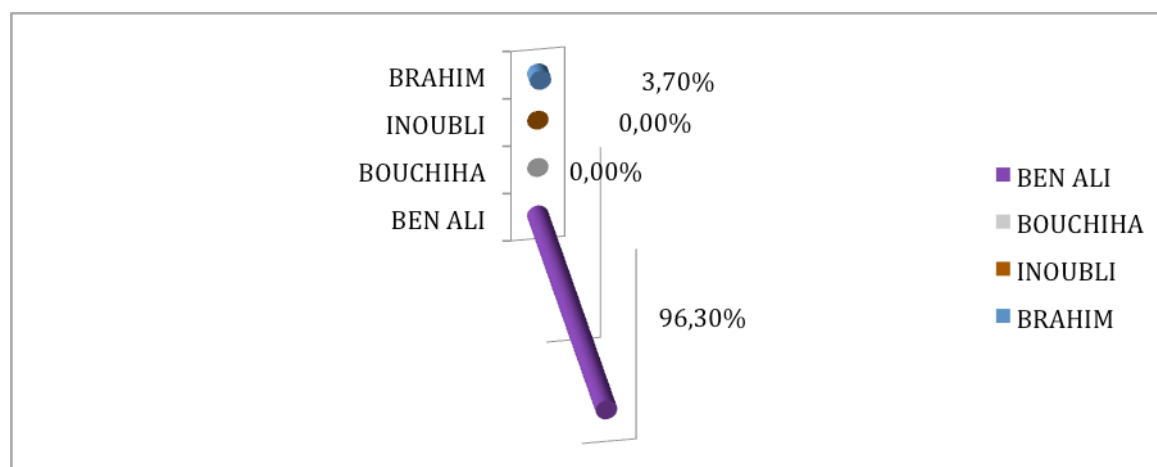
It is mainly the public radio station that has attached importance to the campaign, allocating 9h7m; 79.60% of this time was in favor of President Ben Ali. Private radio stations are less interested in elections; they devoted only 44.51 minutes (almost ten times less than public radio) with 96.3% to the incumbent.

In fact among the radio stations, Radio Mosaic (close to the government) was interested exclusively to President Ben Ali. Only Radio Kalima (independent radio) covered the presidential elections in a balanced way, including the campaign of opposition candidate Ahmed Brahim. This radio has encountered many obstacles in achieving its job, for example its journalists were prevented from meeting the candidate of the ruling party in Tabarka and covering the elections in this city under the pretext that they have not informed ATCE of their trip!

7-Time allocated by public radios to candidates



8-Time allocated by private radios to candidates

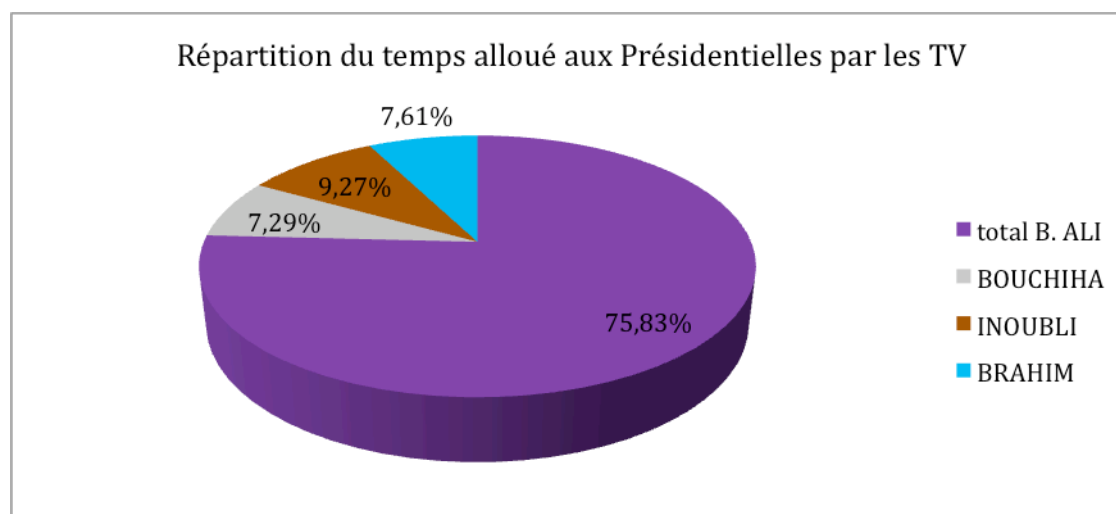


This presentation does not count the benefits for the president and his wife who were regularly broadcast at least twice more by public radio; we can thus appreciate the lack of impartiality and balance that characterized the campaign coverage by public radio.

TV coverage

The same trend observed in the radio coverage was recorded for television coverage. Television has devoted an overwhelming advantage to the incumbent president, even though in percentage terms there was a slight decrease from the radio. This decrease is partly explained by the observed time slot that is not the same for both media. Ben Ali has received 75.83% of air time against an average of 8% for each of the other candidates.

9- Total time allocated to candidates by TV

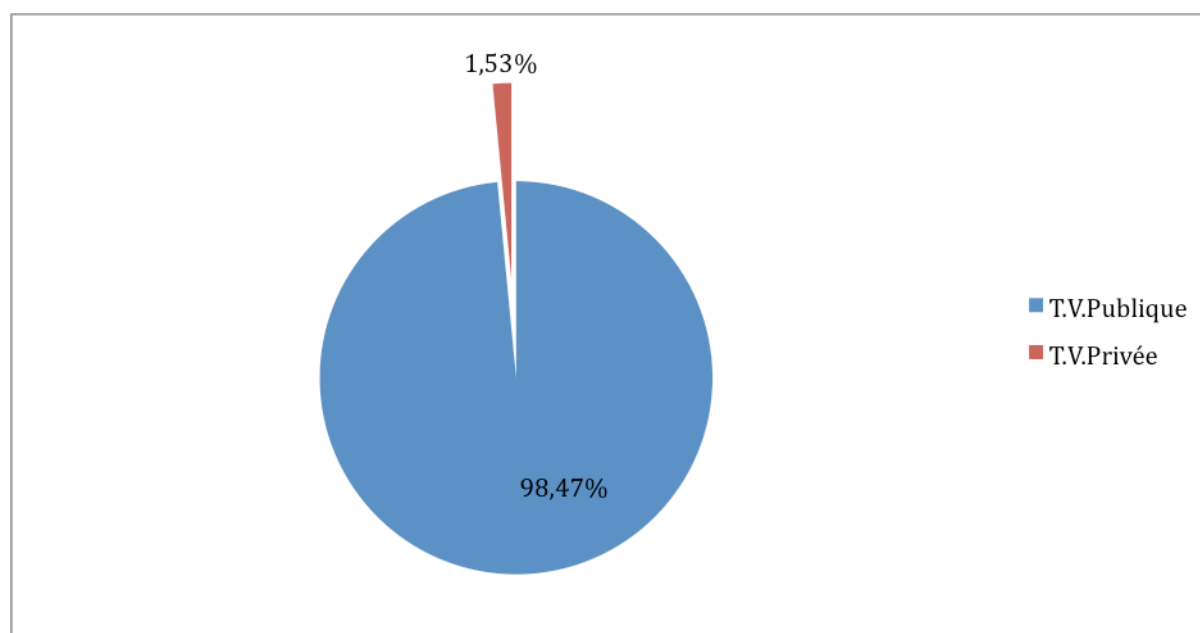


Note that this figure does not include the repeated passages of speeches and activities of the president or Mrs. Leila Ben Ali.

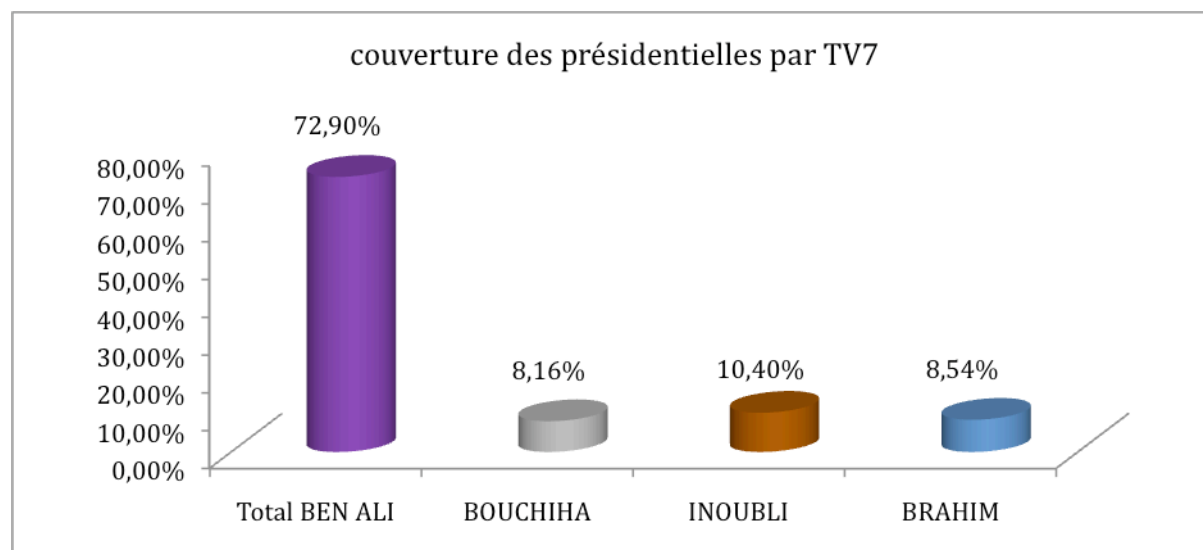
Contrary to print media, regulations has to give opposition candidates a minimum time of antenna. However, the conditions of control and censorship have never reached such a degree. When recording their performance, candidates were informed of licensed content and prohibited content. The attitude of the High Authority of Communication also varied from one candidate to another, depending on how close they had with the government. Ahmed Brahim was the only candidate to have been censored and saw part of his campaign speeches prohibited.

The national channel TV7 allocated time for the presidential campaign at 98.47%, against 1.53% for the private channels.

10-Time allocated by Public and private TV channels



11-Time allocated by public channel TV7 to candidates



It is a partisan coverage in favor of the President shown by the two television channels, characterized by the lack of impartiality and objectivity necessary for the proper conduct of the elections.

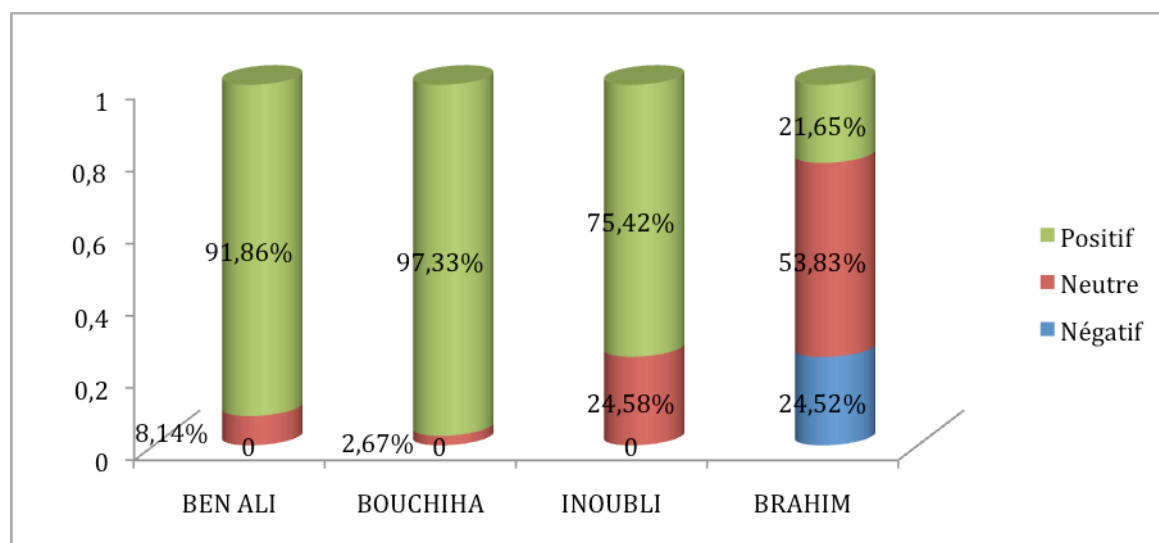
The private channel, Hannibal TV, in its broadcast programming on presidential, testified to a lesser degree of interest to the candidate himself than Mrs. Ben Ali, in comparison with the public channel.

What is noteworthy are the indirect forms related to the campaign in favor of the incumbent president, who is the subject of media coverage: special programs, cultural programs, concerts, debates and interviews.

C - Tone of the coverage of presidential candidates

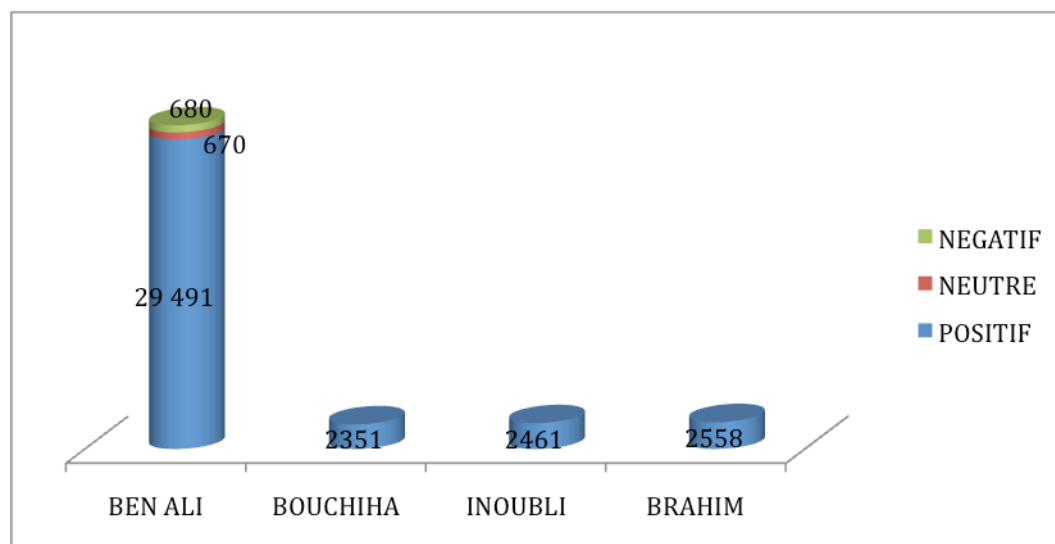
Throughout the observation period, the tone was neither offensive, defamatory, nor hateful in all media. All candidates have received coverage characterized by a largely positive tone with one exception. President Ben Ali has recorded more than 90% of the positive press in the same competition from the PUP candidate who has received 97.33%, followed by Inoubli with 74.42%. However, the press devoted to Mr. Ahmed Brahim very limited space, as coverage with negative tone was at 24.52% and a positive tone at 21.65%.

12-Tone of the coverage in print media



In the audiovisual media, and especially radio, there has been a generally positive tone for all candidates, but very uneven. The striking advantage for President Ben Ali is due to the time that media coverage devoted to him. However, in the following table emerges another except that relating to the negative tone booked by a private radio outgoing president. It is the independence of the radio (Kalima) explains this result.

13- Tone of the coverage in audiovisuel media



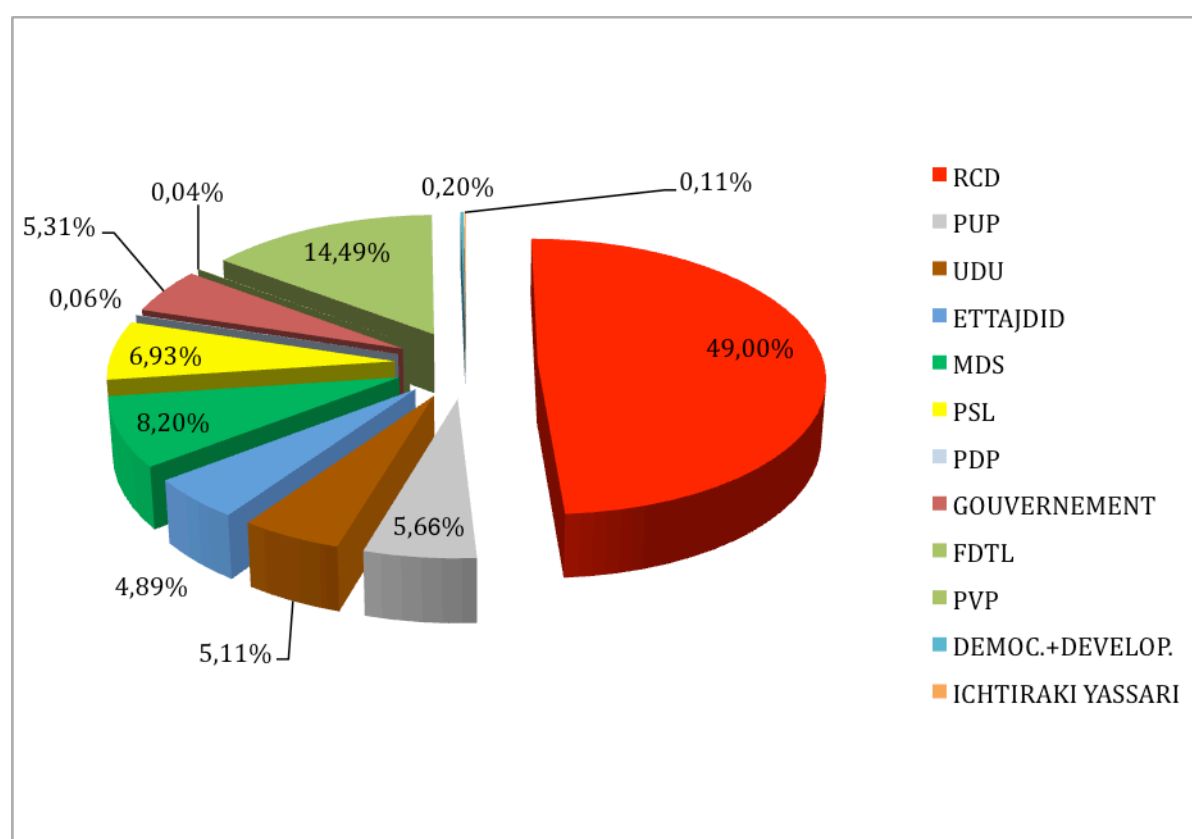
D - Coverage of the legislative campaign by the media

The legislative elections have been marginalized in favor of presidential elections and have received limited coverage in the media. But this imbalance is compounded by another in favor of the ruling party.

The print media

In the print media, RCD received almost 50% of space while the other lists of opposition parties shared the remaining 50%. Ten parties and independent groups were in the race: the RCD lists, the seven opposition parties, and lists of the two independent groups. Three pro-government parties were able to compete in all governorates and have the same number of lists that RCD but have received only limited coverage in the press. Despite their proximity to power, and while some opposition candidates have been campaigning for President Ben Ali, they have not had a real advantage in terms of media coverage. The space allocated was monopolized by the RCD candidates by members of government who were in the field or conducting activities as part of their function and also by Mrs. Ben Ali reducing the space for other candidates.

14-Space allocated by media to legislative (cm²)

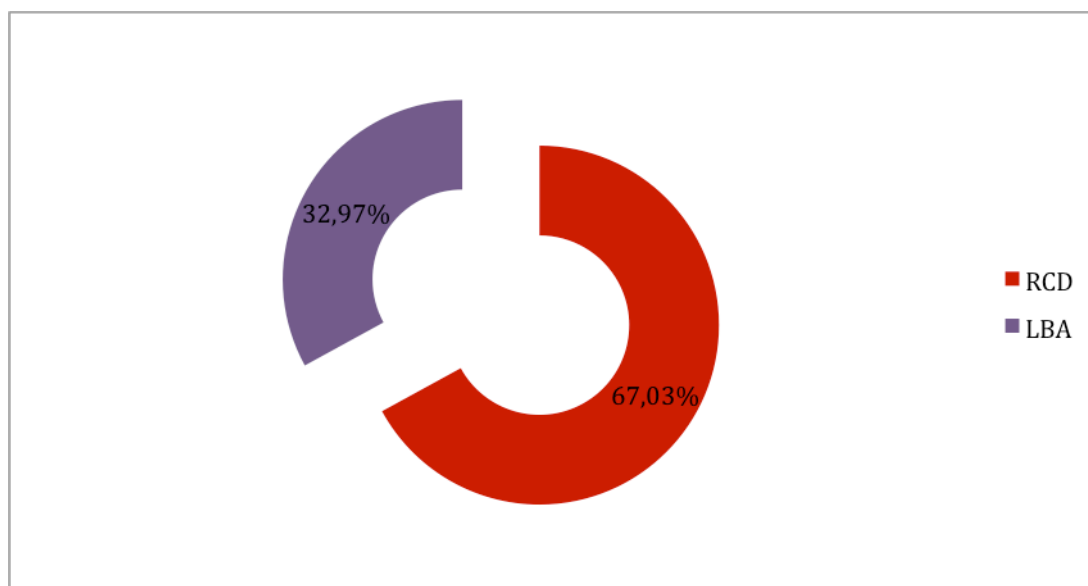


The real opposition parties and independent candidates were able to present a limited number of lists, thus restricting their participation significantly in these elections. They saw a large number of invalidated lists, the selection having taken place upstream. One of the real

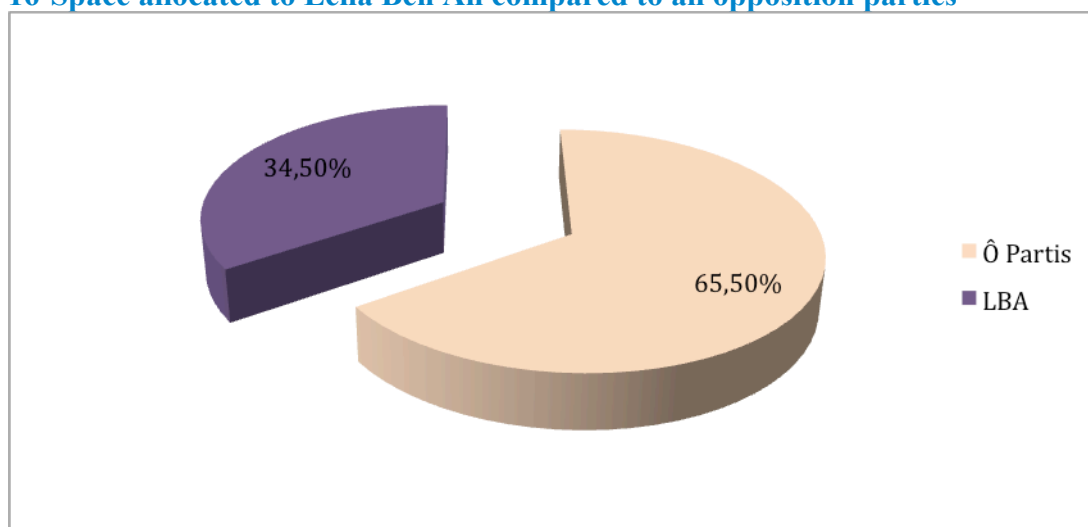
opposition party, the DPP has decided to withdraw in protest of flagrant violations it has suffered in the process of validation of its lists.

In comparison, the following tables, we indicate the space allocated to the RCD to other parties and to Mrs. Leila Ben Ali. They allow us to better assess the imbalance between the first presidential and legislative elections at the expense of legislative candidates and the importance of media coverage enjoyed by the president's wife who was entitled to half the space devoted to the RCD (32.97%) and more than half of all the space devoted to all lists gathered outside RCD (34.50%).

15-Space allocated to Leila Ben Ali compared to RCD



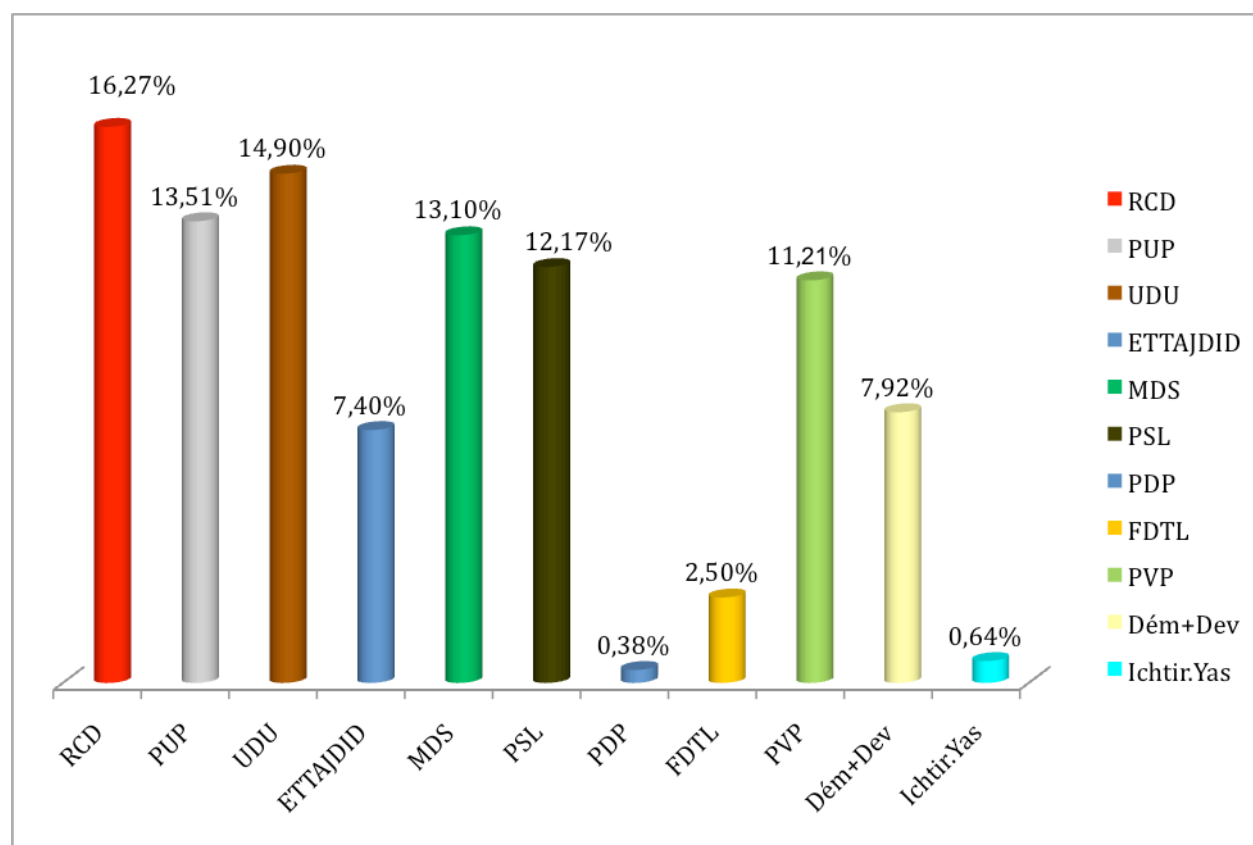
16-Space allocated to Leila Ben Ali compared to all opposition parties



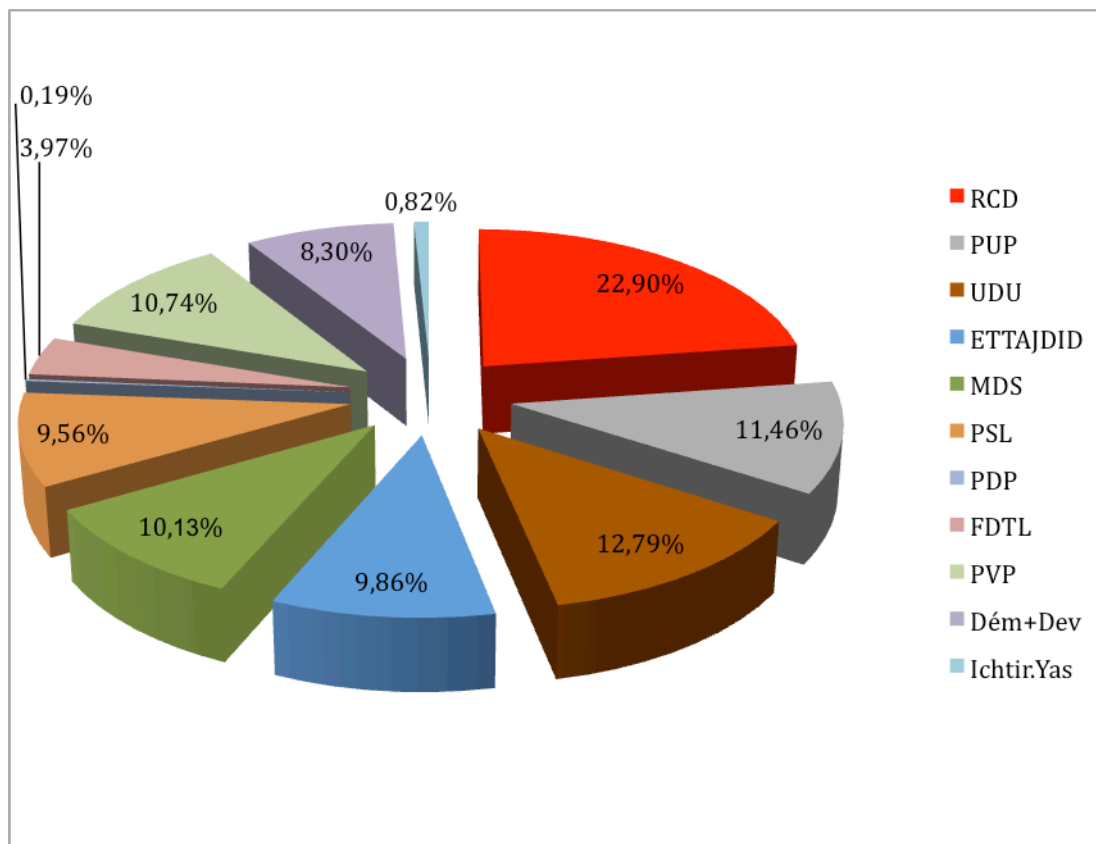
The audiovisual media

Reading the tables we see that a balance was struck between the various parties in the coverage of the campaign for parliamentary elections. Regulating access to public audiovisual media has been a positive step that allowed opposition candidates to enjoy a time equivalent to the RCD candidates. Both the radio as for television, the time in which candidates are the same for all who can conduct equality if the rules are observed, which was not always the case. The ruling party has found an advantage over other parties because of the number of its lists and media indulgence towards them. Radio stations have dedicated more airtime to them with 22.90% which ranks the ruling party 1st among other parties, followed by UDU with 12.52%. In television, RCD was covered at a rate of 16.27%, followed by the UDU at 14.90%.

17-Time allocated to parties in legislative

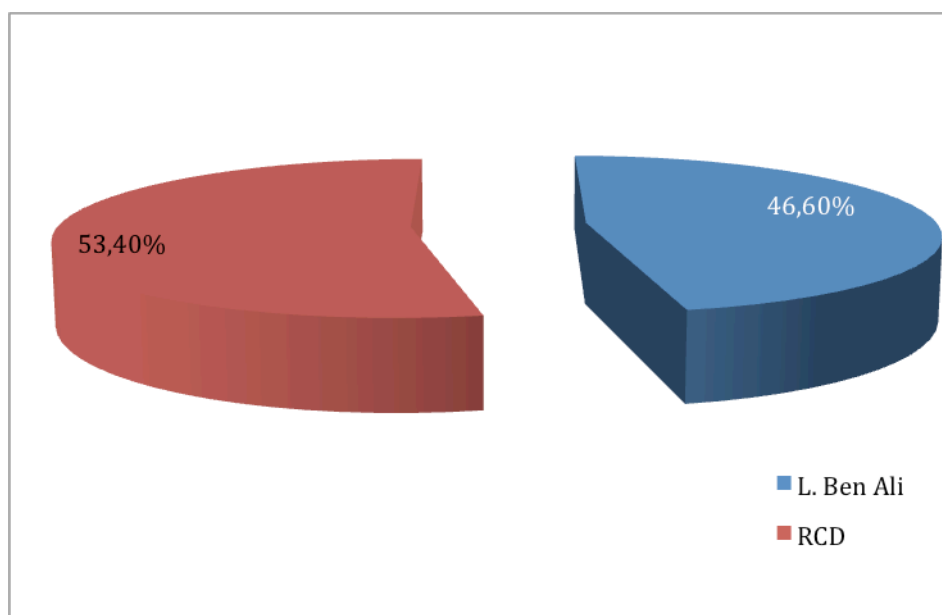


18-Time allocated to parties by radio



This advantage is lost in comparison with the exceptional coverage devoted to the president's wife. For example, on the radio, she recorded alone 46.60% against 53.40% for the RCD:

19-Time allocated to Leila Ben Ali in radio

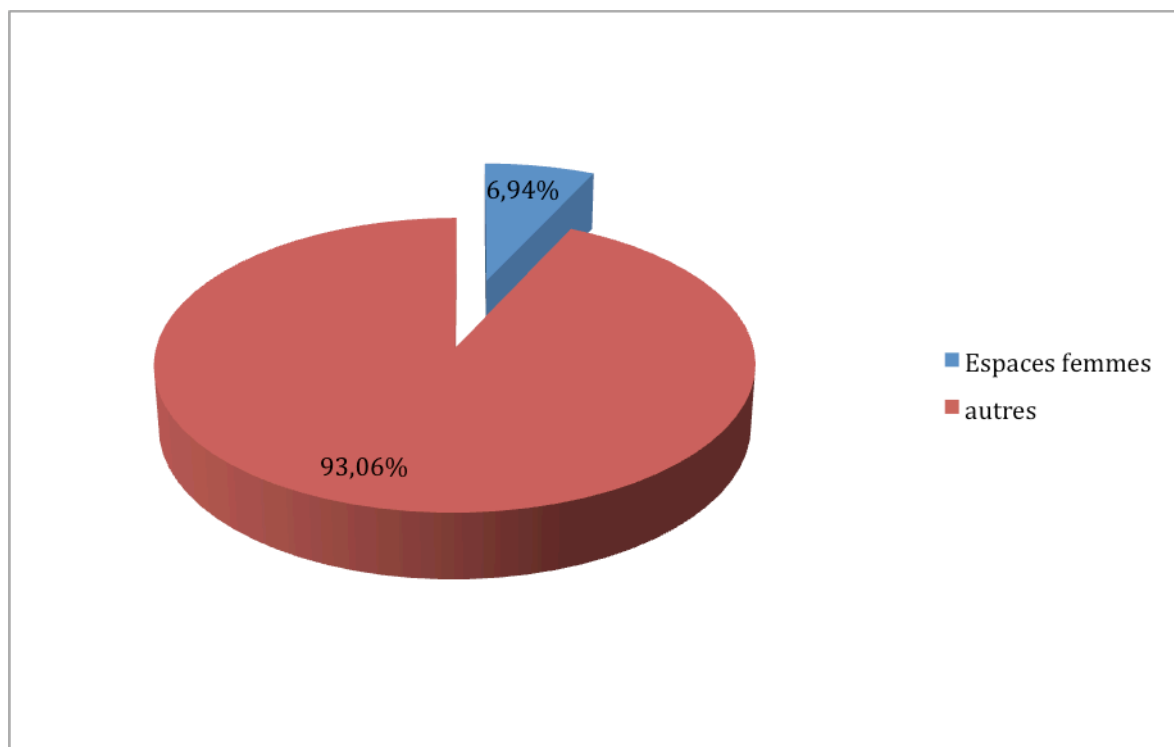


V - Media coverage of women candidates' campaigns

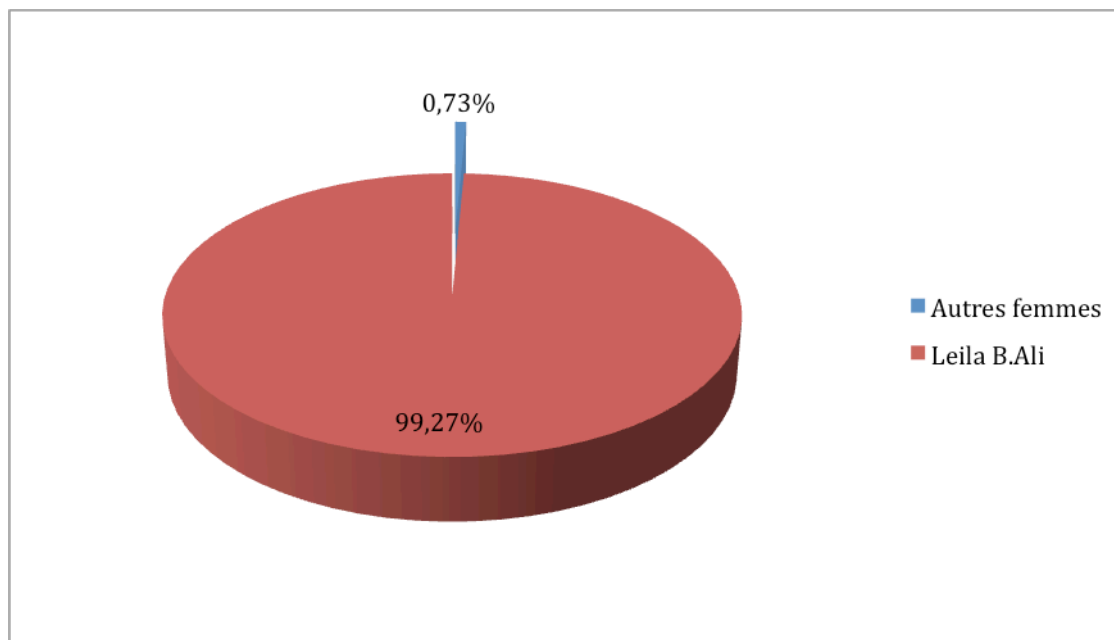
In terms of audiovisual media, the regulation allows a breakthrough time on the airwaves to candidates heading lists. There are only 18 women heads of lists which had access to audiovisual media (this figure has no proportional relationship with the number of approved lists, nor with the number of women candidates on each list). Their passage was very limited in number, and what is noteworthy is the near absence of candidate lists heads of RCD.

We found that during this campaign, women's visibility was extremely poor. Only Leila Ben Ali held the media spotlight, taking over the issue of women's rights as president of the Basma Association and president of the United Arab Women. Investing the political arena during an election campaign for the benefit of the outgoing president; she has overshadowed women candidates for parliamentary elections.

20-Space (cm²) allocated to women during the campaign

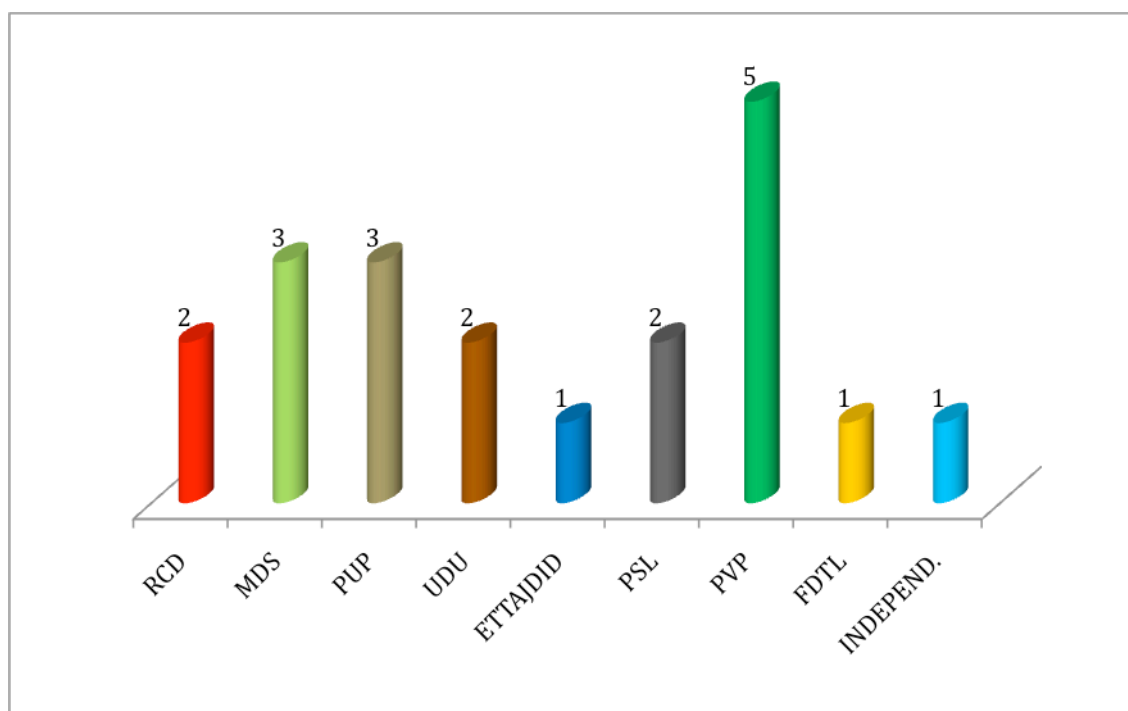


21-Time allocated to Leila Ben Ali compared to other women

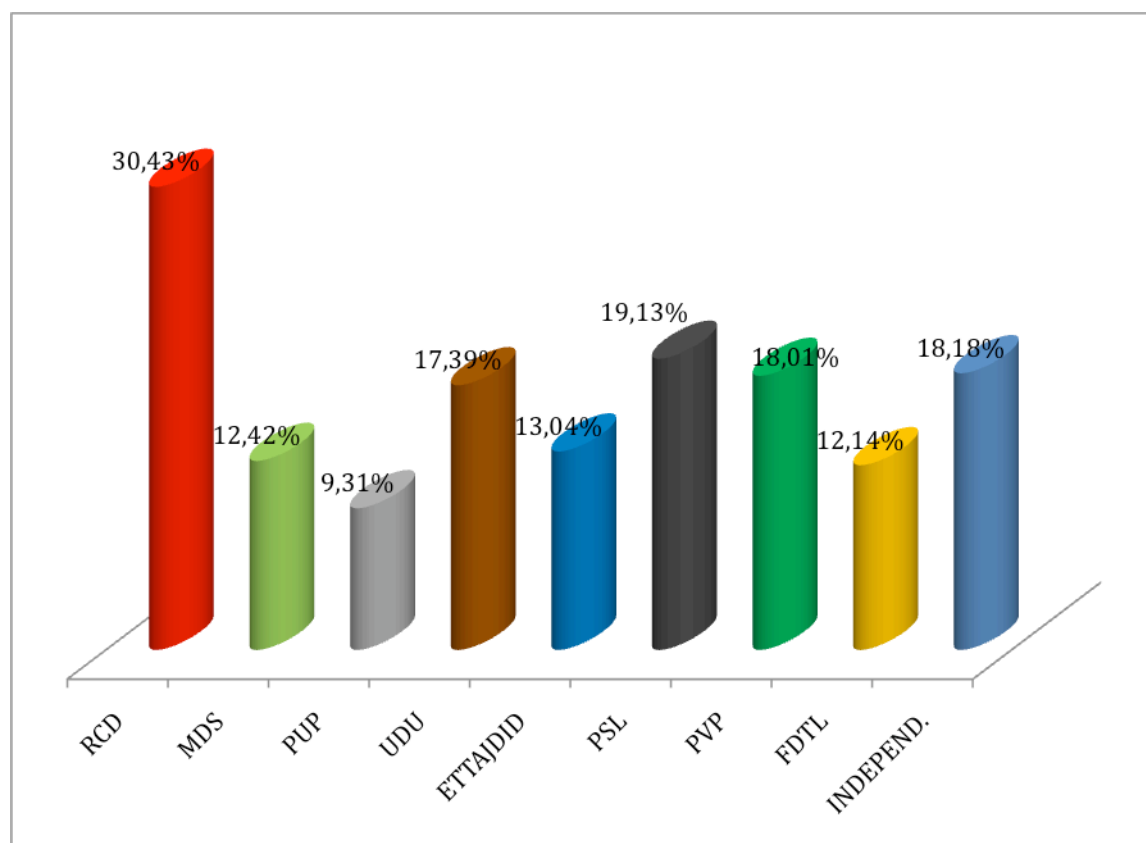


The press has excelled in covering all of Leila Ben Ali activities, including meetings that may not be connected to elections. During this election period, only 6.94% of the space allocated by the press in the election campaign has been devoted to women, and only 0.73% to women candidates. 99.27% of the time allocated to women was in favor of Mrs. Ben Ali.

22-Number of women heading lists

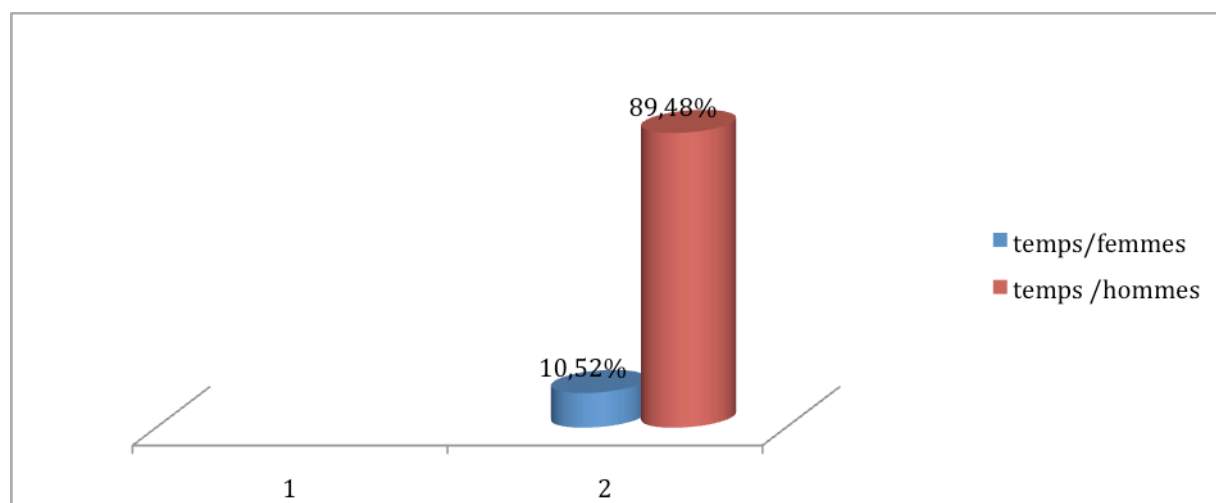


23-Percentage of women by list

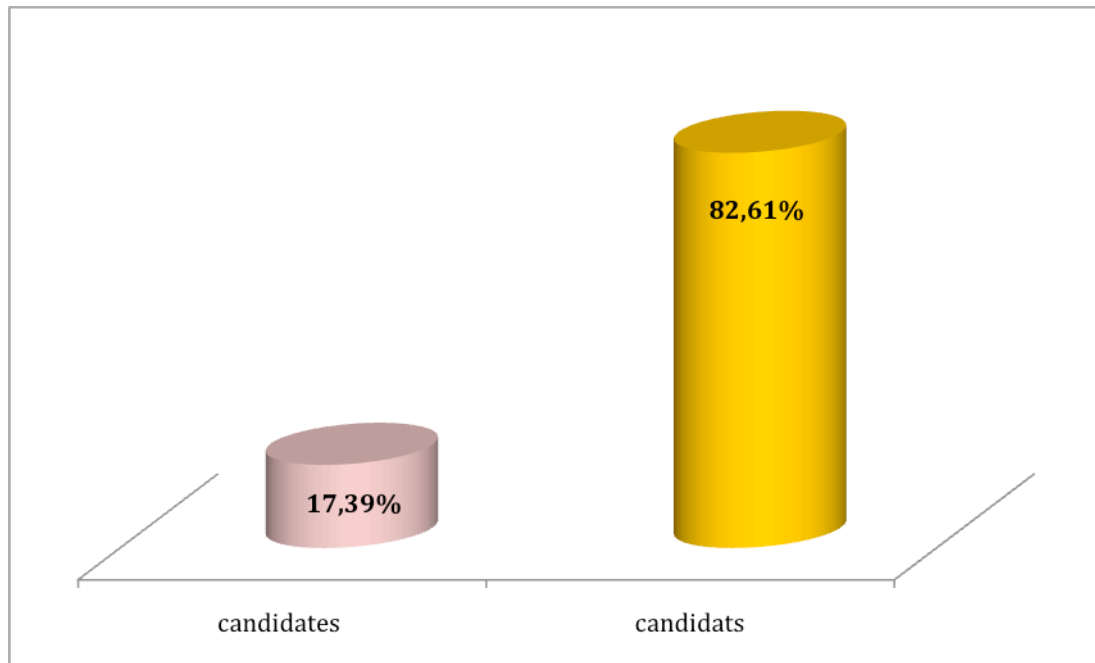


The visibility of women improving slightly in the audiovisual media over print media while remaining limited: it rose from 6.14% (in print) to 10.52% (in the media-audio visual) ie almost 10 times less than the male candidates. The difference for audiovisual media is that this access was concerned the candidates themselves who were given three minutes each to pass on both radio and television, compared to print space which was concerned almost exclusively with Mrs. Ben Ali.

24-Time allocated to women compared to men



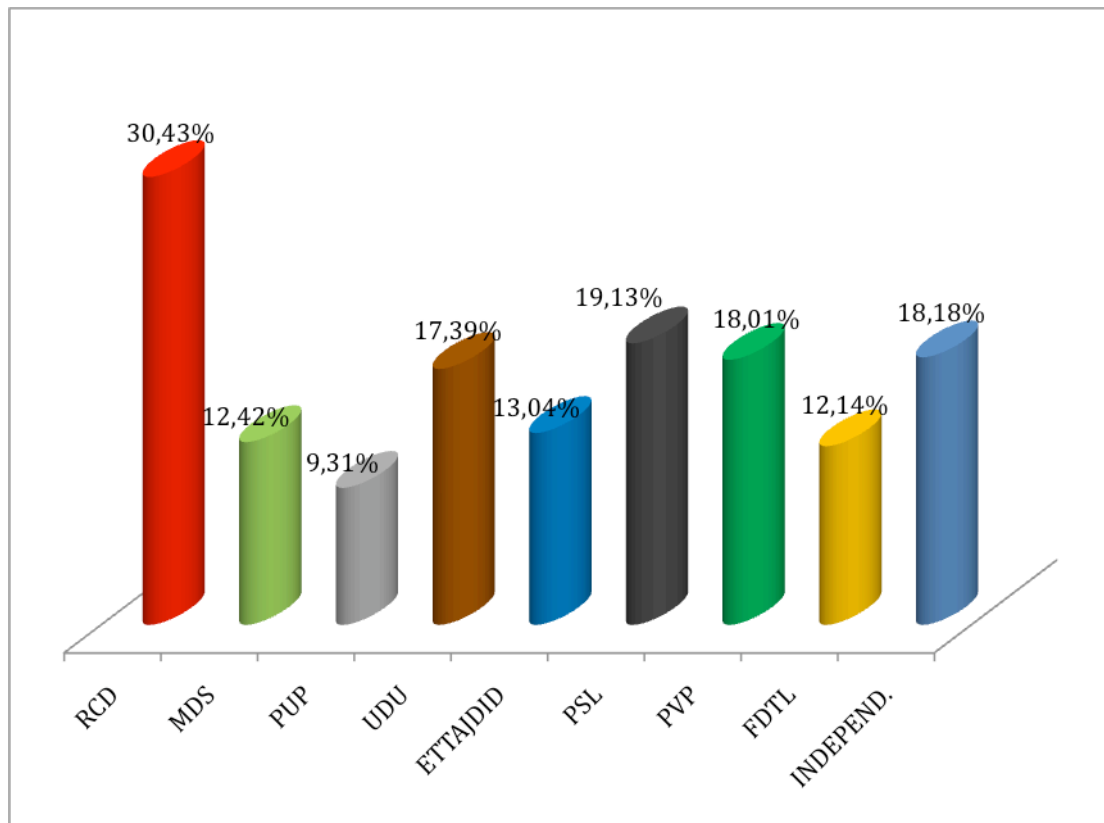
25-Place of women in legislative



Women represent only 17.39% of the total number of candidates. In terms of numbers, RCD is the party with the largest number of candidates on their lists (49) followed by the Green Party (29) and UDU (28), but their presence was reflected little in either the media or in the campaign itself.

Notably, the elimination of a large number of opposition lists did not change significantly the percentage of women candidates for legislative. this if we compare their lists percentage withheld in relation to lists originally presented. The ruling party and opposition to some differences near does not exclude women but do not allow them to play a role in the political battle and occupy the public space and media.

26-Place of women in the lists previously presented

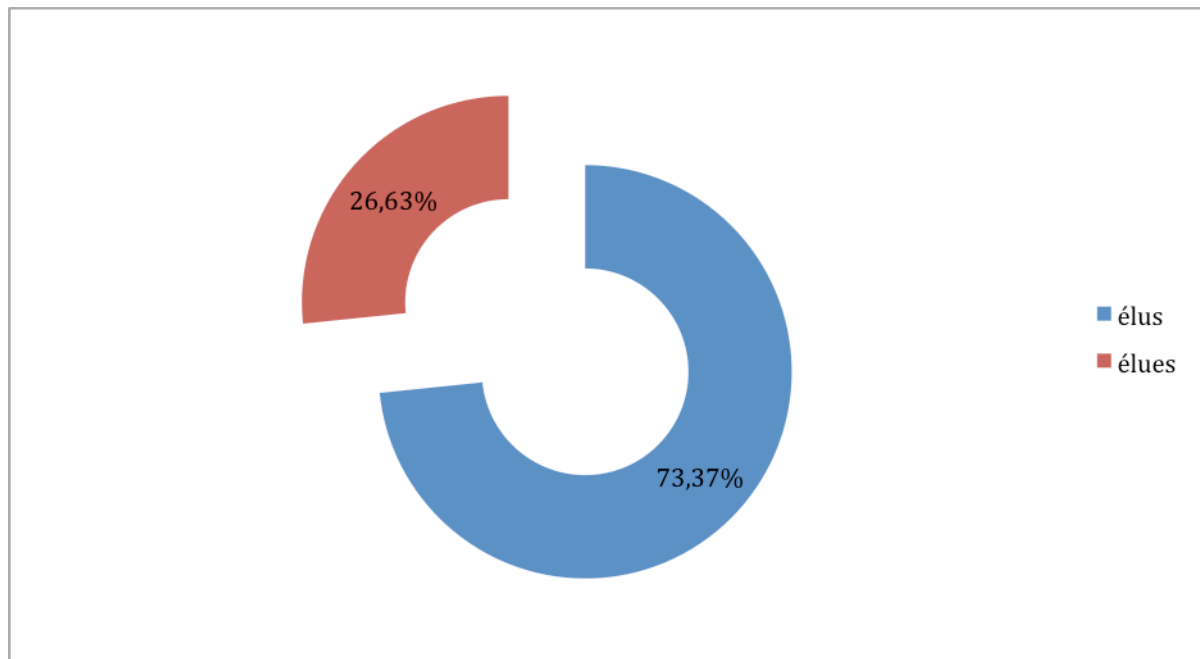


A total marginalization of women was recorded in parallel with a strong presence of the president's wife, thus accentuating the strong personalization of the presidential couple. Surprisingly for a power that is said in the forefront in the field of empowerment of women to see this lack of visibility of women candidates. This near absence of women in media is an important indicator in the exploitation of the women's rights issue for political purposes.

Paradoxically, the ruling party introduced a 30% quota for women on electoral lists, but only two women were heads of lists, and even then with significantly limited visibility, confined to the shadow of the party.

It is true that the rate of women in parliament has risen to 26.63% and that the RCD has met the quota of 30% but what meaning to give out numbers to the participation of women in parliament in the light of a decision Speaking almost zero during the election campaign and their lack of media except that they are there to serve the party's political power.

27-Presence of women in the new parliament

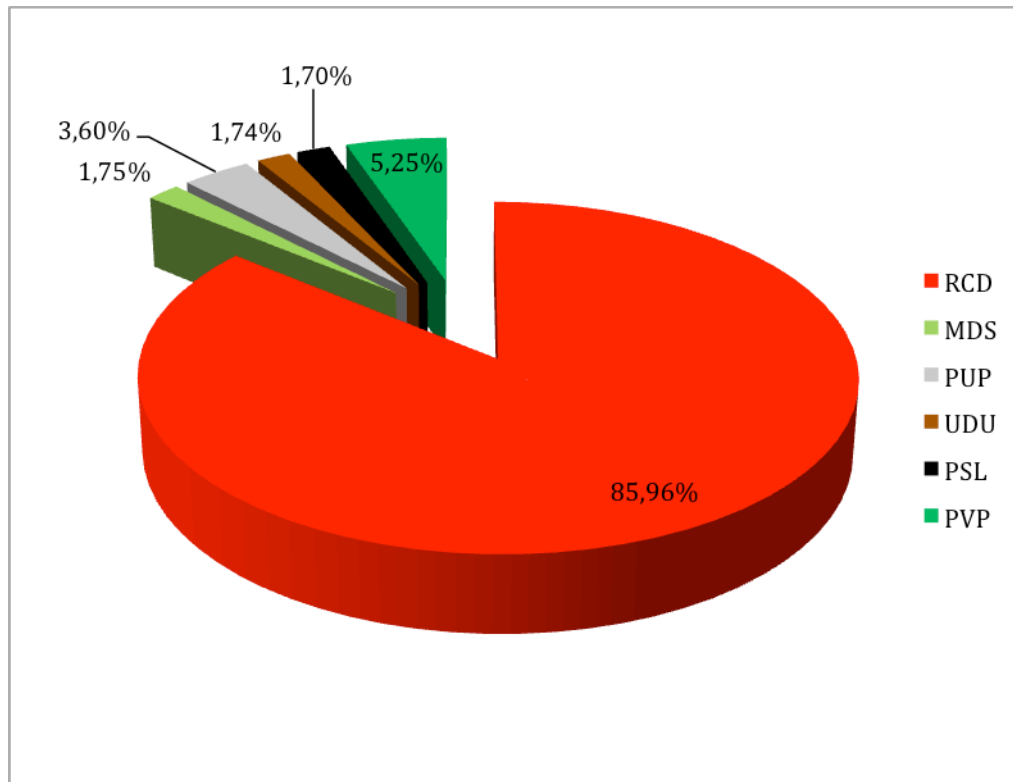


If they were virtually absent from the press, women were not better off in the audiovisual media. Allocated coverage time was 10.52% for 18 women heads of lists.

It is true that the rate of women in Parliament has risen to 26.63% and the RCD has met the quota of 30%, but what meaning to give out to these figures of participation of women in parliament when they have spoken almost nothing during the election campaign?

The presence of women in parliament is seen as an important indicator of the degree of exercise of citizenship and democratic practice. But in terms of what we observed during the election campaign and reading through the media, these figures reveal the limits of state policy in terms of democracy and women rights and the effective role of women as full citizens, and as actresses.

28-Political affiliation of elected



This observation of the low visibility accorded to women indicates that visibility quotas overall were largely ignored, and the current conditions are false democracy. At no time during the campaign could we glimpse a debate between candidates for president or transparency in media coverage, accurately demonstrating the nature of the regime. The marginalization of women by the majority of candidates also illustrates the state of freedom of expression and press in Tunisia. These freedoms are far from being met. This deficit weakens the achievements of women, hinders the exercise of democracy, and undermines the electoral process.

The presence of women in Parliament now stands at nearly 30%, which in itself is significant, but remain far from parity. Women from RCD occupy the largest part at 85.96%. but this raises the question of how this presence facilitates the exercise of democracy and participates in the construction of a proposed modern society. We have seen how access to the media, even for women of the ruling party, is problematic. It seems that these women have very limited leeway and owe their place only to allegiance they have shown to the party and its leader.