

**A New Phase in Jewish and Muslim Maghrebi Cultural Separation:  
Moroccan and Tunisian Diasporas in France React to the “Arab Spring”**

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## **Abstract**

The “Arab Spring” brought significant change to governments and public consciousness in both Morocco and Tunisia after January 2011. It also had repercussions for Maghrebi citizens living outside their birth countries. Tunisian and Moroccan expatriates in France quickly found themselves with greater opportunity and motivation to become socially and politically involved in the democratizing shifts happening across the Mediterranean. Many Muslim Maghrebi immigrants became more actively connected to their birthplaces by voting, participating in social organizations, and increasing communication with communities back home. Jewish immigrants in France from the same countries, however, showed no parallel increase in post-“Arab Spring” connections to the Maghreb and instead appear to grow even more distant. Based upon three months of fieldwork and interviews gathered in France, Morocco, and Tunisia, this thesis addresses and contextualizes these differences between Jewish and Muslim Maghrebi immigrants’ behavior in France. In explaining the roots and consequences of expatriate Jews’ non-participation in the “Arab Spring,” the paper argues that Jewish Maghrebis in France are entering a new phase in a century-old process of cultural alienation from North Africa and its people.

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## **Chapter One: An Introduction**

The images were astounding. Thousands of people marched along Bourguiba Avenue chanting for Tunisian President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali to *degage* and give up his quarter-century-old grip on power. Moroccans gathered in Casablanca and Rabat to demand that that their king relinquish some of his authority and instead empower a democratically elected parliament. Young and old, men and women, religious and secular: all of Tunisia and much of Morocco seemed united against despotism and corruption as protests swept the streets in the winter of 2010 to 2011. The movement, in all its dramatic glory, was splashed across newspapers and international media outlets, and once its fervor and energy spread through North Africa and the Middle East, it came to be known as the “Arab Spring.” Though this “Spring” eventually became summer and has now mostly moved out of the international public eye, these campaigns did succeed in making some lasting changes to Maghrebi political systems. Ben Ali is gone, and Tunisia has taken on the charge of building a more durable democratic system. Morocco has held parliamentary elections and crafted a new constitution that augments individuals’ political rights. More participatory and democratic governmental systems — however imperfect — are taking hold in North Africa.

Scholars are already analyzing these movements’ impacts on emerging governmental systems and national identities in both Morocco and Tunisia.<sup>1</sup> Researchers and journalists have paid particular attention to evolving norms for religious freedom and

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<sup>1</sup> This field is growing and changing rapidly, but two good starting points are [Lin Noueihed and Alex Warren, *The Battle for the Arab Spring: Revolution, Counter-revolution and the Making of a New Era*, (New Haven: Yale UP, 2012).] and [Michael J. Willis, *Politics and Power in the Maghreb: Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco from Independence to the Arab Spring*, (New York: Columbia UP, 2012).].

the integration of religious and civil law, as both Morocco and Tunisia's democratic elections brought self-described Islamist parties into power.<sup>2</sup> The population of the Maghreb is overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim, but the denizens of both nations display a range of religious observance, practice and belief. Both Morocco and Tunisia also have culturally significant Jewish populations with 2,000-year histories in the region, and much work has been done to better understand what kind of futures the Jewish community might have in Morocco and Tunisia as both countries continue to refashion themselves to meet popular demands in an era of more representative government.

While this emerging body of scholarly work has important implications for understanding democratizing movements and political progress in Arab and Muslim-majority countries, it can sometimes minimize the role of a critical stakeholder in Morocco and Tunisia's democratic transitions: the diaspora community. The "Arab Spring" protests made substantial use of online activism and information sharing, and led to a speedy reversal of limitations on public speech for even those citizens living in other countries. Furthermore, the new constitutions adopted in both countries provided for unprecedented voting rights and political freedoms for citizens living abroad. These factors combined to allow Moroccans and Tunisians outside the Maghreb to participate from afar — for the first time — in exacting political and social change in their birthplaces. This shift was readily apparent in France, which is home to well over two million Moroccans and Tunisians; many Maghrebis in France drastically increased their political and cultural involvement in their birthplaces after early 2011. They voted, shared information, and formed associations of

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<sup>2</sup> See Georgetown University's 2011 Berkely Center Initiative on "Religious Freedom in the Wake of the Arab Spring" and the U.K. Foreign and Commonwealth Office 2011 Human Rights and Democracy report on "Religious Freedom & Rights of Minorities, Rights of Women & Rights of People with Disabilities" in the Middle East and North Africa, among others.



like-minded citizens, manifesting their Tunisian and Moroccan expatriate identities more actively and with more of a political bent than before.

Notably though, Jewish immigrants to France who were also from Morocco and Tunisia did virtually nothing to increase their participation with North Africa in the wake of the “Arab Spring.” An accumulation of historical events and social forces over the past century had helped to divorce Jewish Maghrebi immigrants from the culture and people of their home countries, so that few of them had the same motivation or ability to get involved as their Muslim compatriots. Indeed, many of them say that they feel even more isolated and disconnected from their birthplaces than they had before the “Arab Spring,” as they are distrustful of new Islamist governments and the populations that elected them. Very little has been written on this particular phenomenon.

This thesis attempts to address that gap in “Arab Spring” scholarship by outlining the differences between the ways that Jews and Muslims living in France and from Morocco and Tunisia have responded to changes in their birthplaces brought about by the “Arab Spring.” It will place the differences in Jewish and Muslim behavior today within a historical context that explains a century-long process of Jewish and Muslim cultural separation. Events and policies during the colonial era that encouraged Jewish Maghrebis to adopt European languages and cultures, build allegiances to Israel, and even take on European citizenship helped to alienate Jews from North African culture even before they left for France. After immigration, many of these Jews entered communities that encouraged them to quickly assimilate into existing social structures, and to loosen their attachment to the cultures and traditions they left behind. These decades of Jewish cultural estrangement from the Maghreb thus left most Moroccan and Tunisian Jews in France with

less motivation and fewer resources to become involved in North Africa's Arab Spring, catalyzing a new phase in Jews' alienation from their birthplaces.

### ***Methodology and Limitations***

This thesis is largely based upon personal interviews and observations I carried out in Tunisia, France, and Morocco during the fall of 2012 and the first weeks of 2013. I conducted 28 personal interviews in Toulouse, France in November and December of 2012, while directly participating in the Toulousian Jewish community throughout that period. I generally used free-form discussions with a loose interview guide, but I was quite willing to deviate from that formal script based upon the participants' willingness to speak about the topics at hand. Most of my subjects were in some way affiliated with Toulousian political, academic, or religious organizations, and I reached the rest through personal connections and chance encounters. The design of my project meant I had limited contact with non-practicing Jews who were not a part of the organized religious and social community, providing a major limitation to my research findings. The vast majority of Toulousian Jews rarely attends religious events and is thus not connected to the networks I explored.<sup>3</sup> Still, Jewish associations in Toulouse represent a wide range of religious observance and practice and provided me with a relatively diverse group of subjects.<sup>4</sup>

I also visited some remaining Jewish communities in both Tunisia and Morocco in order to better understand the backgrounds of my immigrant subjects and to see what sort of communication networks had endured in North Africa. I visited one of the synagogues in

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<sup>3</sup> Personal Interview with Colette Zytnicki, Toulouse, 13 November 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Marie-Françoise Manolesco, "La Reconstruction de la communauté juive Toulousaine Après 1944," Thesis, Université Mirail Toulouse, 1991, p. 39.

Tunis in September 2012 to meet with its rabbi, attend Rosh Hashanah services, and speak with the congregation. My communication with the Jewish community that has remained in Morocco was more extensive, as I spent two weeks in December 2012 and January 2013 meeting with academics, Jewish community leaders, and the Muslim employees who support them in Casablanca, Rabat, Fez, and Marrakesh. All of the Jews I met had some sort of active and codified role in the community, even if they didn't all live according to the strictest interpretations of Jewish law. The short time of my visit to Morocco and its overlap with the New Year's holiday also meant I was unable to contact some key members of the Moroccan Jewish community, as many were out of the country when I arrived. I therefore gained an admittedly limited perspective on Morocco's remaining Jewish community, which curbs my ability to draw blanket conclusions about its connections to the Moroccan Jewish diaspora.

My personal background and identity provided an important filter and an additional complicating factor in the project. Every one of the Jewish subjects I interviewed in Toulouse asked whether or not I was also Jewish. My positive response generally gave me immediate "insider status" and access to information and community events that might have been closed off to a non-Jew. However, after discovering our shared religious identity, many of my interview subjects felt compelled to look out for my safety and well-being. They therefore may have been more disparaging of Jewish-Arab relations in their home countries today in order to convince me not to go there myself. For example, as soon as I mentioned the time I spent in North Africa to one Jewish professional, he refused to continue discussing the association he leads and instead spent an hour critiquing the status that traditional interpretations of Islamic texts gave to Jews in North Africa through the

nineteenth century, insisting that those restrictive laws would see a resurgence in the coming years.<sup>5</sup> In Morocco, my Jewish heritage was even more important for gaining access to interview subjects. Before I was allowed into Kosher restaurants in Casablanca or the synagogue in Rabat, I was asked about my religious background, and Muslim researchers warned me that the community was often slow to open itself to young Muslim Maghrebi students with similar questions to my own.<sup>6</sup>

In contrast, my non-Jewish subjects in both France and North Africa tended to view me solely as an Arabic-speaking American female — usually a bit of an anomaly in their eyes — and seemed more interested in the types of messages I would bring with me to the U.S. than in my spiritual background. Consequently, they may have exaggerated the levels of religious tolerance and general freedom in their home countries and the ability of Maghrebi nations to move toward democracy independently and without Western intervention. I did not immediately present my religious heritage to any of my non-Jewish subjects, and only gave it when directly asked, generally after the formal interview.

Lastly, the social and political context in which my research was conducted undoubtedly clouded my discussion of Maghrebi Jews' connections to Israel. In the midst of my interviewing process in Toulouse, Israel was engaged in a violent conflict with Hamas militants in Gaza that claimed hundreds of Palestinian civilian lives and sparked a propaganda war overseas. Only a few days later, the body of Palestinian political icon Yasser Arafat was exhumed in order to search for polonium-210 poison that may have originated in Israel and been used to assassinate him. The following week, the United Nations General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to grant limited statehood to Palestine,

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<sup>5</sup> Personal Interview with Ephraim Teitlebaum, Toulouse, 30 November 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Personal Interview with Zhor Rehihil, Casablanca, 2 January 2012.

against the wishes of the United States and Israel. These events dominated international news coverage at the time and helped to further polarize an already divisive set of political affairs, which likely encouraged my interview subjects to offer more aggressive answers to some of my questions. Indeed, during the heaviest points in the fighting in Israel and Gaza, I received somewhat anti-Semitic warnings from several Muslim Maghrebi immigrants to “watch out” for Jewish American political leaders who would persecute anyone who showed any affinity for the Arab world.<sup>7</sup> Later that same day, a Jewish acquaintance warned me that all Arab Muslims were violent and barbaric, and that I risked being physically attacked the moment I set foot in a Muslim-majority country. Mustapha Saïf, who works through the city government to promote diversity and human rights organizations in Toulouse, confirmed that manifestations of both anti-Islamism and anti-Semitism in Toulouse tend to rise during periods of violence in the Middle East.<sup>8</sup>

A full list of the interviews I conducted during this research process can be found in the bibliography section of this paper. Out of respect for the privacy of the people who shared their stories with me and agreed to be interviewed, I have removed the last names and identifying characteristics from their descriptions unless those details provided a crucial context for the quotations used.

### ***A note on terminology***

One of the most challenging aspects of any discussion of North African immigration to France lies in naming and describing groups that are not necessarily unified or self-identified. Terms like “Jewish,” “Muslim,” “Arab” or “Maghrebi” have no single definition,

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<sup>7</sup> Personal conversation at La Reynerie Community Center in Toulouse, 15 November 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Personal interview with Mustapha Saïf, Toulouse, 26 November 2012

and the people they claim to represent do not always fall neatly into any particular category. Furthermore, some of these terms are racially charged and loaded with implicit derogatory associations. But while categorizing and labeling any of the immigrant groups concerned in this paper is difficult, it is necessary to make some generalizations in order to explore the impact and relevance of different individuals' experiences.

This paper will thus need to use some admittedly imperfect terminology to refer to a few aggregate geographic and religious groups. First, the term "Muslim" will refer to a large and diverse ethno-racial group of people with a nominally shared religion, as defined by French colonial policy.<sup>9</sup> "Muslims," as they are defined here, may not be practicing members of any particular religious community or faithful believers. Instead, they are classified by century-old French policies that limited and defined their interactions with European culture both in North Africa and in France.<sup>10</sup> As described in this paper, they are usually the descendants of members of Islamic communities in North Africa. Similarly, "Jews" are classified as people who are nominally a part of Jewish communities, regardless of their level of observance or practice. This definition usually aligns with Jewish establishments' own categorizations of who is and is not Jewish, which also often describe Judaism as an ethno-racial identity marker.

Though the term "Arab" is frequently used as a synonym for "Muslim" and "North African" in France, it is imprecise and racially-charged. It will thus be avoided in this paper whenever possible. I will mainly use it when quoting other writers or informants, or if it is a part of widely recognized titles and phrases. Instead, I will refer to people born in

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<sup>9</sup> Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France*, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University, 2006), p. 230.

<sup>10</sup> Naomi Davidson, *Only Muslim: Embodying Islam in Twentieth-Century France*, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University, 2012), p. 2-14.

Morocco or Tunisia —regardless of their religious identity — as “Maghrebis,” and will then specify their religion as either Jewish or Muslim.

***A note on structure***

In order to explain some of these differences between the ways that Jews and Muslims living in France and from Morocco and Tunisia have responded to the “Arab Spring” changes in their birthplaces, this thesis will place contemporary disparities in Jews’ and Muslims’ engagement with Morocco and Tunisia within a longer historical narrative of Jewish and Muslim cultural isolation in the Maghreb. It will analyze various societal forces that have driven the communities apart, including colonial era legal policies, philanthropic aid organizations, and Jewish and Muslim self-identification with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The second chapter of this paper highlights some of the important aspects of Jewish and Muslim immigrants’ lives before they moved to France that have helped prime them for their different connections to their home countries today. The third chapter will explore the ways those connections continued to develop — or weaken, as the case so often was — once Moroccans and Tunisians arrived in France and faced significantly different challenges and opportunities depending on their religion. The historical narrative presented in these two sections will coalesce in the fourth chapter, which will move into a discussion of Jewish and Muslim immigrant behavior today. I argue that Jewish alienation from the Maghreb is manifesting in a new way — through a lack of Jewish participation in Morocco and Tunisia’s “Arab Spring” movements — even as it is a part of a much longer tradition of Jewish and Muslim divergence. The Muslim Moroccan and Tunisian diaspora communities’ involvement in the political shifts of their home countries have helped to

heighten and cement Jewish and Muslim Maghrebi difference, pushing the two groups ever farther apart.



## **Chapter 2: Jewish and Muslim Maghrebi Divisions Before Immigration**

There is a great deal of existing high-quality historical and anthropological scholarship on the academic questions surrounding Maghrebi-born Jews now living in France. Researchers have quite effectively described the two thousand -year history of Jewish life in the Maghreb, the complicated social forces that encouraged so many Jews to leave the region during the twentieth century, and the pathways through which *Sephardi* Jews merged into French culture after moving there from North Africa. Yet despite this wealth of inquiry and a robust audience of scholars and laypeople who take interest in the Maghrebi-Jewish presence in France, very little work has been done to compare this population with their similarly well-studied peers: Muslim immigrants to France from the Maghreb.

During the last century, France domiciled not only a large proportion of the Jews who left Morocco and Tunisia, but also many of their Muslim compatriots seeking better opportunities for employment and education. Of course, neither of these populations was quite like the other, either before their immigration or after their arrival in France. Jews and Muslims from both countries experienced distinct legal requirements, economic possibilities, and social pressures during and after the colonial period, shifting the timing and trajectory of their migration patterns. Today, Jews of North African descent living in France are – on average – more socio-economically advanced, better educated, and more widely accepted as a part of French society than are Muslims with the same origins.<sup>11</sup> They

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<sup>11</sup> I refer here to both the immigrants themselves, and to the second and third generations that followed them.

also have taken on different group identities that emphasize and deny their affinity to their birthplaces to varying extents.

This chapter will examine several aspects of both Jewish and Muslim migration from Morocco and Tunisia to France, providing a historical perspective on their status before immigration that can illuminate the behavior of these groups today. Though I will use other scholars' work to describe the migration narratives for all four communities, this section represents more than a simple paraphrasing of existing research, because these stories and narratives are not conventionally told together.<sup>12</sup> Though Jews and Muslims from Morocco and Tunisia who have immigrated to France have overlapping histories and cultures, scholarship on these populations is generally quite separate. It often unquestioningly accepts a binary break between Jews and Muslims due to the way colonial legacies and political developments in the twentieth century worked to divide indigenous groups. This chapter takes a somewhat converse approach, and it will instead accept as a baseline that people born in the same geographic locations and historical periods and who immigrated to the same places can be expected to share certain similarities, even if their religious affiliations are different. While my discussion of historical events will concede that Jews and Muslims from both countries had social and cultural differences far beyond their religious associations, I do not make the assumption that Jews and Muslims were necessarily and inevitably separate. Instead, I combine different historical narratives to show why Jewish and Muslim Maghrebi immigrants had begun developing different relations to their home countries long before the "Arab Spring," adding a crucial context for their different behaviors today.

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<sup>12</sup> Moroccan Jews, Tunisian Jews, Moroccan Muslims, Tunisian Muslims

Because it is beyond the scope of this chapter to describe every aspect of North African Muslim and Jewish immigration narratives or the many ways in which they differ from each other, we will focus on four key inconsistencies that are particularly relevant to understanding their contemporary relationships to their home nations:

1. Pre-immigration adoption of French language and culture
2. Legal status of migrants to France before leaving the Maghreb
3. Spread of Zionist thought to colonial North Africa
4. Expectation of permanent relocation or temporary stay

These factors combined in ways that led Moroccan and Tunisian Jewish immigrants to minimize their connections with their countries of origin, whereas Muslim immigrants remained deeply bonded. In other words, well before immigrating to France, Jewish Maghrebis had weaker political and cultural ties to their homelands than their Muslim counterparts.

### ***Pre-Immigration Adoption of French Language and Culture***

Jews and Muslims have lived together in both Morocco and Tunisia ever since Islam spread to North Africa in the seventh and eighth centuries of the Common Era. Judaism had reached the region more than a half-millennium earlier, when Berber tribes came into contact with Jewish traders and businesspeople. The Jewish community on Tunisia's small Djerba Island claims a 2,500-year history, with a central synagogue that boasts ownership of the world's oldest surviving Torah.<sup>13</sup> Judaism spread to Morocco somewhat later, though by the first century C.E., entire tribes had converted to the faith.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, legend holds that one of the most celebrated Berber heroes to defend Moroccan territory in the seventh

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<sup>13</sup> "El Ghriba Synagogue." *Resources on Faith, Ethics, and Public Life*. Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs.

<sup>14</sup> *Tinghir Jerusalem: Les Echos Du Mellah*. Dir. Kamal Hachkar. Les Films D'un Jour, 2M, BERBERE TV, 2011.

century — the Kahina — was Jewish.<sup>15</sup> Judaism became the minority monotheistic religion in both communities after the Umayyad conquest of North Africa, which first introduced Islam to the area. Control of the region shifted between a series of mostly Islamic dynasties and empires throughout the following 1,200 years. These rulers offered varying degrees of stability, violence, and individual freedoms, and conditions for the areas' Jews fluctuated over time. Still, Jews and Muslims continued to cohabitate in both Tunisia and Morocco throughout this entire period. In fact, both countries even saw a growth in their Jewish populations in the middle ages, when Jews sought refuge from persecution in Europe.

By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Jews in both countries had developed complex, heterogeneous societies that varied in their access to wealth and education and in their level of interaction with their Muslim compatriots. In the rural areas of Morocco — particularly those where Berber language and culture dominated — Jews and Muslims were largely indistinguishable from each other prior to the French colonial period.<sup>16</sup> They lived in virtually identical homes adjacent to each other, spoke the same language, and were in similar financial and educational positions. Indeed, some scholars argue that there are indigenous Berber tribes that adopted Judaism as early as the first or second century of the Common Era, and that they created a form of Judaism that is as much a part of the fabric of Moroccan Amazigh culture as Islam eventually became.<sup>17</sup> In cities, Moroccan and Tunisian Jews tended to live separately from the Muslim majority in walled neighborhoods called *mellahs* that had been created by city governments between the fifteenth and nineteenth

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<sup>15</sup> Sarah Taïeb-Carlen and Amos Carlen, *The Jews of North Africa: From Dido to De Gaulle* (Lanham, MD: University of America, 2010), p. IX.

<sup>16</sup> *Tinghir Jerusalem: Les Echos Du Mellah*. Dir. Kamal Hachkar. Les Films D'un Jour, 2M, BERBERE TV, 2011.

<sup>17</sup> In the urban areas of Morocco and in most parts of Tunisia, by contrast, most Jews were the descendants of Spaniards who were expelled from Europe during the Inquisition in at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. See Martin Gilbert, Ken Blady, and Jason Aronson.

centuries, depending on the territory. Scholars disagree over whether these walled quarters provided benevolent, state-sponsored protection from potential Arab attacks or were a chilling barrier that forced Jews into impoverished regions where they could be contained and exploited.<sup>18</sup> Regardless, *mellah* Jews had constant interaction with the Muslims among who they lived, since the economies for both Jews and Muslims were deeply intertwined.<sup>19</sup>

Relations were not always idyllic between the two groups; vestigial *dhimmi* laws and occasional pogroms combined to cement Jews' formal second-class status in both societies. A series of rarely-enforced regulations derived from a treaty between eighth-century Muslims and Christians in Syria, *dhimmi* laws required Jews and other "people of the book" to pay special taxes, wear distinctive identifying clothing, and to perform their religious rituals discretely. They were barred from proselytizing to Muslims, building large or obvious religious facilities, and from holding some elevated positions in society. In exchange, Jews, Christians, and other minorities were allowed to continue freely practicing their religions and given the tools to establish their own court systems and internal governance so they would not be held to Islamic religious law. Few of these regulations were ever fully imposed in either Morocco or Tunisia, but there were periodic moments of violence and persecution against Jews and restrictions on Jewish life that complicated Jewish history in the region.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Norman A. Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times*, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991).

<sup>19</sup> Emily Gottreich, *The Mellah of Marrakesh*, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2006), p. 101-103.

<sup>20</sup> A wealth of extreme (and dubious) scholarship on this topic exists, and it has become a remarkably political subject of study. "Black Washed" books and essays like Bat Ye'or's 1980 *Le Dhimmi : Profil de l'opprimé en Orient et en Afrique du Nord depuis la conquête Arabe* tend to over-exaggerate the level of anti-Semitic action and sentiment in the Maghreb. Works of this type tend to describe both Islam and Muslim communities as unchanging and universal, suggesting that the actions of North African Muslims in the 1800s can be used to explain the sentiments and behavior of Palestinian Muslims in the twenty-first century. By contrast, "White Washed"

The overall cultural similarities between Jews and Muslims in both Morocco and Tunisia fell away at the start of the colonial period, as French rule disrupted the existing social structure. Not only did colonial administrators bring a formal end to vestigial *dhimmi* laws that had limited Jews' economic, educational, and social possibilities, but Jews in both countries also adopted French language and culture more universally than Muslims did.<sup>21</sup>

The *Alliance Israélite Universelle* (AIU) was arguably the most important organization to encourage Jews to align with the French in both countries. The Paris-based AIU was founded in the nineteenth century to protect the human rights of Jews around the world, though it was most active in Morocco, Tunisia, and Turkey. The AIU in both Tunisia and Morocco originally lobbied for the local governments to extend French citizenship to all their Jewish denizens, but that effort eventually proved futile.<sup>22</sup> The organization was far more successful in providing widespread French education to Jewish children. They used European teachers, French curricula, and the French language to teach both religious and

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scholarship insists on a mythical, perfectly peaceful coexistence between Jews and Muslims in the Arab world, and it is occasionally rooted in anti-Zionist rhetoric. See [Kramer, Gudrun. "Anti-Semitism in the Muslim World: A Critical Review." *Die Welt Des Islams* 46.3 (2006): 243-76.] for a larger discussion. As a valuable aside, current research is uncovering some of the gendered aspects of the violence and persecution that *did* face some Maghrebi Jewish communities. Vanessa Paloma's 2009 "Judeo-Spanish Feminine Narratives in Morocco: The Heritage of Spanish Jewry in Morocco from the Expulsion to the Present Day" uncovers traditional folksongs that warned young women of the dangers of kidnapping and rape. Though there is little documented evidence to show the frequency with which non-Jews in Morocco abducted Jewish girls and adolescents, older female community leaders continued to warn younger Jewish women to protect themselves against that threat through the early twentieth century.

<sup>21</sup> Jews were thus allowed to move out of the *Hara* centers, and most relocated to the budding *Nouvelle Ville* French areas of Moroccan and Tunisian cities.

<sup>22</sup> A related effort to extend citizenship rights to Jews was successful in Algeria after the Cremieux decrees were put into place in 1870. Indeed, the AIU was founded by the same Adolphe Crémieux who secured those Jewish rights in Algeria. See more in Kimberly A. Arkin, "'It's the French and the Arabs against the Jews': Identity Politics and the Construction of Adolescent Jewishness in France." Thesis. University of Chicago, 2008: p. 142.

secular subjects.<sup>23</sup> This non-native organization imposed enough of a new set of values and priorities on the local population that the pre-existing leadership structures balked. In both Tunisia and Morocco, Jewish authorities at first fought against the AIU, since it diluted their influence and offered alternatives to the forms of Judaism and Hebrew language they had used previously.<sup>24</sup> Despite early local opposition, the AIU was eventually quite successful in both of its aims: encouraging a seamless integration of North African and French Judaism and also separating Jews and Muslims in North Africa by diminishing their cultural commonalities.<sup>25</sup> While only 20 percent of Muslim children across Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco attended French schools, 60 percent of Jews in Morocco did, and 70 percent of Jews in Tunisia did.<sup>26</sup>

The repercussions of these differing educational paths were enormous: they physically separated Jewish and Muslim children from each other by placing them in different schools — thus making it harder to build interfaith connections — while also giving them entirely different sets of academic experiences and intellectual tools. After the AIU became the standard for Jewish education in both countries, Jews stopped receiving the same Maghrebi cultural education as their Muslim peers.<sup>27</sup> More importantly, they also

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<sup>23</sup> Joy A. Land, "Corresponding Women: Female Educators of the Alliance Israélite Universelle in Tunisia, 1882-1914." *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa*. Ed. Emily B. Gottreich and Daniel J. Schroeter, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana UP, 2011), p. 239-56.

<sup>24</sup> Keith A. Walters, "Education for Jewish Girls in Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Tunis and the Spread of French in Tunisia." *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa*. Ed. Emily B. Gottreich and Daniel J. Schroeter. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana UP, 2011), p. 266; Shlomo Deshen, "The Social Structure of Southern Tunisian Jewry in the Early 20th Century." *Jewish Societies in the Middle East: Community, Culture and Authority*. (Washington, DC: University of America, 1982), p. 126.

<sup>25</sup> Kimberly Arkin, "It's the French against the Arabs and the Arabs Against the Jews: Identity Politics and the Construction of Adolescent Jewishness in France," Thesis. University of Chicago, 2008, p. 147.

<sup>26</sup> Michal Abitbol, "The Integration of North African Jews in France," Trans. Alan Astro. *Yale French Studies* 85. *Discourses of Jewish Identity in Twentieth-Century France* (1994): p. 135.

<sup>27</sup> Elie Cohen-Hadria, "The Gallicization of a Tunisian Jewish Boy in the Years Just Prior to World War I." Originally from *Du Protectorat français a l'indépendance: Souvenirs d'un témoin socialiste* (Nice, 1976) p 9-13. *Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times*, Ed. Norman Stillman, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2003),p. 250.

stopped speaking Arabic. By the end of the colonial period, 90 percent of Tunisian Jews and 60 percent of Moroccan Jews were functionally literate in French, while only 13 percent of Muslims in either country spoke and wrote the language.<sup>28</sup> For many Jews — particularly those who eventually immigrated to France — embracing French language and culture also meant putting aside Maghrebi Arab and Berber traditions. Henri, a Jewish journalist and academic who was born in Morocco but spent his adult life in Paris and Toulouse, provides a paradigmatic example. “Ma culture était profondément française,” he told me of his childhood in Rabat, explaining that he attended French schools and spoke French with both his family and his exclusively Jewish friends. When he moved to Paris for university, he had no trouble adapting to French rhythms of life, because he had never experienced a non-French lifestyle before. Annie, an elderly Tunisian woman living in a Toulousian retirement complex, echoed his sentiments. “Our point of honor was living like French people” in colonial Tunis, she told me.<sup>29</sup>

It is important to note that not all members of the Jewish community in either Morocco or Tunisia embraced French colonial culture to the same extent. Indeed, there were noticeable divisions between the more and less Europeanized Jews in both countries. In Tunisia, the *Touansa* were indigenous Jews whose communities and culture had been in the country since well before the Common Era. They tended to live in rural, poorer areas — particularly in the South — and they often resented the more urbanized and elite *Grana* Jews who placed less value on Judeo-Arab traditions and culture.<sup>30</sup> The *Grana* community was composed of the descendants of Italian Jews who had moved to Tunisia during and

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<sup>28</sup> Arkin, “It’s the French,” p. 148.

<sup>29</sup> Personal Interview with Annie, Toulouse, 4 December 2012.

<sup>30</sup> Taïeb-Carlen and Carlen, “The Jews of North Africa,” p. 54.



after the Middle Ages to escape European anti-Semitism, pogroms, and inquisitions. They had long held more access to education, money, and political power than the indigenous Jewish populations, and they were better poised to take advantage of the opportunities French colonialism afforded. While the *Grana* became progressively more Europeanized by speaking French, living in new parts of colonial cities, and accessing higher-paying employment, the *Touansa* were more likely to continue speaking Judeo-Arabic and participating in Berber and Arab traditions as they had before. There were similar — if less pronounced — divisions between urban and rural Moroccan Jewish communities. European Jews of Spanish and Portuguese origin — known as *megorashim* — lived in coastal cities and lived according to European norms. Indigenous Moroccan Jews — called *toshabim* — lived in the interior held on to Arab and Berber culture longer.<sup>31</sup>

As the colonial period progressed and the international events that spurred Jewish migration from the Maghreb came to a head, Jewish North Africans' destinations for immigration largely varied according to the cultural affinities they had developed up to this point. Jews without pre-existing wealth, educational access, or engagement with French culture generally went to Israel. They were attracted to the subsidized *aaliyah* packages that so many Zionist charities offered, since immigrants were guaranteed work and lodging on farms and *kibbutzes* upon their arrival.<sup>32</sup> Migration to France was more challenging, in some respects, because there were fewer charities offering Moroccan and Tunisian Jews support for their voyages. "Those who could pay for themselves chose their destination," which usually meant Europe, since they wanted more elite options for business, education,

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<sup>31</sup> Arkin, "It's the French," p. 135.

<sup>32</sup> Michael M. Laskier, *North African Jewry in the Twentieth Century: The Jews of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria*. (New York: New York UP, 1994). p. 272-275.

and Westernized social life.<sup>33</sup> Only those Jews who already had a firm grasp on French language and culture were poised to take advantage of those opportunities. Indeed, one Tunisian-born Jew who moved to Toulouse told me he had no childhood memories of poor coreligionists, since he had been so isolated from the lower Jewish class.<sup>34</sup>

There was no such screening process for Muslim Moroccans and Tunisians immigrating to France, and none of the Muslim Maghrebis I met in Toulouse had grown up speaking French or interacting with European culture. Instead, most of the people in this demographic had migrated to pursue low-skilled, low-paying jobs that did not reflect a high social status in their home-countries. In the first wave of Muslim Maghrebi immigration — in the early 1900s — male North Africans were invited to France to do physical labor in villages and rural areas, taking on the poorly remunerated and undesirable jobs that were not already filled by native Frenchmen. France faced debilitating labor shortages at the start of the twentieth century since so much of the young male population died defending the nation during the First World War. Of 8.4 million mobilized forces, 1.4 million were killed and another 4.8 million were wounded, taken prisoner, or lost during the war.<sup>35</sup> That meant nearly 75% of all French soldiers ended up as casualties in some manner or another, leaving behind a stark dearth of working men that further threatened France's already faltering economy. The French government and private sector looked in several directions to fill these gaps. Thousands of Italian, Polish, and Spanish workers were drawn to labor opportunities throughout the country, including Toulouse.<sup>36</sup> There was an additional effort

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<sup>33</sup> Personal Interview with Khaled Ben Al-Srhir, Rabat, 9 January 2013.

<sup>34</sup> Personal Interview with Abraham, Toulouse, 20 November 2012.

<sup>35</sup> "World War 1 Casualty and Death Tables." *PBS*. PBS, (26 Oct. 2012), <[http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/resources/casdeath\\_pop.html](http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/resources/casdeath_pop.html)>.

<sup>36</sup> Arkin, "It's the French," p. 84.

made to recruit migrant workers from France's colonial possessions at the time, which included Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia.<sup>37</sup> This group was explicitly recruited for temporary jobs, and the majority of North Africans left Europe after completing a several-year tour.

A similar call for young, single male Maghrebi workers came forth decades later when France began to permit some undocumented migration in order to promote economic growth after yet another decimating world war. Workers were allowed to come to France, find jobs, and only then complete the necessary paperwork to formalize the exchange.<sup>38</sup> This style of migration was particularly popular with Moroccan and Tunisian Muslim laborers hoping to earn more money than they could at home.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, people who already had significant access to wealth and education or were well ingratiated into French culture were logically *less* likely to migrate to France under these conditions; their work opportunities were better in their home countries, since they had unique and useful skills. To be fair, a much smaller number of privileged Maghrebi Muslims immigrated to France during this period in order to pursue university degrees, exclusive job opportunities, and other prospects closer to those sought by Jews, but they represented a comparatively insignificant proportion of all Muslim Maghrebi immigrants.

Since the early 1970s, North African immigration has been officially closed, and only people working in sectors without a sufficient existing French workforce — engineers,

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<sup>37</sup> While Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia were all colonial holdings, their relations to France were markedly different. Algeria was considered a *département*, or a section of French territory that was as much a part of the motherland as any other geographic region within the European pentagon. Morocco and Tunisia, on the other hand, were protectorates that maintained an independent government structure, even if that government was deeply French-influenced.

<sup>38</sup> T. V. Sekher, "Immigration from the Maghreb: France's Quandary." *Middle East Institute Viewpoints: Migration and the Maghreb* (2010): p. 25.

<sup>39</sup> Immigration rules for Algerians were somewhat more complex, as Algeria was not a protectorate like Morocco or Tunisia, but was instead composed of full départements with representatives in the National Assembly. For example, Arab and Berber Algerians could apply for French citizenship and more easily move to the metropole if they gave up their Muslim identity.

scientists, etc. — and family members seeking to reunite with immigrants already in France are allowed visas.<sup>40</sup> Students pursuing particular university degrees are also entitled to temporary permits. But it is only during the last few decades that the documented immigration of Muslim Maghrebis has favored wealthier, more elite individuals.<sup>41</sup> During the peak periods of Jewish Maghrebi migration to France — the 1950s and 1960s — most of the Muslim Moroccan and Tunisian migrants were not similarly Europeanized before their relocation.

Thus even before Jews and Muslims from the Maghreb became established in France, they had significant differences that would affect their cultural development and later interest in staying involved in their home countries.

### ***Legal Status of Migrants to France Before Leaving the Maghreb***

Jewish and Muslim Maghrebi immigrants to France had not only adopted French language and culture to significantly different levels, but their basic legal statuses also varied. Jews in colonial Tunisia and Morocco were often better positioned than Muslims in the same locations to earn French citizenship. This legislative disparity helped to facilitate their more privileged status as compared to Muslims coming in the same period, and encouraged a lasting cultural disconnect that has endured through the twenty-first century.

Prior to the colonial period, Jews and Muslims in Tunisia already existed in separate legal spheres due to some remnants of the *dhimmi* structure. Among other things, Jews — regardless of their official citizenship — had their own court systems to handle family law,

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<sup>40</sup> This politically charged decision followed years of pressure from right-wing politicians and labor unions. It represented a high point in anti-Maghrebi and anti-“Arab” discourse in France.

<sup>41</sup> Undocumented immigration adds another important element to this discussion, since poorer, less-enfranchised Maghrebis continue to move to France outside conventional legal systems as *sans-papiers*.

so that they wouldn't be subject to Islamic legal stipulations.<sup>42</sup> These distinctions were eased at the start of the French colonial period when the Tunisian Bey relaxed the Pact of Omar regulations that pushed Jews into second-class *dhimmi* status.<sup>43</sup> Aided by international Jewish groups like the AIU, Tunisia's Jews quickly began calling for increased rights and even French citizenship. Although French authorities were unwilling to go that far, starting in 1910 they made it far easier for Tunisian Jews to achieve citizenship than they had for Tunisian Muslims.<sup>44</sup> Young Jewish elites were particularly likely to have successful citizenship applications. By the end of the colonial period, nearly 10 percent of all Tunisian Jews had been naturalized as French citizens through this official legal process.<sup>45</sup> Beyond that, a *protégé* system offered another quarter of the Jewish population special rights that left them unbound by the Bey's authority. The *protégé* system let Europeans give elite status to certain non-Muslims in both Tunisia and Morocco, helping them to escape *dhimmi* laws and military service.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, Jews who were descended from European immigrants and had kept a European passport were allowed to maintain their foreign status.<sup>47</sup> These practices enraged the Bey, since they meant more than a third of all Tunisian Jews were not actually his subjects. During this period, one Tunisian monarch called for Tunisians to beat any Jews they saw in European clothing and to kill Jews who sought French citizenship — in order to stem the flow of Jews away from his authority — but European complaints kept these orders from being carried out.<sup>48</sup> It is important to note that these differences in legal status in no way reflected innate cultural

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<sup>42</sup> Laskier, "North African Jewry," p. 257.

<sup>43</sup> Taïeb-Carlen and Carlen, "The Jews of North Africa," p. 108-109.

<sup>44</sup> Abitbol, "The Integration," p. 250.

<sup>45</sup> Arkin, "It's the French," p. 132.

<sup>46</sup> Arkin, "It's the French," p. 137.

<sup>47</sup> Arkin, "It's the French," p. 157.

<sup>48</sup> Arkin, "It's the French," p. 137.

differences between Tunisian Jews and Muslims; they were simply the outcomes of the French colonial system's attempt to build authority.

In contrast with the Tunisian community, Morocco's Jews had largely the same access to French citizenship as Moroccan Muslims did, and until independence in 1956 it was illegal to naturalize Moroccans of any religious background. Only Jews who moved abroad and stayed away from the country could receive French citizenship.<sup>49</sup>

As a complicating factor though, there was also some Jewish migration between areas in the Maghreb, and Jews from Algeria were able to relocate and keep the French citizenship they had won with the Cremieux decrees. Jewish — and thus French — people from Algeria occasionally moved to both Morocco and Tunisia in order to pursue work opportunities or as a stopover in a longer immigration journey toward Israel or Europe. Any children they had during their time in the protectorates were counted as French citizens according to French law.<sup>50</sup> It was because of this intra-Maghrebi immigration that Michel Bensemoun, who was born in Morocco, was able to move to Toulouse in 1962 with his infant son.<sup>51</sup> Since Bensemoun's father was Algerian, both he and his children were granted French citizenship and easy migration status. Due to legal quirks like this, about 12,000 of Morocco's 200,000 Jews had French citizenship in 1941.<sup>52</sup>

While Algerian Muslims also moved between regions of the Maghreb, they could not generally impart the same citizenship status to their offspring. Only those Muslims who were named in official decrees taken in the Council of State or given a judgment to that

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<sup>49</sup> Arkin, "it's the French," p. 132.

<sup>50</sup> "Etoile jaune et croix gammée: récit d'une servitude." Tunis, 1944, pp 32-36. *Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times*. Ed. Norman Stillman. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2003: p. 435-36.

<sup>51</sup> Personal Interview with Michel Bensemoun, Toulouse, 30 November 2012.

<sup>52</sup> Sarah Sussman, "Jewish Population of French North Africa." *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, (11 May 2012), <<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007310>>.

effect by the Court of the First Instance earned these privileges.<sup>53</sup> Few Algerian Muslims went through this process to request French citizenship, and the majority remained French nationals without full citizen rights. Therefore, even Muslims born in Morocco or Tunisia to Algerian parents — who lived in an official French department — had different citizen rights than many of the Jews who eventually migrated to France.

World War II added even more complexity to the differences between Muslim and Jewish legal statuses in Morocco and Tunisia. At the start of the war — before Nazi Germany overtook France — Muslims in North Africa were called to fight with the French army, while Jewish denizens were exempt.<sup>54</sup> The wartime distinctions between Jews and Muslims became far starker after the Nazi occupation, when Vichy France began promulgating anti-Semitic laws and calling for their implementation in French North Africa. Tunisia had direct contact with the German army, as it was occupied for six months over the course of the war. Nazi and Vichy laws had a profound effect on Tunisian Jewish life, though Tunisia's implementation of the "Final Solution" was limited in comparison with the situation in France and the rest of Europe. Jews were forced into labor camps, required to send money to the Axis war effort, and occasionally killed.<sup>55</sup> Moroccan Jews fared better, mainly because the Vichy government — and not the German Army itself — decided their fate. During the war, Jews were forced to return to the Jewish *mellah* if they had moved away to European quarters, and several thousand were sent to work camps where some

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<sup>53</sup> "Accession: French Citizenship." *Archives Nationales*. French Government, Feb. 2012.

<sup>54</sup> Fayçal Cherif, "Jewish-Muslim Relations in Tunisia during World War II." Trans. Allan MacVicar. *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa*. Ed. Emily B. Gottreich and Daniel J. Schroeter. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana UP, 2011. Page 306.

<sup>55</sup> Robert Borgel, "Etoile jaune et croix gammée: récit d'une servitude." Tunis, 1944, pp 32-36. *Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times*. Ed. Norman Stillman. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2003), p. 435-36.

died from hunger and disease.<sup>56</sup> Moroccan Jews and academics continue to credit the sultan at the time, King Muhammad V, for the relatively light treatment of Jews during the war. The King famously — though perhaps only apocryphally — vowed that no harm would come to Moroccan Jews that did not “affect first my family and myself.”<sup>57</sup> He is said to have refused to implement laws forcing Jews to wear yellow stars, and to have also delayed and minimized as many other limits on Jewish life as he could.

Muslims in both countries also fared poorly during the war, but the limits on their freedom of movement and on their political and social access were minimal compared to anti-Jewish regulations. Jews and Muslims in the same countries thus had radically different experiences during this transformative period in their nations’ histories, helping them to build somewhat different national identities. Importantly, the war cemented legal and social differences between Jews and Muslims in both Morocco and Tunisia that were by no means an innate part of pre-existing Maghrebi culture. French and German authorities — and not local Maghrebi leaders — were largely responsible for crafting and implementing anti-Semitic laws and making the Jewish experience in North Africa so much different than the Muslim one.<sup>58</sup> Regardless of the origins of anti-Jewish sentiment and action in the Maghreb during WWII, the experience gave Tunisian and Moroccan Jews all the more reason to feel different from their Muslim counterparts, enabling a more complete estrangement once Jews left their birth countries.

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<sup>56</sup> Sheryl Ochayon, “The Jews of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia,” *The International School for Holocaust Studies*, Yad Vashem.

<sup>57</sup> “Moroccan Jews the Focus of UN Event Marking Legacy of Holocaust Survivors,” *UN News Center*, UN, (28 Jan. 2010).

<sup>58</sup> Sarah Sussman, “Vichy Discrimination Against Jews in North Africa,” *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, (11 May 2012). < <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007311>>



### ***North African Zionism during the Colonial Era***

Zionist organizations spread to both Morocco and Tunisia early in the colonial period, and they encouraged Jews to make allegiance to Israel a part of their religious and cultural identity. This helped deepen ideological rifts between Jews and Muslims in the same countries, particularly as Zionist organizations brought Maghrebi Jewish communities into closer communication with international Jewry and helped them have less frequent contact with Muslim society. The legacy of this ideological development has endured well into the twenty-first century.

The Zionist movement was stronger and longer-lived in Tunisia than in any other Arab country, and it had a particularly transformative effect on the Jewish community there.<sup>59</sup> In addition to displacing traditional communal authorities by providing educational opportunities, community retreats, and philanthropic aid to the Tunisian Jewish population, local Zionists were the first to suggest that there were alternatives to life in Tunisia. Even before they started facilitating an *aaliyah* movement that literally shipped Jews from North Africa to Israel, they promoted the new idea that Jews could leave the country and gave them the tools and motivations to do so.<sup>60</sup>

One of the earliest effects of the Zionist movement in both Tunisia and Morocco was to reshape the community structures, particularly in poorer regions.<sup>61</sup> Though most Maghrebi Jews used independent, privately funded synagogues to serve community needs before the twentieth century, Zionist organizations re-organized them into an international

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<sup>59</sup> Haïm Saadoun, "L'influence Du Sionisme Sur Les Relations Judéo-musulmanes En Tunisie." *Juifs Et Musulmans En Tunisie: Fraternité Et Déchirements*. Ed. Sonia Fellous. Paris: Somology Editions D'art, 2003: p. 221.

<sup>60</sup> Saadoun, "L'influence Du Sionisme," p. 222.

<sup>61</sup> Southern Tunisian Jewry included mostly the poorer, more "Arab" *Touansa*.

network of temples, putting them in sustained contact with Jews in other countries with their own political and social aims.<sup>62</sup>

Beginning in the 1940s, Jews from British Palestine also began sending emissaries to train Tunisians in self-defense and fighting techniques. The explicit goal of these workshops was to protect Jews from pogroms and violence led by Muslim Tunisians. Though these concerns reflected some legitimate historical realities, most Jews had never experienced anti-Jewish violence of any sort before these workshops began.<sup>63</sup> Programs like the self-defense initiative thus offered a solution to a largely imagined problem, and may have helped create the mindset that Jews were unsafe and vulnerable in Tunisia, and were better off moving elsewhere.

Zionist organizations expanded to include educational programming, fundraising, and an extensive newspaper and media presence across the Maghreb, even though Zionism was technically illegal in Tunisia for most of this period.<sup>64</sup> The most important role of Zionist organizations in Tunisia and Morocco was to facilitate Jewish migration to Israel. Mostly with funding from international donors, Zionist entities like the Joint Distribution Committee, American Jewish Committee, and the Organization for Rehabilitation through Training helped move entire Jewish families from the Maghreb to worksites in Israel. Wealthier individuals in both Morocco and Tunisia helped to finance poor Jews' migration

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<sup>62</sup> Shlomo Deshen, "The Social Structure of Southern Tunisian Jewry in the Early 20th Century," *Jewish Societies in the Middle East: Community, Culture and Authority*, (Washington, DC: University of America, 1982), p. 123-37.

<sup>63</sup> Some examples of anti-Jewish violence included 1952 attacks on Jewish homes in Tunis and riots in Tunis following the 1967 war in Israel. Then-president Bouguiba generally responded quite harshly to attacks on Jewish life in Tunis, taking immediate steps to stop violence and repay victims. While anti-Semitic violence certainly existed in Tunis just before most Jews immigrated to France, it was not necessarily a widely supported institutional phenomenon. See [Laskier, "North African Jewry," 260-306], for more information. See [Phillipe Barbé, "Jewish-Muslim Syncretism and Intercommunity Cohabitation in the Writings of Albert Memmi." Trans. Allan MacVicar. *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa*. Ed. Emily B. Gottreich and Daniel J. Schroeter, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana UP, 2011), p. 110.] for confirmation that most Jews in Tunisia did not experience anti-Jewish violence.

<sup>64</sup> Laskier, "North African Jewry," p. 293.

to Israel too; one Jewish lawyer from Fez and Sefrou recalled his father — a well-to-do leader in the Jewish community — donating money to the cause.<sup>65</sup> Jews from lower socio-economic statuses were the most likely to be attracted to these types of *aaliyah* options, as they tended to specifically recruit people willing to do low-skilled, manual labor. Still, Jews of all wealth strata were exposed to Zionist organizations, and even those wealthier Jews who attended French schools and lived in European areas of Tunisian cities began expressing political and cultural connections to Israel. Many of them carried these alliances forward with them even if they opted to immigrate to France or other parts of the world,

Muslim Maghrebis rarely shared pro-Zionist affinities. Indeed, as Arab Nationalism became a social force and conceptions of Pan-Arab identity spread throughout Arabic-speaking and Muslim regions of the world, many Muslim Tunisians and Moroccans began identifying specifically with anti-Zionist causes and with a disenfranchised Palestinian community. As early as the 1930s, Muslim and Arab organizations in Tunisia were working to raise money to combat the Zionist movement's spread in both British Palestine and Tunisia itself.<sup>66</sup> During the post-revolutionary period under President Bourguiba, Tunisia had formal diplomatic relations with Israel and the government facilitated fairly easy movement — and immigration — between the two countries. On a more popular level though, sentiment toward Israel was more complicated, and relations became politically strained as Tunisia deepened its involvement in collective Arab affairs in the 1980s by serving as the Palestinian Liberation Organization and Arab League Headquarters. In 1985

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<sup>65</sup> Personal Interview with Jean-Gabriel, Rabat, 9 January 2013.

<sup>66</sup> Jam'iyat Al-Shubban Al-Muslimin. "A Manifesto to the Tunisian Nation on the State of Muslim Arab Palestine's Struggle for Freedom." Bayan lil-Umma al-Tunisiyya an Halat Filistin al- Arabiyya al-Mujahida (Tunis, 1353 A.H.). Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times. Ed. Norman Stillman. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2003), p. 381-382.

Israel attacked the PLO's base near Tunis, causing "heavy loss of human life and extensive material damage."<sup>67</sup> Israel's airstrike on Tunisian land and other acts like this exacerbated anti-Israeli sentiment among the general Tunisian population, furthering a political divide between Tunisian Jews and Muslims on the issue.

Zionist and anti-Zionist perspectives thus provided yet another point of difference between the Jewish and Muslim immigrant communities that came from the Maghreb to France, helping to catalyze their different connections to their birthplaces today.

### ***Expectation of Permanent Relocation or Temporary Stay***

Jews and Muslims who made the decision to migrate to France generally did so with significantly different mindsets and expectations for the future. As has already been described, most Muslim workers from both Morocco and Tunisia were invited to complete short-term labor tours in France. The French government, the hiring companies, and the workers themselves usually expected Muslim laborers to return to their home countries after just a few years, at least during the first two waves of Maghrebi immigration. Because these workers were only projected to stay in France for short time scales, they were not encouraged to integrate into French society by learning the local language, adopting regional customs, or raising families. Rather, migrants lived in mandatory work camps with rough living conditions and followed harsher laws than French citizens. A "Conseil de Guerre" controlled this colonial manpower, and could try workers before military tribunals if they refused to work or did anything else to threaten France's social order.<sup>68</sup> Partly because they received such a weak welcome in Europe, the first wave of Muslim Maghrebis

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<sup>67</sup> U.N. Security Council. Resolution 573. 5 October 1985.

<sup>68</sup> Mahfoud Bennoun, "The Maghrebin Migrant Workers in France." *Race & Class* 17.1 (1975): 41.

usually left France as soon as they had earned enough money to support a comfortable life for their families in the Maghreb.<sup>69</sup>

In later years, conditions for Maghrebi Muslim workers improved somewhat and many — particularly those without children and spouses pulling them back home — ended up staying in France well past the short predicted time period. Despite that, both the French government and most Muslim Maghrebis themselves assumed that they would return home, de-emphasizing the need to integrate into French society. In 1962, the head of the Service for Muslim Affairs urged the government to keep Muslims living in the metropole only so long as they were useful in the workforce. He suggested that barring North Africans from French citizenship would be a useful way to ensure that they left eventually.<sup>70</sup>

Indeed, in the immediate post-WWII period, French industries and the government sometimes even encouraged cultural differences as a way to keep their workers from staying in France longer than anticipated. For example, some Maghrebi-staffed businesses offered workers special Muslim prayer rooms — regardless of whether or not they had been requested — to emphasize their religious difference.<sup>71</sup> In 1973, just as the doors for Maghrebi immigration to France were closing, the government signed contracts to allow instructors from other countries to teach foreign languages to the children of immigrants — who were assumed to speak French as a second language, even if they were born in the country. Children could spend 27 hours each week with a teacher who did not necessarily understand the French curriculum, so that they would get a

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<sup>69</sup> France had generally proven inhospitable and uncomfortable enough that it was not worth staying in Europe.

<sup>70</sup> Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization*, p. 237.

<sup>71</sup> Arkin, "It's the French," p.172-174.

“culturally appropriate” education in place of a standard French one.<sup>72</sup> Naomi Davidson posits that the French government’s inability to see Muslims as capable of becoming secular members of society — in the way that Jews and Catholics already had — helped catalyze its different treatment of Muslim immigrants.<sup>73</sup> These twentieth-century policies encouraged workers of Moroccan and Tunisian origin, even those who had begun raising families and building permanent lives in France, to think of themselves as primarily Maghrebi and Muslim, and not as French. As Muslim immigrants were not expected to stay in France and maintain purely religious identities, they were well-prepared to maintain ties to their birthplaces into the twenty-first century.

Jewish migrants from Morocco and Tunisia almost always came to France expecting to stay permanently.<sup>74</sup> “The day I set foot in France, I gave up Tunisian citizenship,” one Jew in Toulouse told me, four decades after he first moved to France for his studies.<sup>75</sup> The Jews who came to France largely did so in the midst of nationalization and Arabization movements in their home countries. Though some Maghrebi Jews demonstrated support for Maghrebi national movements — particularly the Jewish Communist Left in Tunisia — other members of the community worried a power shift that could upset Jewish life in the region, despite specific outreach from political leaders to dispel that fear.<sup>76</sup> The Neo-Destour party in Tunisia, led by the modernizer Habib Bourguiba, made frequent, public promises to keep citizenship free from religious compulsion and to protect Jews’ social, religious, and political freedom, which reflects the

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<sup>72</sup> Arkin, “It’s the French,” p.172-174.

<sup>73</sup> Davidson, *Only Muslim*, p. 35.

<sup>74</sup> Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization*, p. 174.

<sup>75</sup> Personal Interview with Abraham, Toulouse, 20 November 2012.

<sup>76</sup> Paul Sebag, *Histoire Des Juifs De Tunisie: Des Origines à Nos Jours* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1991).

fact that most Jews did not feel innately supportive of or protected by nationalist movements.<sup>77</sup> While Tunisian Jews generally supported Bourguiba, they were largely indifferent to the party as a whole.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, in 1952, when the movement had already gained widespread general support, the Tunisian Jewish community president said that France was the source of Jews' cultural inspiration and political emancipation, and that he wanted Jews to mediate between Tunisians and French to stave off independence.<sup>79</sup>

Morocco's monarchy and burgeoning national movement made similar overtures to its own Jewish community during the same period. A new political association was created under the aegis of the Istiqlaal party in January 1956, with the specific goal of promoting Muslim-Jewish relations and implementing the independence movement's stated aim of equality for all Moroccans regardless of their religion. But "other than a small elite (including three members of parliament and the minister of posts and telegraphs in the first nationalist government), most Jews did not invest great hope in the independent future of Morocco and began preparing for their departure."<sup>80</sup>

Jewish immigration became somewhat of a self-reinforcing cycle for both Morocco and Tunisia. As the community shrunk and Jews left for Israel, Canada, or Europe, it became progressively harder to maintain a Jewish spiritual and cultural life in the Maghreb, encouraging more Jews to leave. When Jews immigrated, they knew that most of their peers were also departing, and they had little reason to expect to return.

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<sup>77</sup> "Le président Bourguiba a affirmé que le gouvernement Tunisien fera pour les enfants israélites ce qu'il fait pour les musulmans car ils sont tous freres," *Le Petit Matin*, 13 February 1957; Laskier, "North African Jewry," p. 306.

<sup>78</sup> Laskier, "North African Jewry," p. 298.

<sup>79</sup> Laskier, "North African Jewry," p. 260.

<sup>80</sup> Gottreich, "Historicizing the concept of Arab Jews," p 438.

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The repercussions of the differences between Jewish and Muslim immigrants' lives in the Maghreb before moving to France have been profound. Well before they arrived in France, Jews had gained tools and support that assisted them in joining the French fold, whereas Muslims were kept in Maghrebi-only geographic and cultural spaces. Many decades later, when these same immigrants would see the political systems in their birthplaces going through momentous political and social reforms, their reactions were inevitably influenced by these historical factors. Jews from Morocco and Tunisia — who had been pulled away from Maghrebi languages, cultures and practices even before they arrived in France — would largely sit aside and remain bystanders. Muslims from both countries became far more involved in directing and participating in political and social change. Having been far more hesitantly invited into French society, they were slower to lose connections to their native countries and instead remained connected into the “Arab Spring” period.



### **Chapter 3: The Rift Widens**

The divisions between the cultures and communities of Jewish and Muslim Maghrebis continued to expand once these populations arrived in France in the second half of the twentieth century. The previous chapter discussed some of the ways in which French-bound Jews and Muslims from Morocco and Tunisia differed from each other. This chapter continues that narrative, exposing the social forces that made Jews even more detached from their home countries as their tenure in France progressed. To better frame my research on Moroccans and Tunisians in Toulouse in 2012, the chapter will focus on later-twentieth century Toulousian history and policies.

I will explore:

1. The timing and duration of Jewish and Muslim immigration to France
2. Socioeconomic opportunities available to Jews and Muslims of the same national backgrounds once they arrived
3. *Ashkenazi* pressure on *Sephardi* Jews to change their cultural practices
4. Jewish separation from Muslim “Arab” communities as a means to confirm French identity
5. Consequences of identification with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict
6. Repercussions of recent anti-Semitic violence in Toulouse

Each of these social influences helped to encourage Moroccan and Tunisian Jews living in France to minimize their connections to their birthplaces, providing a useful explanatory context for their lack of engagement with North Africa’s present political and social changes.

### ***Timing and Duration of Immigration***

Along with the differences in Jewish and Muslim Maghrebis' expectations, legal statuses, and cultural backgrounds — as was discussed in the previous chapter — the distinct timing and duration of Jews' and Muslims' migration to France separated these two groups and influenced their behavior once they arrived. Muslim Maghrebis came to France in significant numbers throughout the twentieth century, and Muslim Moroccans and Tunisians continue to cross the Mediterranean to France today in order to pursue work and study opportunities. Because Muslim Maghrebi immigration has never ended completely, the Islamic Maghrebi community in France is constantly replenished by new members with more recent memories of North African culture, politics, and people.

Jewish immigration was far more concentrated, and largely ended by the mid-1970s. Today, there are so few Jews remaining in Morocco or Tunisia that immigration from those countries to France is no longer numerically significant, and most Moroccan and Tunisian Jews in France have little opportunity to hear directly from their co-religionists about contemporary life in the Maghreb.<sup>81</sup>

This discrepancy had significant repercussions on Jews' and Muslims' interest in and capacity for participation in some of the political shifts that occurred in their home countries through 2011 and 2012. Even those Muslim Moroccans and Tunisians who had spent decades in France had a steady stream of compatriots from similar backgrounds who could encourage them to get involved with political life at home and who could provide the information and contacts they would need to do so. Jews generally did not.

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<sup>81</sup> This is true even though most of the remaining Jewish young people in either country are actually in the process of moving away, and the communities in North Africa are becoming even more elderly. The remaining Jewish populations in Morocco and Tunisia are so small (just a few thousand in each country), that even if most of them leave in the next decade, they will not drastically affect French Jewish demographics.

Jews from the Maghreb had also mostly come to France in the 1960s when France was on the threshold of an economic expansion that provided significant new work options for workers with the skills to integrate into white-collar professions.<sup>82</sup> Since Muslim immigration was not limited to any single temporal period, new immigrants faced a range of economic conditions, some of which were fairly limited, preventing them from establishing themselves comfortably or from building new networks that could supplant their existing ties to their birthplaces.

### ***Socio-economic differences between Jews and Muslims in Toulouse***

The socio-economic levels of Jewish and Muslim North Africans diverged even further after immigrants from both groups installed themselves in Toulouse in the latter decades of the twentieth century. As has already been described, Moroccan and Tunisian Jews generally came to Toulouse with more marketable skills, education, and social capital than Muslims did, which gave more of them the tools to move quickly up to comfortable and often powerful places in French society. Muslim Maghrebis, in the aggregate, did not have the same advantages, and France never afforded them the same social and economic opportunities for advancement. Over time, the differences between these groups only expanded. For Jews, France became a land of opportunity; for Muslims, it was more of a disappointment.

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<sup>82</sup> Abitbol, "The Integration," p. 252.

*Opportunities and resources available to Muslim Maghrebis*

Particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, Muslim Maghrebi immigrants were frequently greeted with distrust and discrimination in France. As has already been described, the first sets of Maghrebi immigrants were expected to remain just a short time in Europe to do menial labor and then to return to their home countries. They were thus kept in immigrant-dense neighborhoods and given few tools to integrate into larger French culture. These immigrant enclaves became permanent when most Maghrebi workers chose to stay in France instead of returning to North Africa, and started sponsoring their family members so that they too could immigrate. Today, most French cities have an isolated *banlieu* area dominated by Maghrebi immigrants where crime, poverty, and unemployment rates are higher than the norm.<sup>83</sup>

Since France puts legal restrictions on recordkeeping regarding racial and ethnic data, it is challenging to accurately measure the socio-economic differences between ethnically European Frenchmen and Maghrebis of any religion. Still, the Brookings Institute estimates that the unemployment rate for immigrants is about twice that of the overall population, and that rates are even higher for people — particularly youth — of North African Muslim origin. In 1999, 22 percent of all first-generation, noncitizen immigrants in France were unemployed, compared to just 13 percent of the larger French workforce.<sup>84</sup> Most scholars and policy-makers attribute this extreme unemployment rate to immigrants' lower education levels and to jingoistic discrimination. Non-citizen immigrants are disproportionately represented in the low-skill jobs that are most effected by a weak

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<sup>83</sup> Jodie T. Allen, "The French-Muslim Connection," *Pew Research Center RSS.*, 17 Aug. 2006.

<sup>84</sup> Jonathan Laurence and Justin Vaïsse, "The Steady Integration of France's Most Recent and Largest Minority." *Integrating Islam: Political and Religious Challenges in Contemporary France*, (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2006), p. 32.

economy, and they are more likely to be considered “workers,” rather than “executives” or “professionals” with more job security and stability.<sup>85</sup>

But even when compared with other French denizens with the same education levels and backgrounds, immigrants — particularly those of North African Muslim descent — have higher rates of poverty and unemployment. SOS Racisme and many other anti-racist French organizations blame this discrepancy on pervasive anti-“Arab,” anti-Islamic and anti-immigrant discrimination in France.<sup>86</sup> Among other empirical data confirming this phenomenon, a 2002 study found that job applicants with non-European first names were less likely to receive offers than similarly qualified people with European names.<sup>87</sup> A more recent Stanford survey suggests that much of this discrimination is specifically anti-Islamic; applicants who appear Christian received more job offers and interviews than otherwise identical Muslim candidates.<sup>88</sup> Correspondingly, a study in the early 2000s found that women who wore headscarves to a naturalization application interview were less likely to receive French citizenship than women who went uncovered.<sup>89</sup>

Recognizing that anti-Islamic and anti-“Arab” discrimination has become a barrier to Maghrebis’ upward social movement, the French government has implemented a series

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<sup>85</sup> Laurence and Vaisse, “The Steady Integration,” p. 32-33.

<sup>86</sup> There is an extensive — and rapidly growing — body of scholarly literature on anti-Maghrebi discrimination and racism in France. See [Peter Fysh and Jim Wolfreys, *The Politics of Racism in France*. (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).], [Tariq Modood and Pnina Werbner, *The Politics of Multiculturalism in the New Europe: Racism, Identity, and Community* (London: Zed, 1997).], [Davidson, *Only Muslim*.] and many other works for a fuller discussion of this social concern.

<sup>87</sup> Samuel Thomas, “Rapport D’analyse Des Affaires Recentes Des Discriminations à l’embauche Poursuivis Par SOS Racisme.” *Paris: SOS Racism* (2005).

<sup>88</sup> David Laitin, Marie-Anne Valfort, and Claire Adida. “Identifying Barriers to Muslim Integration in France.” *Proceedings for the National Academy of Sciences* (2010).

<sup>89</sup> D. Fassin and S. Mazouz, “What is it to Become French? Naturalization as a Republican Rite of Institution,” *Revue française de sociologie* (2009/5, Volume 50), p. 41.

of laws over the past several decades to prevent job discrimination.<sup>90</sup> But new regulations that limit firms' ability to let applicants' names, apparent religions, and ethnic backgrounds influence hiring decisions do not keep employers from noting candidates' hometowns and geographic origins. When some employers see an Arabic name or an address in an immigrant-heavy district on a résumé, they will ignore the candidate rather than risk hiring an "Arab" worker who is assumed to be less reliable and hardworking than an ethnically French citizen. This frequent practice — which continues today, despite laws and policies put in place to prevent it — only makes it more difficult for Muslim Maghrebis to find jobs and reinforces the French stereotype that they are disproportionately unemployed.<sup>91</sup>

Toulouse's city government has taken additional steps to decrease the social isolation of Maghrebi immigrants, though most still live in the under-resourced neighborhoods of Empalot, Bagatelle, and Mirail.<sup>92</sup> Particularly after the socialist party took control of the *Mairie* in 2011, the city leadership has worked to increase "*la mixité*" in Toulouse and minimize the physical separation of Maghrebis from the rest of the community.<sup>93</sup> They hope to decrease discrimination against Maghrebis and help them access better jobs and resources by further extending public transportation options to formerly-isolated neighborhoods and by building more expensive, luxurious housing complexes in traditionally poor areas to increase the diversity there. They are also starting to open more traditional subsidized housing centers in the city center and other more

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<sup>90</sup> Jean-Michel Ageron, and Anne-Laure Périès. "Employment Discrimination Law: A European Guide," *Lus Laboris, Global Human Resources Lawyers, Discrimination International Practices Group* (2011), p. 59-78.

<sup>91</sup> Personal interview with Mustapha Saïf, Toulouse, 26 November 2012.

<sup>92</sup> Personal interview with Daniel Benyahia, Toulouse, 20 November 2012.

<sup>93</sup> Personal interview with Daniel Benyahia, Toulouse, 20 November 2012

desirable areas, so that there will be less of a clear correlation between ethnicity or immigration status and geographic location in Toulouse.<sup>94</sup> While social policies are now evolving to meet the changing needs of Muslim Maghrebis in France, this support comes long after most immigrants arrived in Europe and has still only been moderately effective.

Pervasive job discrimination and social limits on socio-economic expansion have helped to reinforce a culture in which many Maghrebi immigrants and their children do not feel welcome or wanted in France. Fatima, a French-born Toulousian of Moroccan descent, said that strangers occasionally accost her in public and tell her to “go home.” She often feels as though a fear and distrust of Arabs pervades the media and popular culture around her.<sup>95</sup> Hèla Yousfi, an academic at the Paris Dauphin University who was born in Tunisia, says that even though she received French citizenship last year and has had a primarily French education since her childhood, she can never feel fully French because of this type of discrimination. “I like France a lot, but it’s not my country,” she told me, pointing to the way in which Muslims and immigrants are treated in France.<sup>96</sup> She cites bans on wearing religious symbols in public that disproportionately target Muslims as prime examples of a culture that will always, she said, view Muslims as “des nègres mal blanchés.”<sup>97</sup>

Immigrants like Hèla who do not feel as though they have been able to reap true social benefits in France tend to remain even more tied to their birthplaces. Hèla has become an activist in the last several years and has long focused her academic research on Tunisian political questions. For her — and many others in similar situations — French

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<sup>94</sup> Personal interview with Daniel Benyahia, Toulouse, 20 November 2012.

<sup>95</sup> Personal Interview with Fatima, Toulouse, 3 December 2012.

<sup>96</sup> Personal Interview with Hèla Yousfi, Toulouse, 4 December 2012.

<sup>97</sup> Personal Interview with Hèla Yousfi, Toulouse, 4 December 2012.

citizenship has not supplanted a pre-existing Moroccan or Tunisian identity, and she continues to find reasons to stay involved from afar.

Lastly, because a large proportion of Muslim Maghrebis in France still live in poorer quarters filled primarily with other immigrants, many also continue to practice the culture of their home countries without adopting French norms; they speak Arabic at home, celebrate Muslim holidays using North African traditions, prepare the same foods and drinks as their grandparents did in the “b’lad,” and spend time with other people from similar backgrounds.<sup>98</sup> Enough of the community has remained so deeply involved in North African culture that some of the weekly markets and local cafés in the Toulousian neighborhood of La Reynerie would not seem at all out of place in Casablanca or Tunis. These daily reminders of Maghrebi life help to reinforce many Muslim Maghrebis’ cultural and political ties to their birthplaces.

#### *Resources and opportunities available to Jewish Maghrebis*

Jewish Maghrebis in Toulouse have tended to have a very different set of concerns. They are unaffected by discriminatory practices that specifically target people who appear Muslim, and they have never been confined to exclusively Jewish neighborhoods.<sup>99</sup> Instead, they entered with a comparatively warmer welcome that included tangible benefits like housing, job placement, and financial assistance, helping them more quickly and more firmly establish themselves in France while also encouraging them to weaken what ties they may have still maintained to their birthplaces.

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<sup>98</sup> Personal Interview with Mustapha Saïf, Toulouse, 26 November 2012.

<sup>99</sup> Though Jews do experience discrimination of other types.



Most North African Jews immigrated to France — and specifically to Toulouse — within one or two decades of the end of World War II, a period in which the Holocaust was still a recent memory and when the French public felt responsible for its participation in the Vichy government's deportation, mistreatment, and mass-murder of Jews. The Grand Rabbin of Toulouse at the time later offered the following description of the post-war environment for Jews:

The general atmosphere was very favorable; was that because of repentance, regret, remorse, I don't know? There had never been such good feelings with respect to the Jews, especially in France. The fact that a community was rebuilding itself brought us the widest sympathy. We had the best relationships with the authorities: with the prefecture, where the largest facilities were granted for naturalization; with the Central Commissioner, I had meetings with the archbishop. Cardinal Saliège would stand up when I entered a room. We could use the most beautiful rooms in the city, those of the "Grand Hotel," in particular, on Rue de Metz.<sup>100</sup>

Jews generally had access to significant public resources and assistance in Toulouse in the years just after WWII, which undoubtedly helped immigrants enter the community with more ease. Several pre-existing Jewish organizations — themselves aided by international funding — helped Jewish immigrants acclimate to life in France by offering them money, housing, job placement, and other support.<sup>101</sup> Many of these Jewish organizations felt an extra pressure to assist Maghrebi Jews as abundantly as possible, because they had faced criticism for inadequately welcoming Eastern European Jews in the 1930s.<sup>102</sup> The aid that Jews received from organizations like the *Comité de Bienfaisance Israélite de Paris* and the *Fonds Social Juif Unifié* helped Jews to enter into French public life

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<sup>100</sup> Manolesco, "La Reconstruction," p. 37.

<sup>101</sup> Colette Zytnecki, "Gérer la Rupture: Les Institutions Sociales Juives de France Face aux Migrations des Juifs Tunisiens (1950-1970)," *Juifs Et Musulmans En Tunisie: Fraternité Et Dérichements*, Ed. Sonia Fellous. (Paris: Somogy éditions D'art, 2003), p. 336.

<sup>102</sup> Abitbol, "The Integration," p. 254.

comparatively easily upon arrival. These associations had a complicated effect on *Sephardi* life and the following section will discuss some of the ways that they asked Maghrebi Jews to merge with a pre-existing *Ashkenazi* culture in exchange for social support.

Those differences, mixed with Jews' higher levels of education and better grasp of French language and culture before immigration, helped give Jews measurably higher socio-economic statuses than their Muslim counterparts in France. In 1984, 23 percent of Jews of Moroccan and Tunisian origins in Paris had earned some sort of post-graduate degree. Additionally, 26 percent of Jews from Morocco or Tunisia in Paris classified themselves as professionals and executives in their workplace.<sup>103</sup> These economic opportunities have left most Tunisian and Moroccan Jews in France quite well established, helping them to loosen any previous connections to their countries of origin.<sup>104</sup>

### ***Ashkenazi pressure on Sephardi Jews to change their cultural practices***

While Muslims from Morocco and Tunisia live in immigrant-dense neighborhoods that often reinforced their identification as foreign and non-French, Jewish communities faced collective policies that sought to reduce their identification with *Sephardi* and North African culture. Once immigrants reached Toulouse (or other cities in France), local Jewish *Ashkenazi* populations encouraged Moroccan and Tunisian Maghrebis to assimilate into the community that was already in place and give up some of their previous practices. To explain this behavior, it is important to consider the post-WWII challenges facing French Jews, and particularly Jews in Toulouse.

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<sup>103</sup> Arkin, "It's the French," p. 255-256.

<sup>104</sup> Personal Interview with Collette Zytnicki, Toulouse, 13 November 2012.

Immediately following WWII and the Holocaust, the Toulousian Jewish community — like most of Jewish populations in France — struggled to deal with drastic changes in its demographics, a significant population of orphans, and a lack of interest in traditional rituals and Jewish education. During the war itself, some key members of the community were lost through deportations and killings, and thousands of “hidden children” were only able to survive because they lived with Christian families who then raised them as Catholics.<sup>105</sup> Furthermore, prior to the war, Toulouse took in a significant number of Eastern European Jewish refugees who never returned to their homes in the Soviet Union after fighting ended.<sup>106</sup> Most of these people had been raised in a Marxist environment that eschewed organized religion; they had abandoned traditional practices and no longer identified with Orthodox forms of Judaism.

Eager to keep these more secular Jews tied to the community, Toulouse’s Jewish leadership tried to build new more inclusive cultural centers where all Jews — regardless of their religious background — could participate. The head rabbi of Toulouse gave a speech in 1947 warning that “chaque communauté, aussi petite soit-elle, pour rester une cellule vivante doit se rattacher à la communauté mère sous peine de dépérir faute de soutien.”<sup>107</sup> *Every community, however small it may be, must connect to the mother community in order to remain a living cell, under penalty of losing all support.* Essentially, individual differences needed to be minimized and forgotten in order to unite and prevent the further degradation of the Jewish community. The Toulousian Jewish leadership did not reach this conclusion on its own. Instead, Jewish American organizations like the Joint

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<sup>105</sup> Manolesco, “La Réconstruction.”

<sup>106</sup> Manolesco, “La Réconstruction,” p. 15.

<sup>107</sup> Manolesco, “La Réconstruction,” p. 7.

Distribution Committee helped to reshape and rebuild French Jewish communities like that in Toulouse by donating significant funds for community centers and social services that helped unite European Jews. Between 1945 and 1948, the Joint offered French Jews \$14,318,000 for projects and endeavors in accordance with the “belief that political, religious, and economic differences among Jews should be subsumed in a unified social, cultural, and educational framework.”<sup>108</sup> All Joint-funded community centers were based on an American model that welcomed Jews from all religious backgrounds in an effort to create communal unity.

This philosophy continued to guide Toulouse’s Jewish community once Jews from the Maghreb began to arrive *en masse* the following decade. Even though *Sephardim* made up the majority of the Toulousian Jewish community by the late 1950s, they were discouraged from identifying exclusively with North African culture. Indeed, even when the overwhelming majority of the elected leaders on synagogue boards and fundraising committees were *Sephardim*, reflecting the demographics of their electoral base, the community insisted upon reserving leadership roles specifically for *Ashkenazim* so their voices would remain prominent.<sup>109</sup> While the head rabbis in Toulouse throughout the 1950s had been born and raised in Algeria, North African Jews in Paris were frequently excluded from leadership roles.<sup>110</sup> In the 1980s and 1990s, as Jewish day schools became more of an omnipresent religious force in France, the curriculums that were developed for Jewish children reflected *Ashkenazi* traditions, even though most of the students and teachers were of Tunisian and Moroccan descent. The most common form of Jewish

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<sup>108</sup> Mandel, Maud S. "Philanthropy or Cultural Imperialism? The Impact of American Jewish Aid in Post-Holocaust France." *Jewish Social Studies* 9.1 (2002), p. 54.

<sup>109</sup> Manolesco, "La Réconstruction," p. 50.

<sup>110</sup> Manolesco, "La Réconstruction," p. 53-55; Arkin, "It's the French," p. 175-176.

education in France today draws on European rituals and traditions. Among other things, Orthodox school systems encourage married women to wear wigs and men to don black hats, practices that were not indigenous to North Africa. The schools also emphasize Talmud, Mishnah, and Halakhah learning far more exclusively than *Sephardi* schools normally had before.<sup>111</sup> *Sephardic* Jewish history is also rarely included in religious schools' curricula, though some schools include units that vaguely point out that Jews were treated poorly in North Africa both prior to and during the colonial era, and that they were rarely granted the French citizenship that they sought.<sup>112</sup> Schools purposefully emphasized the universality of the Jewish experience and fought to suppress the drive for Jews to segment into different sects and denominations.

The pressure to minimize differences between the *Ashkenazi* and *Sephardi* populations in Toulouse continues into the present day. Notably, Toulouse holds both *Ashkenazi* and *Sephardi* services simultaneously in the same building — a massive and new Jewish Community Center — for the well-attended high holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.<sup>113</sup> Though three- or four-dozen people ended up without seats during the services because the building was so crowded in 2012, several of the city's ten synagogues offered no programs at all over the holidays so that the community would be united in one location. But while in that case the rituals and practices of both segments of the community were respected and practiced — since both services occurred — more often *Sephardic* and North African traditions have been overtaken and subsumed by the pre-existing, *Ashkenazi* versions of Judaism. For example, the *Bibliothèque Hébraïca* in the same Jewish Community

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<sup>111</sup> Arkin, "It's the French," p. 193-194.

<sup>112</sup> Arkin, "It's the French," p. 297.

<sup>113</sup> Personal Observation, September 2012.

Center has supplemented its collection of Hebrew and French books with an entire Yiddish section, but it does not have a single Arabic or Judeo-Arabic language book on display.<sup>114</sup>

Rather than being a way of life that can be actively lived or experienced, *Sephardi* culture is generally depicted in the community as an interesting historical quirk with little modern-day relevance. Throughout November 2012, several French Jewish organizations that were founded or re-organized in the post-WWII era helped sponsor an exposition of *Sephardi* culture at the Jewish Community Center in Toulouse.<sup>115</sup> Through films, debates, and a long-standing photo display, the event celebrated Jewish *Sephardi* figures ranging from Maimonides to Albert Cohen. They represented many fields and areas of society, so that the only thing they really had in common — besides their North African heritage and Jewish religion — was the fact that all of them were dead. Though interesting historical figures, they were not a part of the existing, living Jewish world. A speaker introducing the exposition even said explicitly that *Sephardi* culture has lost its “value” in the present era, and that *Sephardi* and *Ashkenazi* forms of Judaism are — necessarily — melting into each other to form a more unified religion.<sup>116</sup> Though the elderly crowd at the event quickly protested — many of them were immigrants themselves who felt offended by the comment — the speaker had a point. After the shock of the Holocaust, the Jewish community has forced itself to unify and meld together, sacrificing some individual forms of Judaism in the process. One author wrote, “These years of terror unified the Jews (of Toulouse) in a

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<sup>114</sup> Personal Observation, November 2012.

<sup>115</sup> Fondation du Judaïsme Français, Fédération des associations sépharades de France, Akadem, Fonds Social Juif Unifié

<sup>116</sup> Personal Observation, 14 November 2012.

common destiny. One feeling of belonging stamped out differences in origin, opinion, and rites.”<sup>117</sup>

In yet another way then, Jewish Moroccans and Tunisians living in Toulouse have thus been discouraged from identifying with their birthplaces.

### ***Proving Jewish “French-ness” through distance from Arabs***

Many sociologists and anthropologists attribute French Jewish reticence to associate with *Sephardi* culture or North African origins to the community’s long-held desire to appear “French” and less foreign. By distancing themselves from Muslim North Africans, French Jews have collectively cemented themselves as more traditionally European than the “Arab” minority, and thus they hold a more secure place in French society despite their unique religious and cultural practices. Kimberly Arkin’s research during the first years of the twenty-first century provides the best overview of this tendency. Having examined the behavior of students and teachers in Parisian Jewish day schools, which attract mainly Moroccan and Tunisian immigrants and their descendants, Arkin interviewed *Sephardi* Jews about their relations to French-Muslim communities and thoughts on contemporary North Africa. Arkin found that the *Sephardi* Jews with whom she spoke had developed a conception of Judaism that was deeply cultural, ethnic, and even racial — not just religious. For them, Judaism was often incompatible with Frenchness — as they defined it — and it demanded an anti-Muslim, anti-Arab attitude.<sup>118</sup> While her thesis also proposes that Jews are distancing themselves from French identity — a position I contest — she aptly shows that Jews are comparatively more “French” than Muslims are. In order to maintain a

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<sup>117</sup> Manolesco, “La Réconstruction.” p. 7.

<sup>118</sup> Arkin, “It’s the French.”

distinctive and all-consuming Jewish way of life that was different than their secular or Catholic neighbors' routines, Jews pitted themselves against France's Muslim Arab minority to create a sense of being comparatively more embedded in society.

The current collective interpretation of *laïcité* in France posits that religious beliefs regulating a person's day-to-day actions or rooted in any sort of orthopraxy prevent him or her from being a true French citizen.<sup>119</sup> While diversity within the French fabric is allowed — and even encouraged — beliefs that keep individuals from putting national identity before religious affiliation are denounced as un-French.<sup>120</sup> The barrier for full acceptance into French society is even higher for potential citizens born elsewhere; in order to become a naturalized citizen and convert from foreigner to French, applicants are expected to fully abandon their native culture.<sup>121</sup> For traditionally observant Jews, this is all but impossible.<sup>122</sup> Since they will not give up their restrictive rules for communal life, but still want a safe and secure place in French society, they have instead begun to contend — through a mix of speech and action — that Jewish culture and practices are innately French, even if they're at odds with a secularized-Catholic majority.<sup>123</sup> This is a challenging argument to make, even with the long tradition of Jewish presence in France and the overlap of some pivotal moments in Jewish history with French national identity. In order to ensure that Jews remain mostly accepted as a part of larger French culture — even as

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<sup>119</sup> *Laïcité* is a rather complex and loaded term that loosely translates as secularism or a Church-State separation. It is one of the foundations of France's constitution and governing bodies, and it's often interpreted as demanding a strict removal of religion from the public sphere.

<sup>120</sup> Arkin, Kimberly. "Laïcité, Fraternité, and Nationalité: Discontinuities in French Jewish Discourse." *AJS Perspectives: The Magazine of the Association for Jewish Studies*(Spring 2011): 22.

<sup>121</sup> Fassin and Mazouz, "What is it to Become French?" p. 41.

<sup>122</sup> Traditional conceptions of Judaism necessarily involve time-bound actions that define and control daily life. For example, the laws of Kashrut define what can and cannot be eaten, and when. Work restrictions on the Sabbath or major holidays control the possible employment calendar, etc.

<sup>123</sup> Arkin, "It's the French."



they hold on to cultural markers that isolate them from their nominally Catholic compatriots — the Jewish establishment has needed to position itself in contrast to other minority ethno-religious groups. By suggesting that Jews are more “French” than Muslim immigrants or their descendants, for example, Jewish leadership organizations can insist upon remaining socially recognized and accepted even as they demand special allowances for their unique cultural practices and traditions.

This type of distancing behavior has not always been consistent, but it has been particularly apparent when Jews have tried to fight off social policies that restrict their ability to practice or leave them feeling at all marginalized in their own country.<sup>124</sup> In the 1990s, when new French laws threatened to limit the wearing of religious head-coverings — including both Muslim women’s headscarves and Jewish men’s *kippot* — in public spaces, Jewish newspapers entered the national debate and published articles arguing that Jewish and Muslim religious issues were different and should not be treated as equivalent under the law. The crux of their argument was that Jews were part and parcel of French society — no matter what they did — while Muslims were not.<sup>125</sup> This type of mindset has been largely effective in helping Jewish populations find government accommodation for their special needs and communities, without sacrificing Jews’ place in the wider French culture. For example, in 2005 the Baccalaureate exam — the pinnacle of French high school achievement and the deciding factor in students’ eventual university placement — was scheduled over *Shavuot*. Traditionally observant Jews do not work during this spring

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<sup>124</sup> See Maud Mandel’s upcoming “Muslims and Jews in France: The Genealogy of a Conflict” for a broader discussion of this tendency. This has been a fairly complex evolution, and for decades there was more consistent collaboration between French Jews and Muslims toward anti-racist goals.

<sup>125</sup> Arkin, “Laïcité, Fraternité, and Nationalité,” p. 22.

holiday, and they would have been unable to sit for the test.<sup>126</sup> Jews involved in politics and the educational sphere worked discreetly and had the dates moved without any public discussion; this is quite different than what has happened with parallel concerns in the Muslim community.<sup>127</sup> While Jews had the option of collaborating with other religious minorities to change school policies on a larger scale, so that they would not infringe upon religious practice for many communities, it was more politically expedient to stand alone.

If French Jews were to align themselves more closely with Muslims, either by joining forces against religiously-restrictive French policies or through shared interest in the domestic affairs of their birthplaces, they would risk losing some of the social capital that lets them maintain independent, restrictive traditions while still holding on to a deeply French identity. Ethnographic studies have shown that this fear of being marginalized in French society has made some North African Jews reconstruct memories about and behaviors toward Muslims and Arabs. For example, Joelle Bahloul has traced how one Jewish family from a building in Algeria in which Jewish and Muslim families both lived emphasized the difference and separation between the two groups, even though they shared bathrooms and kitchen facilities. Her Jewish subjects were trying to become better established in the French community, “and the more they could distinguish themselves from the Muslim community, the greater their chances of being accepted amongst the French.”<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> “Work” here has a technical religious definition. Among other things, it precludes writing, erasing, using electrical implements, and other aspects of test taking.

<sup>127</sup> Arkin, “It’s the French,” p. 250.

<sup>128</sup> Joëlle Bahloul, *The Architecture of Memory: A Jewish-Muslim Household in Colonial Algeria, 1937-1962*, (New York: Cambridge UP, 1996), p. 27.

These pressures suggest that today's French Jews of Moroccan and Tunisian descent have yet another motivation to downplay their connection to their places of birth. Any interest or investment in North Africa that they demonstrate chips away at their collective French identity and risks their stable spot in French culture.

### ***Identification with the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict***

An additional factor limiting French-Maghrebi Jews' desire and ability to connect with their birthplaces in the present day is the omnipresent specter of the Jewish state and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Because Zionist organizations recruited so many Maghrebi Jews to live and work in Israel during the twentieth-century, most Moroccan and Tunisian Jews in France have more family and friends in Israel than they do in North Africa. Furthermore, the Palestinian cause resonates widely across Arabic-speaking and Muslim communities, helping to equate Palestinian people, goals, and politics with the populations of other countries. Political divisions around this issue help to solidify Jewish alienation from Muslims from the same regions.

### ***Recent Israeli Outreach to French Jews***

If Tunisians and Moroccans of different religious persuasions were divided by their perspective on and affiliations with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Zionist cause while they were still in their birth countries, Israeli outreach to French Jews has only deepened these rifts. When Tunisian and Moroccan Jewish immigrants entered France and began getting involved in existing social and religious organizations, they found themselves embedded in a pro-Zionist milieu. In the post-War period, the Toulousian Jewish

community already had a wide range of active Zionist groups doing everything from fundraising to political agitation to facilitating *aaliyah*.<sup>129</sup> Indeed, for much of this post-war period in Toulouse, Zionist actions had entirely replaced traditional Jewish practices.

“Nous, notre identité, c’est la sionisme,” Toulousian Jew Daniel Benyahia told me, describing the mindset of most of his generation of French-born Jews. He continued that he once needed to explain to his grandchild why he still considered himself Jewish at all, because he does not eat exclusively Kosher food or attend religious services. He said he answered the grandchild’s query by describing his connection to the Jewish state.<sup>130</sup>

Relations between French Jews and Israel continued to evolve after the main periods of North African Jewish immigration. Though it is beyond the scope of this paper to describe all of the moments of diplomatic tension, economic strain, and political shifting that affected ties between the communities of both countries, it is valuable to explore a few main themes in more recent years. In general the French Jewish public has remained quite publicly supportive of Israel’s continued existence and politics. Indeed, many Tunisian and Moroccan Jews now living in France have reshaped their identifications with the Jewish community to reflect a newly adopted sense of Zionism. Rather than sending their children to Jewish day schools or following traditional Jewish law, they maintain their Jewish identities through solidarity with the state of Israel. For many, Zionism has taken the place of text study and adherence to spiritual values.<sup>131</sup> The Israeli State has encouraged that shift through direct outreach, particularly in the past several decades.

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<sup>129</sup> Manolesco, “La Reconstruction,” p. 91-92.

<sup>130</sup> Personal interview with Daniel Benyahia, 20 November 2012.

<sup>131</sup> Abitbol, “The Integration,” p. 257.

Within just the past the few years, strong connections between the sister cities of Toulouse and Tel Aviv have been developed on an official level, complementing these softer connections.<sup>132</sup> The current mayor of Toulouse went on a diplomatic mission to Tel Aviv in 2011, and the mayor of Tel Aviv visited Toulouse's main synagogue in October 2012. The two cities have several commercial partnerships and business exchanges, which also help to facilitate feelings of shared identity and affinity, according to the adjunct mayor for urbanization in Toulouse.<sup>133</sup>

Relevantly, some of those newer official partnerships include discourse that encourages French Jews to consider themselves unwelcome and unsafe in France or any other state that is not explicitly Jewish, which certainly has ramifications for their ability to connect with Muslims in France and in their birth nations. Because more progressive Jews are quickly becoming a smaller proportion of Israel's population, the Israeli government has spent much of the past decade encouraging French Jews to move to Israel. In July 2004, then-Prime Minister Ariel Sharon told a group of Americans that France had "one of the wildest forms of anti-Semitism out there." He concluded, "If I were addressing our brothers in France, I would tell them, immigrate to Israel as fast as possible."<sup>134</sup>

Many French Jews appear to be responding to this encouragement. In 2003, 2,100 French Jews moved to Israel. 2,415 came in 2004, 3,000 in 2005, and 3,500 in 2006.<sup>135</sup> The

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<sup>132</sup> Personal Interview with Daniel Benyahia, 20 November 2012.

<sup>133</sup> Personal Interview with Daniel Benyahia, 20 November 2012.

<sup>134</sup> Alain Badou and Eric Hazan, *L'antisémitisme Partout: Aujourd'hui En France*, (Paris: La Fabrique Editions, 2011), p. 43; It is worth noting that Sharon's statement attracted the deep ire of the mainstream French Jewish establishment.

<sup>135</sup> Zohar Blumenkrantz and Amiram Barkat, "2,500 American, French Immigrants to Arrive This Summer," *Haaretz*, 14 May 2006.

total French Jewish population is fewer than 500,000 people, so these numbers are noteworthy, particularly because they have been regularly increasing.<sup>136</sup>

The pressure toward *aaliyah* has also taken hold in Toulouse. I attended an “Israeli culture” fair in October 2012 at the Jewish Community Center that turned out to be mainly a time-share and real estate display that offered low-cost vacation and retirement options. The most popular table focused on providing young people with the tools and funding they needed to permanently relocate in Israel.<sup>137</sup> There are current plans to open direct flights between Toulouse and Tel Aviv in June 2013, reflecting a growing volume of exchanges between the two cities. Especially during periods of increased anti-Semitism when the situation in France seems precarious, Toulousian Jews think constantly about making *aaliyah* or retiring in Israel, one former community president told me told me.<sup>138</sup> Indeed, about 50 percent of the Jews in Toulouse already have family members or a second home in Israel, according to Jean Levy, the president of the France-Israel committee for the South of France.<sup>139</sup> Nearly everyone who is involved in the organized Jewish community of Toulouse talks about moving to Israel after retirement, but Levy speculates that *Sephardi* Jews of North African descent are more likely to follow through than are *Ashkenazim*.<sup>140</sup>

Even though most *Sephardi* Jews fully adopted French culture as soon as they arrived in Toulouse — if not before — many worry that French society is evolving into something closer to the North African societies they left, due to rising Muslim populations in France. When Kimberly Arkin interviewed Jewish day school students in the early 2000s,

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<sup>136</sup> Sergio Dellapergola, “World Jewish Population, 2010.” *North American Jewish Data Bank* (2010); Arkin’s “It’s the French” explains this shift in depth. She posits that growing French-Jewish affinity for Israel has stemmed from a decreasing sense of belonging and citizenship in France itself.

<sup>137</sup> Personal Observation, 14 October 2012.

<sup>138</sup> Personal Interview with Michel Bensemoun, 30 November 2012.

<sup>139</sup> Personal Interview with Jean Levy, 29 November 2012.

<sup>140</sup> Personal Interview with Jean Levy, 29 November 2012.

she heard most reflect the conviction that the only way to guarantee long-term Jewish safety is through *aaliyah*, since there are now so many Muslim North Africans in France.<sup>141</sup>

This ever-increasing connection between Toulousian Jews — especially those of Maghrebi descent — and Israel drives yet another cultural wedge between Jews and Muslims of the same national background, since French Muslims tend to be more critical of Israel.

Furthermore, even when I met Tunisian and Moroccan Jews in Toulouse who said they felt no conflict between being loyal to Israel and fully French or Maghrebi, affinity for Israel sometimes directly prevented Maghrebi Jews from connecting to their birthplaces. For example, I spoke with a couple from Gabes who had very fond memories of their childhoods in Tunisia and were fiercely proud of their heritage, but had not returned to visit in 30 years. They would have liked to go in 2012, but they felt that it was too unsafe to visit Tunisia as Jews with Israeli stamps on their passports while an Islamist party was in power. They decided to visit Jerusalem instead. Unlike most Muslim Magrebi immigrants who have family in Tunisian vacation spots, their relations were all in Haifa and Jerusalem.<sup>142</sup>

### *Beur Connections to Palestinian Causes and anti-Zionism*

While Jewish Moroccan and Tunisians have built up ever-stronger connections to Israel while living in France, Muslim North Africans have tended to develop far more critical sentiments. Beginning in the Nasser era, many Muslim Moroccans and Tunisians

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<sup>141</sup> Arkin, "It's the French," p. 284; as aforementioned, the children and grandchildren of Moroccan and Tunisian Jewish immigrants are disproportionately represented in French Jewish day schools.

<sup>142</sup> Personal Interview with Annie and Gerald, Toulouse, 4 December 2012.

began to associate with a budding pan-Arab movement that linked their fate with the outcome of all Arab nations.<sup>143</sup> The pan-Arab student movement was particularly invested in the fight against Israel's politics and very existence. One of its primary goals was to "restore national dignity" that had been stolen by an Israeli enemy to Palestinians, who were depicted as brethren and peers.<sup>144</sup>

Most of the connections between Muslim Maghrebis in France and the Palestinian cause began after the 1968 War between Israel and its Arab neighbors. In parallel to Israeli outreach to Jewish people living in North Africa and in France, Palestinian political parties approached left-leaning university students in Paris and North African workers across France. They helped them organize protests and encouraged them to see their struggles as united under the same anti-imperialist goals.<sup>145</sup> While the Palestinian movement failed to mobilize or unite all Maghrebi workers in France in the 1970s, it did become fundamentally integrated into North African immigrants' leadership structures, which gave it a long-term hold on the community's collective outlook.<sup>146</sup> Even if most Maghrebi Muslims never become personally active in the struggle against Israeli imperialism in the Middle East, they came to generally align themselves with the Palestinian cause.

Because these types of mind-sets and priorities took hold among both Tunisians and Moroccans living in North Africa and abroad in France in the 1970s and later, most "Arab" immigrants in Toulouse today — regardless of the date that they immigrated — are

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<sup>143</sup> Gottreich, "Historicizing the concept," p. 447.

<sup>144</sup> Pratt, Nicola C. *Democracy and Authoritarianism in the Arab World*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2007: p. 70.

<sup>145</sup> See Maud Mandel's upcoming "*Muslims and Jews in France: The Genealogy of a Conflict*" for a broader discussion of the growth of the pro-Palestine movement among Maghrebi youth in France after 1968.

<sup>146</sup> Again, Mandel's upcoming "*Muslims and Jews in France*" offers the best overview of these movements.



nominally opposed to Israel's policies and actions regarding Palestinians.<sup>147</sup> Jews and Muslims from the Maghreb are therefore usually divided by the Israeli-Palestinian question, which has helped augment tension between these two groups in France.<sup>148</sup>

### ***Recent anti-Semitic Violence in Toulouse***

One of the complicating factors of my research project in Toulouse was a vicious attack on the Jewish community in March 2012, in which an unstable French-Algerian shot and killed a rabbi, two of his children, and an eight-year-old girl entering a Jewish school in the city. The attacks — which were part of a several day spree that also claimed the lives of three French soldiers — shocked the community and the country as a whole.<sup>149</sup> “Our community was deeply marked by what happened,” Annie — a Jewish woman born in Tunisia — told me. “Deeply marked.”<sup>150</sup>

In the six months after the attack, Jewish organizations added significant new layers of security and fundamentally changed the way they interact with their non-Jewish Toulousian neighbors. Armed police guards now stand in front of every Jewish establishment during times of prayer and deny entrance to anyone they do not recognize. The Jewish community center has a new bulletproof entrance system, and road barriers protect the Jewish school that had been infiltrated.<sup>151</sup> Indeed, the speech given on the

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<sup>147</sup> Personal interview with Mustapha Saïf, Toulouse, 26 November 2012.

<sup>148</sup> Tensions between Jews and Muslims in France around the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are made more complex by alliances between Jewish and far-left groups in the 1970s that left many Jews supporting Palestinian rights over the Israeli state. There is no perfect binary split aligning all French Jews with Israel or all French Muslims with Palestine. Still — in the aggregate — the two groups tend to divide themselves on this issue, creating points of ideological and cultural tension that have occasionally lead to direct conflict between both groups.

<sup>149</sup> “Murders in the Midi-Pyrénées.” *The Economist*. The Economist Newspaper, 24 Mar. 2012. Web. 04 Dec. 2012. <<http://www.economist.com/node/21551121>>.

<sup>150</sup> Personal Interview with Annie, Toulouse, 4 December 2012.

<sup>151</sup> Personal Observations.

afternoon of Yom Kippur in 2012 — something of a prime-time event with the highest synagogue attendance of the year — was dedicated to asking community members to donate money to help fund the €300,000 that had been spent on increased security measures between March and September of that year.<sup>152</sup> Rabbis and community leaders frequently mentioned the attacks in more quotidian events like Saturday afternoon Torah discussions and invitations to holiday celebrations throughout my time in Toulouse. For example, they asked the community to ensure that the annual Chanukkah celebration was bigger than ever in 2012 “because of what happened this year” and to make certain that charity events raise impressive funds “to show them that we’re still here.”<sup>153</sup> The fear and vulnerability that most of the community still feels is palpable and omnipresent.

I was able to witness some of this first-hand when the Chabad Lubavitch synagogue I occasionally visited was defaced on a Friday evening. Though the graffiti had been washed away long before I arrived the following Saturday morning, I was told that someone had scrawled, “the Jews are all killers” across the front door.<sup>154</sup> During a light meal and discussion that followed the morning service, the attendants spoke solely about the graffiti and their feelings of insecurity. “There’s no future for the Jews here,” one woman from Morocco told me, explaining that a rising Arab population had fundamentally changed the French culture that had once been a haven to her and her family. Another woman spoke with a British couple that was visiting and considering relocating to Toulouse, and told them to move to America or Israel instead. It was too precarious in France, she explained.

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<sup>152</sup> Personal Observation, 26 September 2012.

<sup>153</sup> Personal Observations.

<sup>154</sup> Personal Observation, 20 October 2012.

Samuel, the Moroccan Jew who spends part of the year in Toulouse, blamed the increasing radicalization of the French Arab population for the questionable security situation in France. He said he cannot envision a future for his family or any other Jews in France if Arab populations continue to rise, because they are increasingly “chez eux” and able to act on the “hate” and “jealousy” he thinks most of them feel toward French Jews.<sup>155</sup> For many Maghrebi Jews who already viewed the Moroccan or Tunisian culture in which they were raised as intrinsically anti-Semitic, the fact that the March 2012 Toulousian shooter was of Algerian descent only confirmed their detachment from their birthplaces.

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All of these social pressures — from Israeli policy to *Ashkenazi* cultural domination — have helped to further push Toulousian Jews of Moroccan and Tunisian descent away from any personal, cultural, or political connections with their birthplaces. While Muslims from the same geographic origins have been encouraged by family and community members to stay in touch with their North African home countries, Jews have not, and they have steadily lost their ties to Morocco and Tunisia during their tenure in France. Therefore, though the “Arab Spring” has theoretically given all Maghrebi citizens living abroad new opportunities and incentives to become more connected to their home countries, Jews have little reason or ability to participate.

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<sup>155</sup> Personal Interview with Samuel, Toulouse, 2 December 2012.

## **Chapter 4: A new phase of estrangement**

Starting in 2011 during the “Arab Spring,” the dissimilarities between Maghrebi Jews and Muslims that had gathered over the previous century became evident in new ways. Novel political rearrangements in Morocco and Tunisia brought more participatory governments to both countries and created unprecedented opportunity for the diaspora community involvement. Muslims living in France but from Tunisia and — to a lesser extent — Morocco contributed to some of the political changes happening in their homeland by voting in Maghrebi elections, returning to their birthplaces, and forming new political and cultural groups of like-minded peers. Conversely, Jews from both countries stayed almost universally silent. Shaped by decades of separation from their birthplaces, Maghrebi Jews did not get involved in Tunisia or Morocco’s “Arab Spring” movements to the same extent as their Muslim counterparts, suggesting that the advent of more participatory North African government has pushed Jewish and Muslim Maghrebi estrangement into a new phase.

### ***Setting the Stage***

Even a superficial evaluation of most Tunisian and Moroccan Muslim immigrants living in Toulouse can uncover their strong social and cultural involvement across the Mediterranean in late 2012. The myriad street advertisements in *La Mirail* offering inexpensive money transfers to North Africa and low-cost calling cards to Maghrebi countries attests to the frequent contact most Maghrebi immigrants living in France tried to keep with family members left behind. Long-standing and numerous direct flights connect Toulouse with several North African city centers — Algiers, Rabat, and Tunis — to

further facilitate that contact.<sup>156</sup> The continued concentration of Maghrebi immigrants in remote — usually poor — neighborhoods lets them continuously engage with Maghrebi languages, cultures, and religious practices, since such a large proportion of their immediate community shares the same traditions. Morocco and Tunisia also both had well-established government ministries and organizations designed to create links to citizens living abroad, mainly to encourage them to help their countries' economic and social development by sending money and resources.<sup>157</sup> But until 2011 and 2012, these organizations did nothing to encourage political involvement from afar, and — if anything — they could sometimes be vehicles for punishing anti-government action.<sup>158</sup>

Before the regime changes and revolutions of the 2011 “Arab Spring,” both Morocco and Tunisia — along with other North African nations — were led by markedly undemocratic and despotic political regimes. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali had been the undemocratically elected Tunisian president since 1987, when he seized power in a “medical coup-d'état.” His administration stamped out any political opposition, and he maintained his authority through sham elections in which he claimed between 89 and 100 percent of the national vote.<sup>159</sup> Morocco's government was plagued by similar systems of corruption and autocracy. The country had a monarchical government led by King Mohammed VI, who has amassed nearly \$2.5 billion in personal wealth during his reign. Though Morocco had elected officials and the King had made promises of democratic

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<sup>156</sup> Flights Timetable, Toulouse Blagnac Airport, [www.toulouse.aeroport.fr](http://www.toulouse.aeroport.fr).

<sup>157</sup> Algeria: Consultative Council for the National Community Abroad; Egypt: Ministry of Manpower and Migration; Lebanon: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Lebanese Expatriates Abroad; Morocco: Council of the Moroccan Community Residing Abroad (CCME); Hassan II Foundation for Moroccans Residing Abroad; Tunisia: Office of Tunisians Abroad (OTE).

<sup>158</sup> Philippe Fargues and Christine Fandrich. *Migration after the Arab Spring*. (Rep. no. 2012/9. Florence, Italy: Migration Policy Center, 2012), p. 8.

<sup>159</sup> “Tunisian President in Fifth Win.” *BBC News*. BBC, (26 Oct. 2009), <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8325378.stm>>.

reforms, the country shared Tunisia's unwillingness to protect free speech, free assembly, or other hallmarks of representative government.<sup>160</sup>

Not only were these limits on political freedom and expression motivating factors that encouraged some Muslim Maghrebi immigrants to leave their home countries in the first place, but they also prevented immigrants from getting involved in politics in the Maghreb in any meaningful way while living in France. Both the Tunisian and Moroccan governments strictly monitored Internet communications and media sources, and they limited publically available information and criticism of their regimes.<sup>161</sup> For Moroccan and Tunisian Muslims living in France, this meant two things. First, their own activity was being monitored, and they were often worried that any kind of political activism would be met with threats, intimidation, or physical violence from their home governments. More pressingly, they were also generally quite concerned that their families or friends who remained in Morocco or Tunisia would be hurt in retaliation.<sup>162</sup> Hèla Yousfi is a Tunisian-born professor at the Paris Dauphin, and she involved herself in Tunisian politics well before Ben Ali's fall by traveling to Tunis five times a year to lecture, focusing her research on Tunisian political questions, and advocating for immigrants' rights in France. But she avoided television appearances and other public forums, as she worried that critique of the Tunisian regime would incriminate her family back home.<sup>163</sup>

Those hazards were enough to keep most Muslim Maghrebi immigrants from participating in any kind of agitation for political change, but even those willing to take the

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<sup>160</sup> Nicolas Pelham, "How Morocco Dodged the Arab Spring." NY Times, (5 July 2012), <<http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2012/jul/05/how-morocco-dodged-arab-spring/>>.

<sup>161</sup> Personal Interview with Mathieu Guidère, Toulouse, 14 November 2012.

<sup>162</sup> Personal Interview with Mathieu Guidère, Toulouse, 14 November 2012.

<sup>163</sup> Personal Interview with Hèla Yousfi, Toulouse, 4 December 2012.

risk often lacked the means to do so. Instead, as a second effect of the Maghrebi governments' limits on political free speech, Moroccan and Tunisian Muslims abroad had no reliable way to get information about the political situation in their home countries or to communicate with possible collaborators on the other side of the Mediterranean. Exacerbating the challenge, most of the Islamists and political opposition leaders with whom they would need to join forces in order to effect any political change were in jail or otherwise incapacitated.<sup>164</sup> For example, Ben Ali imprisoned and deported the vast majority of the leadership of the Islamist party Ennahda, which was the largest and most effective political group advocating for regime change in Tunisia during his reign.<sup>165</sup> The party had minimal public voice in Tunisia until 2012.

While Ben Ali was in power and Tunisia and Morocco still lacked a constitutionally sanctioned government, most Maghrebis living in France had no way to engage politically with their home countries. Their social and cultural ties — which remained quite strong — were their primary connections.

### ***Post-“Arab Spring” Opportunities for Tunisian Involvement***

Muslim Tunisians' willingness and ability to participate in political efforts from afar have changed considerably in the months following the 2011 “Arab Spring.” In December 2010, a fruit-seller in Sidi Bouzid — a poor rural area in Southern Tunisia — lit himself on fire out of frustration with the economic situation in his country. His act of desperation became a rallying cry, sparking massive protests across the Southern region that rapidly

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<sup>164</sup> Personal Interview with Mathieu Guidère, Toulouse, 14 November 2012.

<sup>165</sup> Oren Kessler, "Keeping the Onus on Ennahda." *Online Features*. World Affairs Journal, <<http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/keeping-onus-ennahda>>.

reached the capital. These protests called for Ben Ali to “*degage*” and step down from power, which he did on January 14, 2011. Quickly afterwards, the country started a democratic transition that included wide-ranging political party development, the advent of less-obstructed journalism, and the birth of a new civil society sector.<sup>166</sup> By October, elections were held to choose a Constituent Assembly that was then charged with writing a new Tunisian Constitution, which is still meant to be the basis for a Tunisian government that will replace the Ben Ali regime.

Along with these monumental governmental changes came a substantive shift in the way Tunisians living in France could connect with their home country. There are several notable examples of key Muslim Tunisian individuals — like president Moncef Marzouki — returning from exile in Europe to take on leadership roles in civic and political developments.<sup>167</sup> But it was not just figureheads and high-powered political leaders who reshaped their connections to the post-“Arab Spring” Maghreb; mainstream Tunisians also found themselves newly empowered to engage with the politics and changing culture at home.

### *New Voting Rights*

Tunisia extended voting rights to citizens abroad for the first time during its October 2011 elections, and the country dedicated 18 of 217 parliamentary seats to citizens living outside Tunisia. Unlike most countries’ electoral systems, this arrangement did not ask expatriates to vote by absentee ballot or to list a location in Tunisia as a primary residence; their home abroad was their voting district. France alone was allotted 10 representatives.

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<sup>166</sup> Middle East Partnership Initiative, U.S. Department of State, [mepi.state.gov](http://mepi.state.gov).

<sup>167</sup> Fargues, “Migration after the Arab Spring,” p. 2.



There were 71 polling places throughout the South of France — which includes Toulouse — and any citizen with a Tunisian passport or government identity card was eligible to cast a ballot.<sup>168</sup> The voting region that included Toulouse gave a plurality of its votes, about 34 percent, to Ennahda, which was on par with the 40 percent the party received in the rest of the nation. Data was not available to describe the demographics of those Tunisians in France who did vote, but political scientist Mathieu Guidère suggested that people from a wide range of ages and socio-economic statuses participated.<sup>169</sup>

Concurrent with these changes, several different government agencies have been reshaping their expectations of Tunisians living abroad. A new State Secretariat for Tunisian Expatriates was created in October 2011. That office is helping to reform the older *Office des Tunisiens à l'Etranger* and it has created several new organizations — like the *Haut Conseil des Tunisiens à l'étranger* — largely to help better organize immigrant-facilitated development projects in Tunisia. It was often these organizations that instructed Tunisians abroad on voting procedures and connected them with Tunisian social and political communities. Importantly, these offices do not seem to be reaching out to every one of the 625,000 Tunisians living in France, since none of the Jewish Tunisians I met had received any sort of contact from a Tunisian government body in the wake of the “Arab Spring.”<sup>170</sup> Indeed, most official outreach from Tunisia to expatriates in France has happened on enough of an ad hoc basis that people who are not visible public figures or

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<sup>168</sup> Yves Lebaratoux, "PACA : Election Assemblée Constituante Tunisienne." *France 3 Côte D'Azur*. France 3, (20 Sept. 2012) <<http://cote-d-azur.france3.fr/info/paca--election-assemblee-constituante-tunisienne-70893182.html>>.

<sup>169</sup> Personal Interview with Mathieu Guidère, Toulouse, 14 November 2012.

<sup>170</sup> Christopher Reeve, “An active diaspora: Tunisians in France mobilize to help their homeland,” *Egypt Independent* (20 October 2012) <<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/active-diaspora-tunisians-france-mobilize-help-their-homeland>>.

keyed into Tunisian networks tend to get ignored.<sup>171</sup> Because most Muslim Tunisians in Toulouse are still a part of Tunisian communities, these kinds of programs could still offer effective means for them to build new connections. Jews, who were already disconnected from Tunisia, generally have not received any communication from the new government, effectively cutting them off from this new stage in the nation's history.

### *New Outreach from Political Parties*

When Tunisians living in France became a new voting constituency in 2011, they also started experiencing unprecedented outreach from political parties who had never had the motivation or ability to campaign internationally before. Tar, a Tunisian consultant in his 20s who lives in Paris, recalls being invited to dozens of political party roundtables and rallies in the weeks leading up to the 2011 election.<sup>172</sup> Ennahda's outreach was especially potent, as they were larger, better organized, and more fully funded than most of the other parties, and it has continued to sponsor educational events and rallies since then. A more recent Ennahda-sponsored debate in an immigrant-dominated neighborhood in Paris attracted several hundred young professionals in their 30s and 40s.<sup>173</sup> While Tar still finds that his main connection to Tunisia's political changes comes through speaking with family and friends at home, events like these political party roundtables gave him extra motivation to vote and stay current on the news.

Here too, political parties usually only reached potential Tunisian voters by chance. Tar, Sana, Jihène, and other the other Muslim Tunisians I met who were active in the

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<sup>171</sup> Andrea Frieda Schmelz, "Potentials of Diaspora Cooperation for Economic Relations between Germany/France and Tunisia: Matchmaking Instruments," *Office for German Public Sector Clients*, (January 2011).

<sup>172</sup> Personal Interview with Tar, Paris, 5 November 2012.

<sup>173</sup> Personal Interview with Felice Feit, Toulouse, 26 November 2012.

political movement usually had been specifically invited to these types of events.<sup>174</sup> They had contacts through social media networks or friends in their communities who wanted them to attend, or they knew people involved in political parties in Tunisia itself. Jewish Tunisians in France, who had far fewer of these connections, generally were not called to be a part of new party movements.

### *Other Ways of Getting Involved*

While most Muslim Tunisians abroad limited their direct involvement with the political situation at home to casting ballots and following news sites, many felt empowered to participate as social and political activists after the “Arab Spring,” since they no longer feared punishment for taking public action. Muslim Tunisians in France also quickly found themselves with more resources and information necessary to start seeking change after the “Arab Spring.” Ben Ali’s strict controls on political discourse and action were almost immediately lifted when he left Tunis, so Muslim Tunisians living in Toulouse — and in France as a whole — for the first time were able to find accurate and timely information about their birthplace.

No longer worried that their Internet activity would be monitored and used against them or their families, Tunisian Muslims of all ages and socioeconomic statuses increased their levels of communication across the Mediterranean by 100 percent.<sup>175</sup> Young people engaged in online activism through platforms like Twitter and Facebook, while older generations sought out news outlets and journalistic sources that were now freer to report the situation they saw on the ground. According to some studies, Muslim Tunisians in

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<sup>174</sup> Personal Interviews, Toulouse and Paris, November 2012.

<sup>175</sup> Personal interview with Mathieu Guidère, Toulouse, 14 November 2012.

France are also visiting Tunisia three times more frequently now than they did before the Revolution. They now go there for the major Islamic holidays — Eid al-Kabeer, Eid al-Sghreer, and Ramadan — and not just for the secular summer vacation as they had before.<sup>176</sup> One 60-year-old Tunisian lawyer I met in Toulouse at a protest at the Tunisian consulate helps embody this shift. He left Tunisia at 19-years-old to study law in France, and refused to go back after that, since he felt so stifled by the earlier regime. As soon as Ben Ali fell, he purchased a plane ticket to Tunis and spent two weeks reconnecting with his family and life there.<sup>177</sup> Even more dramatically, 10,000-15,000 Tunisian Muslims in France are estimated to have moved back to Tunisia between January 2011 and November 2012, likely because of the new opportunities for work and political freedom there.<sup>178</sup>

Lastly, and far less quantifiably, Muslim Tunisians in France have displayed markedly more pride in their national identity. In the early 2000s, most North African youth did not identify themselves as “French,” because that meant being White, Catholic, or — at the very least — non-Muslim. But because they considered their nations of origin to be somewhat backwards and underdeveloped, young people would call themselves generally “Arab” or “Islamic” instead of associating with a particular country.<sup>179</sup> After Tunisia became publicly linked to revolutionary thinking and freedom in the wake of the “Arab Spring,” many individuals who had previously used these generic descriptors started to self-identify with “Franco-Tunisian” or other country-specific titles.<sup>180</sup> Sana, a 25-year old engineer who has been living in France for the last half-decade and has thought about

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<sup>176</sup> Personal Interview with Mathieu Guidère, Toulouse, 14 November 2012.

<sup>177</sup> Personal Interview, Toulouse, 25 October 2012.

<sup>178</sup> Personal Interview with Mathieu Guidère, Toulouse, 14 November 2012.

<sup>179</sup> Arkin, “It’s the French,” p. 28.

<sup>180</sup> Personal Interview with Mathieu Guidère, Toulouse, 14 November 2012.

applying for French nationality, fits this profile quite perfectly. We met in a Toulousian McDonalds when I overheard her speaking with some friends in a distinctly Tunisian Arabic dialect. "It's such a wonderful thing that you knew I was Tunisian," she told me later in Arabic, a language she prefers to speak whenever possible, even though she's also proficient in English, French, and Italian. "I'm proud to be from my country. Of course I want people to know what I am."<sup>181</sup>

### ***Post-“Arab Spring” Opportunities for Moroccan Involvement***

While Tunisia's government underwent massive political shifts and moved toward democracy, the Moroccan government made significantly smaller shifts that still reshaped political involvement for the diaspora community in France. In the weeks after Mohamed Bouazizi's death in Tunisia, 20 Moroccans also self-immolated amidst calls for the government to deal with crippling illiteracy and unemployment rates. The country saw massive street protests, public demands for government change, and other actions reminiscent of those in Tunisia.<sup>182</sup> Unlike Ben Ali though, Morocco's King Mohammed VI met protests with a referendum on a revised national constitution and new national parliamentary elections.<sup>183</sup> His government's quick, comparatively accommodating response to Morocco's version of the “Arab Spring” staved off more radical calls for change. While the reforms that came out of the political adjustments in Morocco were thus small

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<sup>181</sup> Personal Interview with Sana, Toulouse, 21 November 2012.

<sup>182</sup> Pelham, “How Morocco dodged the Arab Spring.”

<sup>183</sup> Ray Suarez, “Morocco avoids Arab Spring violence, but progress is mixed on reforms,” *PBS Newshour* (19 December 2011), < <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/2011/12/morocco-avoids-arab-spring-violence-but-progress-is-mixed.html>>

compared with Tunisia's changes, Moroccans living abroad received new political rights that were almost in parallel with Tunisians' recently extended entitlements.

### *New Official Outreach*

Morocco's new constitution provides updated stipulations to let Moroccans vote and even run for office from afar.<sup>184</sup> Other parts of the constitution ease economic and social partnerships between Moroccans at home and abroad, and even encourage diaspora Moroccans to participate in institutions of good governance and consultative bodies.<sup>185</sup> Ballots in the 2011 elections were available at every consulate and embassy abroad, and any Moroccan with a state identity card could cast a vote.<sup>186</sup>

Many of the Muslim Moroccan voters I spoke with in Toulouse had taken advantage of these new rights and abilities by voting and staying abreast of political news, though they were less obviously involved than Tunisians living in France. Fatima, who was born in France to Moroccan immigrants and spends about three months a year in Morocco, said she knows of several new Moroccan associations and groups in Paris that have developed as a result of the "Arab Spring." She did not join any of them though, because none of these groups addressed the specific human rights issues that speak to her.<sup>187</sup> Fatima is a Moroccan Berber who does not identify with Arab culture or comfortably speak the Arabic language, and she is mainly interested in agitating for increased government support of her specific ethnic community. She considered returning to her family's home in rural Morocco

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<sup>184</sup> Article 17.

<sup>185</sup> Articles 16, 18, 163.

<sup>186</sup> I was unable to uncover the number of votes cast in Toulouse or in France as a whole in the 2011 Parliamentary elections, though my Moroccan interview subjects generally insisted that most people they know voted.

<sup>187</sup> Personal Interview with Fatima, Toulouse, 3 December 2012.

to take a more active role — particularly in combating an emerging religious conservatism that she sees as detrimental to economic development in the rural areas where her family lives — but decided that there were enough limits remaining on political change that she would not be able to make much of an impact.

Morocco has a longer history of vigorous outreach to its diaspora community than Tunisia does, so the changes for expatriates in the past two years do not represent as much of a radical departure from previous policy. At the end of the 1970s — as the *Beur* movement was emerging in France — dozens of groups based around a shared Moroccan identity were created in France.<sup>188</sup> They generally focused on building local Maghrebi communities and raising money for communities back home, without including any emphasis on hastening political change in Morocco.<sup>189</sup> The Moroccan regime itself worked with big business support to create the *Amicale des Travailleurs et Commerçants*. This association of Moroccan workers in France had the dual mission of discouraging unionization and monitoring any actions opposing the monarchy, all while building community among expatriates. The King appointed new ministries and investment coordinators in the 1980s and 1990s to enhance the *amicales*. These new government bodies were charged with studying Moroccans abroad, helping keep them connected to

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<sup>188</sup> The *Beur* Movement was a nationwide campaign against racism and in favor of civil rights. Most of its members were either Maghrebi immigrants themselves or the children and grandchildren of North African Muslim migrants, and it became a social force once the French Maghrebi population had become large enough that it could not be easily ignored. Its members celebrated Arab-Muslim contributions to French music and higher culture (indeed, *Beur* is a slang word based on the inversions of “*arabe*”) and lobbied for greater political representation and support. The movement splintered off a decade or so later, as ethnically neutral anti-racist organizations eclipsed some of its efforts and far-right political parties like the National Front made ethnicity-based organizations taboo.

<sup>189</sup> Antoine Dumont, and Thomas Lacroix, *Moroccan in France: Their Organizations and Activities Back Home*, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2012), p. 4, 11.

North African culture and language, and encouraging remittances.<sup>190</sup> The royal government facilitated and directly monitored remittances across the Mediterranean throughout the subsequent decades; Morocco's national bank has branches across Europe, facilitating state supervision of expatriates' financial communication with the homeland.<sup>191</sup> The country also implemented Structural Adjustment Programs that let expatriates open bank accounts in convertible currency.<sup>192</sup> Of course, none of these earlier official outreach efforts encouraged the type of political participation that is now becoming more common.

Despite the smaller scale of the new opportunities for Muslim Moroccans in France, they have begun reshaping their connections to their birthplace in the wake of the "Arab Spring." Moroccan Muslims now vote, participate in political agitation, and take advantage of the rights extended to them in the new constitution, even if they have not experienced as many monumental changes as Tunisian Muslims in France have. Their response to even these gentler shifts provides a sharp contrast to Jewish Tunisians' and Moroccans' much more subdued reactions.

### ***What about the Jews?***

Throughout my three months in France, I did not meet a single Moroccan or Tunisian Jew who expressed interest in participating in the political shifts happening in his or her birth country. While some avidly followed news about the region and tried to stay abreast of the changes there, none matched the active roles held by their Muslim compatriots. Neither Jewish Tunisians nor Jewish Moroccans were involved in Maghrebi

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<sup>190</sup> Laurie A. Brand, "States and Their Expatriates: Explaining the Development of Tunisian and Moroccan Emigration-Related Institutions," University of Southern California Working Paper, (May 2002), p. 19.

<sup>191</sup> Dumont and Lacroix, *Moroccan in France*, p. 16.

<sup>192</sup> Brand, "States and Their Expatriate," p. 8.



political or cultural associations, nor had they voted in elections or made more of an effort to return to visit their birth nations.

An older Moroccan Jew named Henri told me that he has no desire to return to the country where he was born and raised, even though he has a “visceral attachment” to Moroccan “foods, scents, and music.”<sup>193</sup> He enjoyed reading news and stayed abreast of the political changes in Morocco, but “ça reste intellectuel.”<sup>194</sup> He does not feel personally invested in the outcome, since he is so disconnected from his birth country. Another Moroccan-born Jew who lives in Paris and who vacations in the South of France told me he travels to Morocco occasionally for business, but that he always tries to conceal his religious identity when he is there. He and his family left the country when he was an adolescent in 1962, both because the situation for Jews was so “tense,” and because there were more resources in France for his autistic brother. Since then, all of his family and friends have also left for France, Canada, the U.S., or Israel, and he now finds that few Moroccans have ever met a Jew personally. He assumes the only image they have of Jews is whatever they see on Al Jazeera, so he fears that it is no longer safe for him to travel there while being open about his background.<sup>195</sup> Because the 2011 elections in Morocco brought a conservative, religiously-focused party to power, he now felt less safe in the Maghreb than he had before the “Arab Spring.”<sup>196</sup>

Even those Jews who wanted to stay connected to their birth countries explained that they did not find themselves with any points of contact or ways to become involved. Some of them feel even more isolated from Tunisia in late 2012 than they had before the

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<sup>193</sup> Personal Interview with Henri, Toulouse, 29 November 2012.

<sup>194</sup> Personal Interview with Henri, Toulouse, 29 November 2012.

<sup>195</sup> Personal Interview with Samuel, Toulouse, 2 December 2012.

<sup>196</sup> Personal Interview with Samuel, Toulouse, 2 December 2012.

2011 political shifts. A group of French Tunisian Jews who had spent decades regularly returning to a large synagogue in Djerba, Tunisia for an annual Lag B'Omer pilgrimage has not gone back in the last two years because they are scared of the Islamist government and social instability there.<sup>197</sup> One Toulousian university professor who lived in Tunis until age 23 said he insisted upon bringing his whole family to visit several years ago, since he wanted to rejuvenate his ties to the region and pass on a stronger Tunisian identity to his children. But when he arrived, he no longer felt like it was his home. Although this Jewish man still spoke Arabic and could chat convivially with border guards and fellow Tunisians, his neighborhood had changed from the youth he remembered, and he discovered that he had no remaining community in the country. Indeed, the cemetery where his father was buried had been turned into a public park, and his local synagogue converted into a dance studio.<sup>198</sup> He was acquainted with some of the Jews who had made the annual Djerba pilgrimage, and for years he had depended on those friends to keep him updated about changes happening in his home country, as he no longer felt he had any way to visit himself. Now that even those few deeply committed Jews have stopped visiting Tunis, his last ties have been cut.<sup>199</sup>

Michel Bensemoun, the former president of Toulouse's Jewish community, had the strongest connection to his birthplace of all the Jewish Maghrebis I interviewed in France. He maintained his business contacts in Morocco after moving to France, and for 15 years traveled to Casablanca once a month for meetings and work events. He also still has family and friends in the country, and said he is continuously impressed by the country's

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<sup>197</sup> Personal Interview with Abraham, Toulouse, 20 November 2012.

<sup>198</sup> Personal Interview with Abraham, Toulouse, 20 November 2012.

<sup>199</sup> Personal Interview with Abraham, Toulouse, 20 November 2012.

welcoming culture and emphasis on hospitality whenever he goes back.<sup>200</sup> Despite his distance from Morocco, he expressed the same type of investment in its social and political future as many of the Muslim Moroccans I met in France did. “As a Jewish Moroccan, I’m always interested in whatever Morocco hopes and strives for,” he told me. He still feels joy when good things happen there and is unhappy whenever the nation faces economic or social problems, and he wants the country to find stability and progress.<sup>201</sup> But even he had not voted or in any other way increased his engagement with Moroccan politics and culture after the creation of the country’s new constitution and parliament.

#### *Why Jews say they are uninvolved*

While each Tunisian and Moroccan-born Jew had a personal set of reasons for staying uninvolved in the political changes happening across North Africa, all of them used language that reflected a long lasting cultural disconnect from their birth countries. They had spent most of their lives divorced from Moroccan and Tunisian societies, and they simply did not have the same visceral ties to the Maghreb as their Muslim counterparts have maintained. Jews told me they did not see any way or reason to get involved.

“Je vis ma vie en France,” Henri said after explaining that he did not feel a personal investment in the outcome of Morocco’s political development.<sup>202</sup> He had grown up in a “profoundly French” Moroccan-Jewish family and had never felt ingratiated into larger Moroccan society. His decades of life in France had exacerbated that cultural disconnect,

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<sup>200</sup> Personal Interview with Michel Bensemoun, Toulouse, 30 November 2012.

<sup>201</sup> Personal Interview with Michel Bensemoun, Toulouse, 30 November 2012.

<sup>202</sup> Personal Interview with Henri, Toulouse, 29 November 2012.

and he now feels that he has no reason to be involved.<sup>203</sup> As one of the many Maghrebi Jews raised in largely Francophone environments with Europeanized cultural practices, he had no reason to feel personally affected or involved in contemporary Moroccan concerns. Other Jews mentioned fear of anti-Semitism and anti-Zionist sentiment in the Maghreb when they explained why they did not want to visit their birth countries to see the reformed societies. Particularly as the Toulousian Jewish community has become more concerned about anti-Semitism amongst the “Arab” population living in France, they fear that Muslim Maghrebis still in North Africa are adopting anti-Jewish ideas.

The majority of my Jewish subjects had also given up their Maghrebi voting rights when they became French citizens.<sup>204</sup> Still, some of the Jewish Moroccans and Tunisians who had not entered France already holding French citizenship were legally able to sign up for identity cards that would let them participate in Moroccan or Tunisian elections. Still most of them did not take advantage of the opportunity. Michel Bensemoun’s wife, for example, was eligible to cast a ballot in Morocco’s parliamentary elections, but she decided that the time and paperwork involved outweighed her interest in influencing the results.<sup>205</sup> As much as she theoretically cared about her birthplace, she chose not to get involved.

Correspondingly, Toulousian Jews have not received specific invitations from people still living in Morocco or Tunisia asking them to participate in advancing social or political change. Most Moroccan Jews living abroad do not have strong connections to the remaining Muslim communities, as has been discussed in the previous two chapters. Furthermore, the small Jewish communities still living in both Morocco and Tunisia are not encouraging

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<sup>203</sup> Personal Interview with Henri, Toulouse, 29 November 2012.

<sup>204</sup> Personal Interview with Annie, Toulouse, 4 December 2012.

<sup>205</sup> Personal Interview with Michel Bensemoun, Toulouse, 30 November 2012.

political action themselves, because they generally did well in the pre-“Arab Spring” systems and have less incentive to try to agitate for new structures. “With the king of Morocco [in power] we are not worried,” an elderly Jewish English teacher who lives in Rabat told me. She said all of the kings in Morocco during her lifetime have supported the Jewish community, and that she would never want to disrupt the monarchy.<sup>206</sup> She and her husband have a second home in Toulouse and other properties in Europe, but have not encouraged their Jewish friends of Moroccan descent in France to reshape their relations to Morocco after the “Arab Spring;” they do not want political change.

Even those Moroccan Jews who actively reach out to the diaspora community to encourage social and cultural support for Moroccan Jewry have not called for political action. I met one Jew in Casablanca who runs four different websites dedicated to building cultural connections between the international Jewish community and Morocco. He sometimes uses them to raise money for his project to protect and catalog the thousands of Jewish tombstones across the country, but he never encourages Jews to become involved in the country’s political life, nor does he know of any other organizations that do.<sup>207</sup> Even if members of the Jewish community in Morocco wanted to engage Moroccan Jews living abroad, they would have difficulty contacting them since Moroccan Jewish institutions have not kept consistent registers about Jews who left the community. While the Moroccan government has kept watch on the Muslim workers who left the country over the past four decades, Jewish organizations have only ad-hoc records.<sup>208</sup> They try to invite as much of the diaspora community as they can on pilgrimage trips and to occasional reunions in Israel,

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<sup>206</sup> Personal Interview with Collette, Rabat, 9 January 2013.

<sup>207</sup> Personal Interview with Georges Sebat, Casablanca, 31 December 2012.

<sup>208</sup> Interviews with administrators at Rabat synagogue, Fez synagogue, and Communauté Israelite de Casablanca.

but they usually only end up reaching the expatriate family and friends of people still living in Morocco, which represents just a small fraction of the total diaspora.<sup>209</sup> The small group of Jews I met in Tunis in September of 2012 offered a similar perspective; they did not have much involvement in building a new political system, and they had not reached out to friends and acquaintances in the diaspora for support in this area.<sup>210</sup> Most Maghrebi Jews do not receive personal calls to visit their birthplaces or to connect in any social, cultural, or political manner.

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Moroccan and Tunisian-born Jews in Toulouse are thus manifesting a century-old cultural separation from their Muslim compatriots in a new way. With less imposition from despotic pre-“Arab Spring” regimes that limited political expression, Maghrebi Muslims in France are more actively participating in North African societies and more visibly displaying their Maghrebi identities. They’re voting in Moroccan and Tunisian elections, returning to their birthplaces more frequently, participating in internet activism, and forming new associations based on political action. But while Moroccan and Tunisian Muslim immigrants have responded to new opportunities for political involvement from afar by sharply increasing their engagement with their birth countries, Maghrebi Jews have remained silent and disconnected. Jews’ detachment from their birthplaces reflects the century-old legacy of Jewish and Muslim cultural separation in the Maghreb that started early in the colonial period, as has been discussed in the previous two chapters. Jews’ desire to be recognized as a welcome part of mainstream French society, their

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<sup>209</sup> Personal Interview with Moise Hamou, Casablanca, 3 January 2013.

<sup>210</sup> Personal Observation, Tunis — La Goulette Synagogue, 17 September 2012.

identification with Israel and Zionism, and their earlier separation from Arabic language and culture — among other social forces — helped encourage these new behavioral differences. Jews' and Muslims' different responses to the political shifts in their birthplaces today also suggest that Jewish Maghrebis' cultural isolation has entered a new phase and is manifesting somewhat differently than it ever has before.

## **Chapter 5: In Conclusion**

To a certain extent, Muslim Maghrebis have fundamentally reshaped immigrant identity in France in the wake of the “Arab Spring.” The state of being a Moroccan or Tunisian Muslim abroad now includes voting in home country elections and being a part of a politically active diaspora community. Government changes in Morocco and Tunisia freed Maghrebis living internationally to become more active participants in their birth countries’ political and cultural shifts, and Muslim immigrants in Tunisia have largely responded by drastically increasing their involvement across the Mediterranean. Jewish immigrants from the same countries have not responded in kind. They have not voted in Tunisian or Moroccan elections — even if they theoretically had that privilege — and they generally have no part in the new Tunisian and Moroccan political organizations that are developing in France. Conversely, Jewish Maghrebis in France seem to be distancing themselves ever further from their North African identities, since they believe that rising democracy in these nations will lead to an increase in anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist action.

This thesis has outlined many of the historical and cultural forces that helped give Jewish and Muslim immigrants such different connections to their birth countries, helping to explain their divergent reactions to the “Arab Spring.” Jewish and Muslim cultures began to separate from each other long before either group immigrated to France, since French colonial policies helped to endow future Jewish immigrants with higher socio-economic statuses, better grasps on French culture, and more convenient legal standings than Muslim immigrants had. Maghrebi Jews also usually received a much warmer welcome in France than did their Muslim counterparts. In the post-Holocaust era, Jews had support from both



a guilt-ridden French public and from religious organizations looking to rebuild a devastated Jewish community. Muslims, on the other hand, were seen as a more temporary, less desirable immigrant group ideally confined to immigrant-segregated enclaves. As a result of their different treatments both in the colonial Maghreb and later in France, Jewish and Muslim Maghrebi immigrants entered the twenty-first century without the same connections to their birthplaces. The “Arab Spring” helped to highlight those differences and convert them into concrete divergences in the ways that Jews and Muslims in France manifest Maghrebi identity today.

This new phase in Jewish and Muslim Maghrebi cultural separation has had effects extending far beyond the mosques, temples, and community organizations of Toulouse and other cities in France. As scholars continue to examine the political and cultural progression of the “Arab Spring” in both Tunisia and Toulouse, it is important that they consider which members of both countries’ diasporas are helping contribute to the newly forming North African governments and societies, since Jewish voices are largely missing. Their absence is particularly noteworthy because the presence of a Jewish community plays an important role in emerging Moroccan and Tunisian national identities. The past decade has brought an explosion in Tunisian and Moroccan scholarship on the Jews of their countries; before, most scholars on North African Jews were American or Israeli.<sup>211</sup> Furthermore, the emerging Islamist governments in both countries have taken great pains to emphasize their protection and compatibility with Jewish populations. For example, Rachid Ghannouchi — the founder and spiritual leader of Tunisia’s *Ennahda* party — has repeatedly condemned violence against Jews and called for them to be a continued part of a

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<sup>211</sup> Personal Interview with Zhor Rehehil, Casablanca, 2 January 2012.

future democratic Tunisia.<sup>212</sup> The first official photograph of Moroccan Islamist Prime Minister Abdelilah Benkirane was taken at the memorial service for Simon Levy, a Leftist, anti-Zionist Jew who spent much of his life as a leader in the both national political life and the Moroccan Jewish community. The Moroccan king has regularly invested significant funding and political capital in the remaining Jewish community, and consistently hails the “spiritual wealth and diversity” of Morocco.<sup>213</sup> Perhaps in order to combat allegations that Islamist governments will be unable to protect religious freedom or to escape criticism that their nominal opposition to Israeli policies is rooted in anti-Semitism, both countries continually publicize their harboring of a Jewish community, both on an official governmental level and in more popular discourse. The populations and governments of both Morocco and Tunisia thus act as if they are still connected to their diaspora Jewish communities, even though these Jews lack reciprocal ties.

Future inquiries will need to explore the role that the notion of a Moroccan and Tunisian Jewish community plays in the public dialogue and emerging national identities of both countries after the “Arab Spring.” In what ways are Moroccans and Tunisians talking about the Jewish communities that remain in their countries, and about those who have left? How does their dialogue confront the fact that very few Tunisian and Moroccan Jews are interested in maintaining connections to countries that appear so preoccupied with them? Because such a wide range of Maghrebi citizens and political leaders seem to share this focus on disproportionately promoting Jewish life in the Maghreb, it seems likely that some combination of international pressure from Jewish and Western organizations,

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<sup>212</sup> Azzam Tamimi, *Rachid Ghannouchi: A Democrat within Islamism*, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001).

<sup>213</sup> “Morocco boasts 'spiritual diversity' at synagogue renewal,” Agence France Presse, (13 Feb 2013).

governmental desire to appear welcoming and tolerant, and community-wide cultural values and traditions are behind the trend.

It would also be valuable to further explore which categories of Muslim Maghrebi immigrants have had the most active role in responding to the political and cultural shifts of the “Arab Spring.” Young people from lower- to middle-class socio-economic brackets were among the most visible participants in the public demonstrations and manifestations that sparked the “Arab Spring” in North Africa itself, but it is unclear whether the diaspora communities who joined them from afar shared those demographics. Furthermore, more work should be done to demonstrate which particular aspects of Maghrebi political and cultural change most strongly resonate with diaspora communities. Though their governments have mainly encouraged them to become involved with economic development by sharing remittances and best practices, Moroccans and Tunisians abroad are also getting separately involved in advancing women’s rights, promoting incorporation of religious tradition into legal codes, and influencing foreign policy. It would be helpful to better understand where Tunisian and Moroccan expatriates align on these key social issues, and whether they prefer to advocate socially or politically on any given concern rather than another.

The questions surrounding Jewish and Muslim Maghrebi diaspora communities in France will continue to become more complicated as the political results of the “Arab Spring” crystallize into sustained governmental changes, and as the population of Jewish immigrants themselves ages and eventually mostly disappears. It will remain a ripe area for scholarship, as it has so many repercussions for our collective understanding of religious identities, diaspora communities, and democratic changes in North Africa.

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### ***Interviews Conducted:***

#### **Tunisian and Moroccan Muslim Immigrants in France**

- Ahmed, consultant from Tunisia, ~25 years old
- Choukri Hmed, Parisian academic, ~35 y.o.
- Hèla Yousfi, activist from Tunisia, ~35 y.o.
- Fatima, academic with Moroccan parents, ~30 y.o.
- Jihène Saadi, Head of Tunisian Toulouse Jasmine Revolution Organization, ~30 y.o.
- Samia, student/consultant from Morocco, ~25 y.o.
- Samir, undocumented worker from Algeria, ~60 y.o.
- Sana, engineer, 26 y.o.
- Tar, consultant from Tunisia, ~30 y.o.
- Unidentified lawyer from Tunisia, 60 y.o.

#### **Jewish Immigrants in France**

- Abraham, professor from Tunisia, ~55 y.o.
- Annie and Gerard, retired Tunisian couple, ~70 y.o.
- Daniel Benyahia, adjunct mayor from Algeria, ~60 y.o.
- Esther, Moroccan chef, ~50 y.o.
- Francis Zehra, Tunisian-born school-teacher, ~65 y.o.
- Gérard, rabbi born in Tripoli who moved to Tunis, Algeria and then France, ~65 y.o.
- Henri Amar, Moroccan Journalist and Academic, ~60 y.o.
- Michel Bensemoun, Moroccan-born former Toulouse Community President, ~70 y.o.
- Moshe, Algerian rabbim ~65 y.o.
- Samuel Cohen, Moroccan-born Parisian businessman, ~60 y.o.

#### **Religious Leaders and Intellectuals in France**

- Mathieu Guidère, Mirail University
- Jean Levy, director of France-Israel Association



- Monique Lise Cohen, author of book on Toulousian Jews
- Sarah Mazouz, Université Paris-Dauphine
- Mustapha Saïf, Chargé de mission promotion de la diversité et des droits humains in Toulouse
- Ephraïm Teitlebaum, Fonds Social Juif Unifié
- Collette Zytnicki, Mirail University

### **Members of Jewish Community in Morocco**

- Aziz, 30-year-old Muslim waiter at Casablanca Kosher restaurant
- Colette, 70-year-old French-Moroccan retired high school teacher in Rabat
- Fabrice, 46-year-old French-Moroccan artist in Rabat
- Jean-Gabriel, 79-year-old French-Moroccan international lawyer in Rabat
- Mary, office coordinator for Rabat synagogue
- Oliel, cook at Jewish Community Center in Fez
- Saïd, 46-year old caretaker of Rabat synagogue

### **Religious Leaders and Intellectuals in Morocco**

- Sallah Abdellaoui, executive director of Amnesty International Morocco
- Khaled Ben Al-Srhir, Mohammed V University Rabat
- Kamal Hachkar, director of “Tinghir-Jerusalem” documentary on Berber Jews
- Mohamed Hatimi, Mohammed V University Agdal, Sais-Fes
- Mohamed Elmedlaoui, Mohammed V University Rabat
- Moïse Hamou, Communauté Israelite de Casablanca
- Vanessa Paloma, senior Fulbright research scholar and artist specializing in Judeo-Spanish music from Sephardi diaspora
- Zhor Rehilil, lead conservator at the Museum of Moroccan Judaism in Casablanca
- Abraham Sabbagh, rabbi and notary for synagogue in Fez
- Georges Sebat, Casablanca-based businessman leading project to protect and archive inscriptions in Jewish cemeteries