



Awaiting the Arab Social Spring

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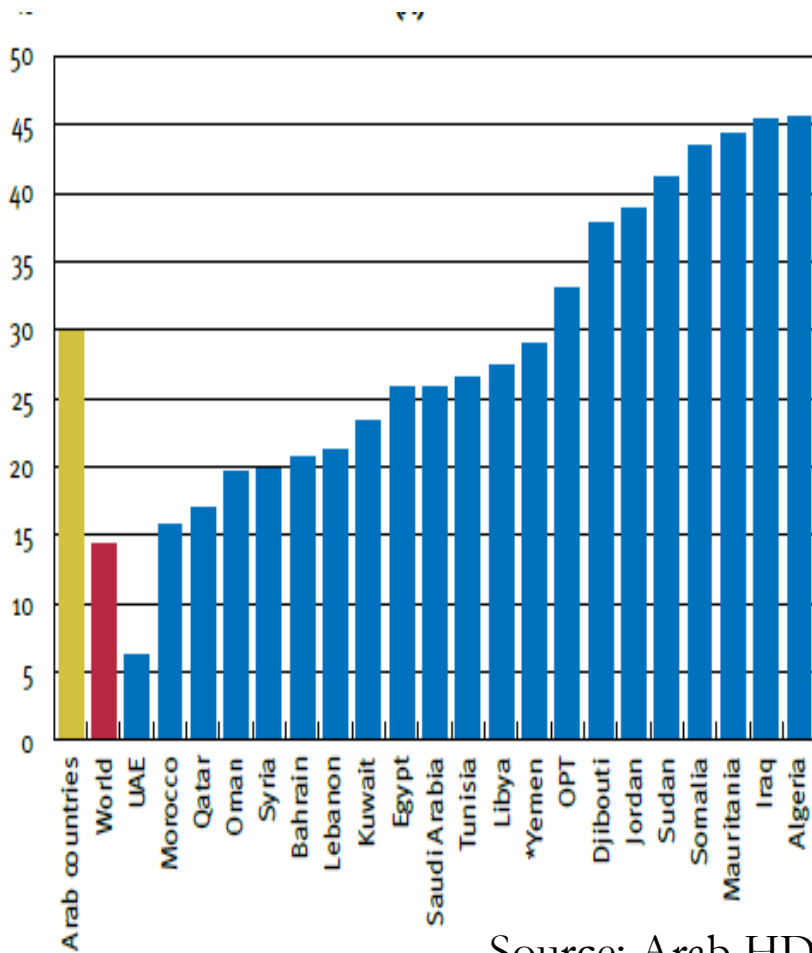
Mohamad Bouazizi

“How do you expect me
to make a living?”

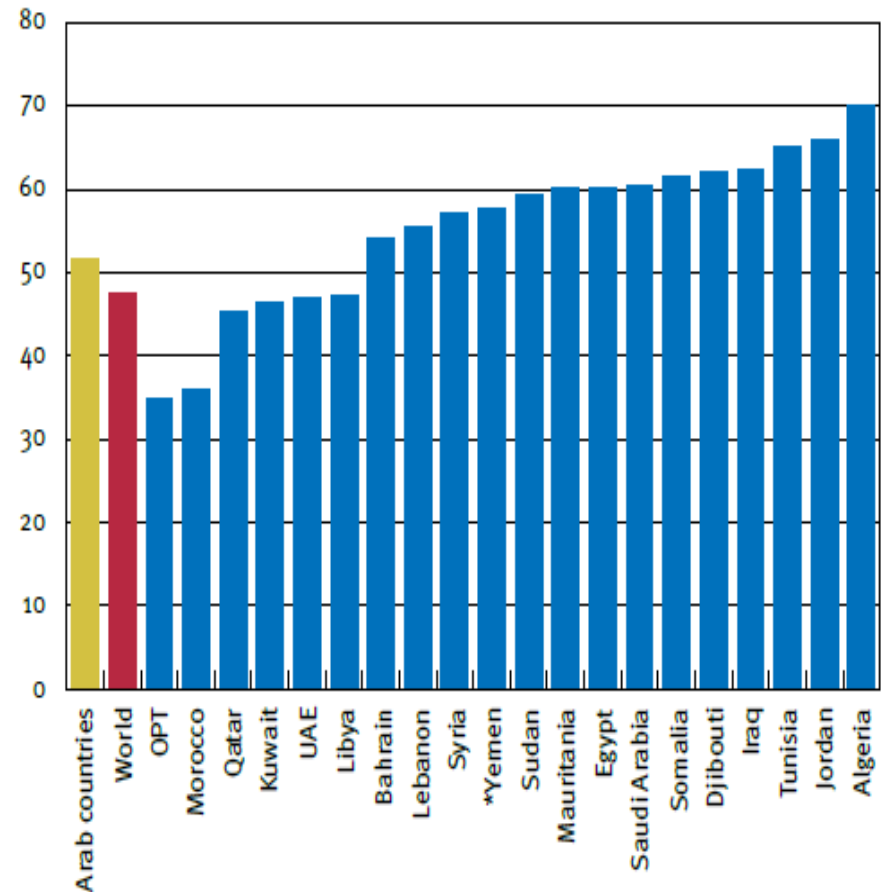


Unemployment big time

Unemployment rate(%)



Youth Unemployment rate (%)



Source: Arab HDR 2009



Unemployment

- World's highest rates of unemployment (including graduate unemployment):
- 10.3% compared to 6.2% global average
- Average Arab unemployment: 14.4%
- In Tunisia, unemployment rose from 5% to >22% since Ben Ali took power in 1987
- Region has world's highest female unemployment rates
- Also highest <25 youth unemployment rates



Youth unemployment

- MENA: about 24%:
 - >46% in Algeria, 6.3% in UAE
- Sub-Saharan Africa: < 12%
- South Asia: 15%
- High unemployment, high population growth rates → Arab region will need about 51m. new jobs by 2020!



Poverty

- 20.3% of population living below \$2/day (2005)
- National poverty line: poverty rates range from 28.6 – 30% in Lebanon and Syria to 59.5% in Yemen; in Egypt, about 41%.

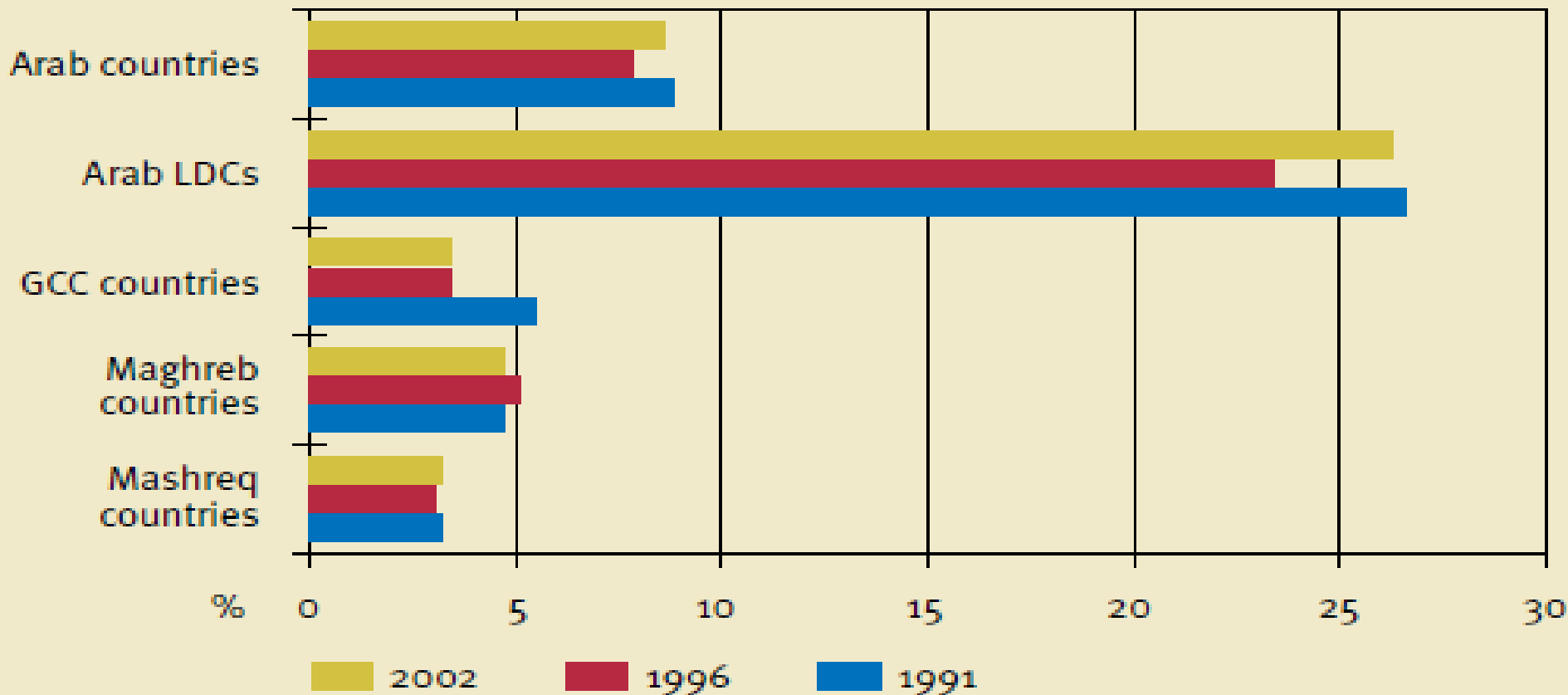
Arab HDR 2009 projections:

- 39.9% poor with higher poverty line
- ~65 million poor Arabs
- Extreme poverty especially acute in low-income Arab countries, where 36.2% in extreme poverty



Hunger

Proportion of population below the minimum level of dietary energy consumption (%)





Inequality

- Income inequality moderate:
regional average Gini 0.365

But,

- Wealth inequality has worsened much more than income inequality
- E.g., in many Arab countries, high asset, esp. land, ownership concentration
- In most Arab countries, social exclusion has increased over past two decades



After the Arab Spring

Need critical review of policy paradigm that:

- deprived ‘Bouazizis’ of decent work
- widened disparities in wealth, income
- increased economic insecurity
- increased social exclusion



Arab Social Spring?

- Diverse region:
 - one-size will not fit all
- Developmental role for the State
- Social compact among state, labour and employers
- National ownership of policies



Thank you

- Visit UN-DESA website:
 - <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policynotes/>
 - السياسات الاقتصادية والاجتماعية للمنطقة العربية:
- (National Development Strategies for the Arab Region)