

Illegal immigrants and the deportation from Italy

Socio-anthropological study

Conducted by: Foued Ghorbeli



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Executive summary

This research is part of the research topics of the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social rights regarding immigration in general and specifically illegal immigration, a phenomenon in tremendous growth among youth. Many reasons push Tunisian Youth to immigrate illegally to pursue happiness. Economic reasons coupled with personal and psychological reasons drive youth to opt for such decisions. However, the punishment approach adopted by the national authorities and the authorities at the European Union seeks to repress such phenomenons. Such This approach has made illegal immigration a series of material obstacles and symbolic impediments that need to be overcome by youth. Deportation is one of the punishment instruments tools used by the European Union for years as a way to limit the immigration movement from the South Mediterranean countries to Europe. In this context, this qualitative research was carried out in Sfax, Kelibia, Redeyef, and Tunis. Thirty interviews with youth aged between 20 and 30 were conducted in an attempt to perceive the phenomenon of illegal immigration as a social and personal experience and its reasons as explained by youth themselves who expressed their views, a view that is neglected by Tunisian public political authorities and media. However, this research focuses mainly on deportation from the Italian territories as perceived by deported youth themselves, an experience that they deem tough as it reflects their failure to fulfill their personal dreams. The deportation experience sounds like a story they recite and that adds value to their personality, as they were actually people with no story to tell. The deportation experience influences the deported psychologically and economically, namely, those who have lived longer periods in Europe and who feel that they were forcibly expelled from a place they are familiar with pushing them to isolation, stress and permanent depression. At the economic level, the deported person lives in miserable economic conditions, they are unable to integrate economically, driving them to rethink about immigrating again. Thus, deportation is a security measure and a political approach that is transferred from an instrument of punishment into an incentive factor driving youth to rethink about immigrating again. Deportation has, as a consequence, adverse impacts and a new approach to illegal immigration shall be adopted between Tunisia and the European Union.



ملخص تنفيذي

يندرج هذا البحث ضمن الخيارات البحثية للمنتدى التونسي للحقوق الاقتصادية والاجتماعية في مناصرة القضايا المتعلقة بالهجرة عموما والهجرة غير النظامية بشكل خاص، والتي صارت تأخذ في السنوات الأخيرة منحنى تصاعديا بفعل تزايد عدد الشبان المنخرطين فيها، وتعدد الأسباب التي تدفع بالعديد من الشبان التونسيين لتبني خيار الهجرة غير النظامية لتحقيق أحلامهم، حيث تتداخل الأسباب الاقتصادية مع الأسباب الذاتية والنفسية. لكن بالمقابل، تظهر سياسات المتوخاة سواء على المستوى الوطني أو على مستوى الاتحاد الأوروبي بوصفها سياسات عقابية ذات طبيعة أمنية تعمل على وضع مزيد من الحدود أمام الهجرة غير النظامية، على نحو أصبحت الهجرة غير النظامية تبدو وكأنها سلسلة من الحدود المتتابعة والنجاح في تجاوز سلسلة الحدود المادية والرمزية ولعل الترحيل هو أحد أهم الآليات العقابية التي يتوخاها الاتحاد الأوروبي منذ سنوات في إطار التضييق على حركة الهجرة من جنوب المتوسط إلى أوروبا. في هذا الإطار يندرج هذا البحث الكيفي حول المرحلين التي تم إنجازها في كل من صفاقس وقليبية والرديف وتونس العاصمة حيث تم إجراء ثلاثين مقابلة شبه موجهة مع شبان تتراوح أعمارهم بين 20 و30 سنة وذلك من أجل فهم مسار الهجرة غير النظامية كتجربة اجتماعية وذاتية في الآن ذاته من حيث الأسباب المتعلقة بها وذلك من وجهة نظر الفاعلين أنفسهم، والذين تركنا لهم إعطاء وجهة نظرهم، وهي وجهة نظر غير مسموعة في الفضاء العمومي التونسي سواء السياسي أو الإعلامي. لكن ما يعنينا في هذا البحث هو تجربة الترحيل القسري من الأراضي الإيطالية، وذلك مثلما يرويها ويتمثلها الشبان المرحلون أنفسهم وهي تجربة تبدو قاسية حسب رؤيتهم الخاصة لأنها تعبر عن فشل مشروعهم الهجروي وأحلامهم الفردية ولكن بالمقابل تظهر تجربة الترحيل بمثابة القصة التي يرويها المرحلون والتي تعطي معنى لوجودهم الشخصي لأنهم في الغالب كانوا بلا قصص. من ناحية أخرى تبدو تجربة الترحيل لها استتبعات نفسية، وإقتصادية على المرحلين وبشكل خاص على الشبان الذين قضوا مدة طويلة في أوروبا حيث يشعرون أنه قد وقع انتزاعهم قسريا من بيئة تعودوا عليها لهذا ينكفئون على أنفسهم ويعيشون ضغط نفسي وتوتر دائم. أما من الناحية الاقتصادية يعيش جل المرحلين تحت وطأة ظروف إقتصادية قاسية، حيث لا يقدر جلهم على تحقيق الاندماج الإقتصادي وهو ما يجعلهم يفكرون في معاودة الهجرة غير النظامية وهو ما يعني أن الترحيل بوصفه سياسة أمنية بحتة يتحول بشكل أو بآخر من آلية للتقليل من عدد المهاجرين إلى عامل دافع لها وهو ما يمكن إدراجه فيما يسمى بالآثار اللامتوقعة لعملية الترحيل وهذا ما يفترض، من هذا الناحية، إعادة رسم سياسة جديدة للهجرة بين تونس والاتحاد الأوروبي

Overview

Illegal immigration shall not only be conceived from its morphological part based on the numbers of immigrants but their personal experiences and views also shall be considered. Although illegal immigration sounds like a common social experience, it is in some ways a personal and individual experience and even an emotional one. This was discovered through the different interviews conducted namely an in-depth understanding of this phenomenon must consider the personal levels and the different views of immigrants regarding the “driving forces” pushing the Tunisian Youth to think about the illegal immigration. They may “succeed” as they may “fail”. This situation also applies to the illegal immigrants who were deported from Italy after they “illegally migrated”, which is the main issue of this study, without being able to achieve their dreams and the objectives they wished. The driving reasons entail social and economic factors and illegal immigration constitutes, according to these immigrants, a way “to break with the unbearable reality they live”. As such, immigration is a self-fulfillment tool allowing them to live the experience itself and improve their economic situation, namely with the inability of the traditional institutions such as school to hold them back. The younger generation in Tunisian lives in a state of disequilibrium resulting from the absence of any future guarantees; the state of uncertainty pushes them to “adventures” which makes the illegal immigration experience a highly-risked experience. The illegal immigration experience necessities as well planning takes place within “groups” that are usually not under the control of the traditional institutions. Most of the people we interviewed planned for immigration “among their friends”, groups that are widespread in slums to which belong most of illegal immigrants. The immigrant belongs to local streets and is one on whom we can rely either during the trip or in the foreign country.

Illegal immigration experience is not individual; it is a collective experience as it rebuilds the social structures that the immigrants lost among families, school and state. The transformation witnessed in the Tunisian society that can be summarized in the ‘deterioration of the institutions’, entailing that the institutions that should grant a minimum level of social integration have vanished; what used to be the responsibility of the institutions has now become the responsibility of the individual, mainly among the vulnerable categories, has made illegal immigration an individual decision. Even though it is a highly risked experience that nourishes the soul regardless of the possibilities of “failure” or “inability to fulfill the immigration dream” that ends with the “forced



deportation". Deportation is part and parcel of the illegal immigration experience. The studies on illegal immigration made in Tunisia failed to shed the light on forced deportation and focused only on two levels: the structural level relating mainly to the factors and reasons that explain this phenomenon and the different steps adopted during the experience from its first day until it is achieved. What most of the studies neglected is the "forced deportation" from Europe as conceived by immigrants who reached Europe illegally. It is indeed an experience that deeply explains the way the European Union deals with this phenomenon at the security level, among which is the forced deportation as these immigrants are defined according to the classic anthropology as "the strangers who live in a territory without having any right neither to visit nor to reside in". This summarizes the common perception toward clandestine immigration as the illegal existence in the national territory and allowing deportation as a solution and a right granted to the countries to "expel those undesired individuals" from its boundaries. It is the same punishment instrument adopted by the countries of origin of immigrants, Tunisia in this case, for crime of "clandestine immigration" to limit the flow of illegal immigrants. On the other hand, the sociologist Ulrich Beck defines in his book issued in 2006 "cosmopolitanism" states that 'boundaries are made to be transcended' and that 'clandestine immigrants are the artists of the boundaries as they create a rebellion among nations and countries and among the ambiguous legal systems'; Beck considers that 'boundaries shall be used and transcended'. In other words, illegal immigration is a process of restructuring of boundaries that may end in failure as expressed by Ulrich Beck. In this context, we will approach the experience of forced deportation as the crossing of 'the Tunisian and Italian borders' illegally as experienced by the immigrants themselves. We will investigate on the one hand, how do Italian authorities deal with the flow of illegal immigrants and on the other hand, how do Tunisian authorities deal with the flow of deported immigrants. Deportation is one of the types of forced immigration to the country of origin. However, the study shed the lights mainly on the flow of immigrants who returned to Tunisia and their economic situation after deportation.



- I. Research methodology
3. Qualitative methodology

Illegal immigration shall not be confined to structural and subjective facts relating to the poverty and unemployment that the immigrants face which makes any research on illegal immigration difficult. Thus, what has been drawn up during the research "is the apparent part of the relations and mechanisms relating to social relationships". To understand such mechanisms, the topic shall take into consideration deportation experience and the living conditions of immigrants and matching it with the economic and social context.

The research topic is based on investigating reasons as driving factors to make social relationships and interactions questionable, and that is what we will conduct in this research through understanding the phenomenon of illegal immigration on the emotional level. We seek to understand illegal immigration and deportation as perceived by immigrants we interviewed from Tunis Capital, Redeyef, Sfax and Kelibia. The value the immigrants added to their experience shall not be perceived in the absence of social factors that shape the experience. For a better understanding of the experience of illegal immigration and deportation, the subjective, personal and structural parts shall be combined together.

The qualitative approach allows us, at the same time, to understand the sufferings of the experience of illegal immigration and deportation as overlapping experiences. It enables us as well to witness the pain the immigrants suffer without resorting to the comparative approach. As such, we may listen to their views and stories about illegal immigration and deportation as perceived by them, using their own words and personalities. The main issue tackled in this research is: How did immigrants live the illegal immigration and deportation experience? How did this influence their behavior and how do they interpret their social situations and the conditions they were forced to live in?

Based on these questions we will study the experience of illegal immigration and deportation as a detriment related to 'social conditions' as expressed by the sociologist Ulrich Beck. In other words, we cannot conceive the experience of illegal immigration and deportation from the economic and cultural levels but through studying its impact on the personal and collective levels. The experiences are thus considered as a detriment influencing their lives. Illegal immigration is considered thus as a collective reaction to a series of forced



constraints and forms of hegemony that appear to be a solution to the problems of poverty, unemployment, occupational fragility and social exclusion that have been affecting young people in Tunisia for years.

The young men we met are endowed with a "sociological imagination" enabling them to formulate positions that put them in a wider social, historical and political context, making them not only speak of their experiences as individual experiences but as common experiences. They interpret these experiences as being the result of reasons beyond their control. In this sense, illegal immigrants who have been deported, are portrayed by the media as "criminals" who must be rehabilitated or eliminated. They are also not "victims" of a social pattern that they do not understand and are therefore incapable of doing anything. If they do, it is useless to talk to them, because they will have no existence and their words will be abstract in every sense. This research is thus based on asserting the capacity of illegal immigrants to integrate: they are not "evil" or "victims" they are active in social life. The purpose of our research is not merely an explanation of the behavior of the immigrants involved in the research, but also of the subjective structure covered by self-delusions and hidden imperatives under the banner of freedom of action.

Therefore, to understand "illegal immigration" and the experience of deportation, we have to reconstruct the experiences of the immigrants. We told their stories, their representations and experiences during and after deportation. Immigrants who have participated in the experience of illegal immigration to Europe have been forcibly deported, which means analyzing according to the logic of individual paths, and then looking for cross-references in various subjective experiences and interpretations which will enable us to understand the logic of the act associated with irregular migration and the experience as faced by immigrants.

1. Field and research techniques

- Semi-directed interview

We have based our research on the semi-directional interview technique to collect testimonies on illegal immigration and deportation experiences to allow young people who have lived the experience to speak and present their personal view of how they have lived their experience. "When we want to analyze the meaning that immigrants give to their practices, the events in which they



were involved " and rely on data collection on migration experiences Note that systematic transfer makes the researcher somehow part of the "subject of the research", not merely describing the behaviors and delivering speeches of the immigrants in their raw form, but to work to dismantle their signs and reconstruct them sociologically as previously mentioned.

The interview manual is divided into four main axes: the first focuses on the social and demographic characteristics of the deported youth. The aim of this approach is to find out the correlation between these characteristics and to engage in irregular migration and the impact of the immigration experience on immigrants. The search does not aim at constituting a causal relationship between factors and results but we will seek to find meaningful relationships that can be confirmed or denied in other stages. What we seek is to build hypotheses. The second axis concerns the pre-arrival stage in Italy, and specifically to the island of Lampedusa i.e. planning, engaging in the network and the starting point. The third axis relates to the experience of arriving to Lampedusa and the experience of accommodation and life in Italy. The last axis, concerns the deportation experience related to the causes, the procedures adopted by the Italian authorities and the Tunisian authorities to deport immigrants, namely those who immigrated in 2011.

- Field:

This research was conducted in July and October 2018 in the cities of Redeyef, Kelibia, Sfax, and Tunis. Kelibia and Sfax constitute points of departure for illegal immigrants to Italy. Most of the interviewees live in slums around these cities, which lack good infrastructure. Unemployment and occupational fragility are prevalent among young people, contributing to a negative self-image, especially in the case of stigmatization. Added to the feeling of injustice and inequality when they compare themselves with the privileged groups. All interviewees justify their involvement in illegal immigration by living "excluded" and feeling a sense of inequality and the wish to live like others.



The first chapter:

Who are the deportees?

**Social profiles and life histories
of the interviewees**

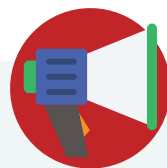


The first chapter: Who are the deportees?
Social profiles and life histories of the interviewees

I. School: Early dropout of school

1. School is no longer fit for life!

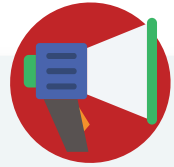
Most of the interviewees, aged between 18 and 30, share a fundamental characteristic as they lived the "school failure experience" through early drop-out. They refer such drop-out to several reasons ranging from economic difficulties, and reluctance to continue to study, because the school, in their view, is no longer useful in light of the high unemployment of high-ranking people, and therefore drop-out is a strategy "to shorten the road". These transformations are linked to school failure as a social issue and a mechanism for economic integration, which has not changed around them, as it no longer adequately guarantees the improvement of economic conditions and integration into the work market. It is not only about the school as a mechanism for reproducing social inequality, but about the lack of intermediary frameworks that accommodate early dropouts such as vocational training, so that those who drop out of school remain in a waiting position and within a "working and uneducated" bilateral.



I dropped-out because of the financial condition of my family... my friends have illegally immigrated and I no longer desire to pursue my studies and I started thinking about immigration. I tried once and got caught

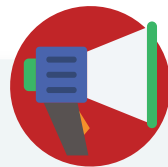
Arbi 28 years old, Kabaria, Tunis





I dropped-out as I used to see people from my family and neighbors who graduate and hold their Bachelors' and Master's degree but remain jobless, and when they find a job, his wage is barely 350 Dinars or 400 Dinars. While when I quit school I worked as a waiter for 650 Dinars...this encouraged me to quit... I see that it is useless to study for 3 years then remain unemployed...If they open a national contest 40 thousand people would apply while they only select 1 thousand... 39 thousand remain jobless...among that one hundred 800 candidates succeeded...the state's approach is unfair...In Europe, when you attain your High School Degree, you get a job fit for a holder of a High School degree... when you attain your Master's Degree, you get a job fit for a holder of a Master's Degree...here, as you see, you are not sure when you finish your studies what job will you find... you need to work for two years to gather 2000 Dinars...that will not enable you to live decently...1000 Dinars will not enable you to live decently...If you marry while your wage is low you will not enable you to live decently with an unemployed woman, you'd better not marry.. you won't afford water and electricity bills, diapers...these reasons pushed me to quit...

**Mohamed, 25 years old,
Cité Habib, Sfax**



I dropped-out because of the financial condition of my family... my father could not afford buying our school uniforms or furniture so I decided to quit and started working at the age of 11

Mnawer 25 years old, Redaief



I worked during summer and gained money, so I decided to drop-out... education is useless

Mohamed, 25 years old, Kelibia

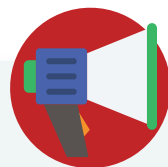


3. Professional fragility or economic survival

If we assume with Zygmunt Bauman that we live in a flexible world, where the institutions (such as the family and the world of work) have lost their power and become flexible and streamlined institutions, this qualitative transformation has taken its sociological manifestations into the world of work, it was then characterized by instability and flexibility, which means the liberalization of labor from the rigor of collective and legal agreements. Here, normative work is compensated by non-normative work, as the French sociologist Claude Dubbar points out. The labor market is in the process of diminishing the guarantees of the social protection system, which has long been the core of the main demands of labor unions and movements.

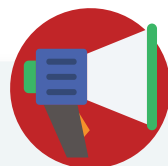
At another level, according to several economic studies, the labor market in Tunisia appears to be more flexible in terms of employment. In terms of employment, it provides only "small jobs" and "fragile jobs" that ensure economic integration of youth into the labor market, both degree holders or those who quitted school, creating situations of "instability" towards work, which, as Rubar Kastal demonstrates, leads to a kind of "risk of the tendency towards social viability" where the individual is faced with a double loss; work and relational isolation, and this occurs within the collapse of the previous pillars and disintegration of the networks. Within this transformation, some sociologists tackled the issue of the collapse of the institutions "le déclin des institutions", which is a decline that have been associated in the Tunisian context with the modernization project of the state of independence, namely the school, the health system and the social protection networks. In this regard, as the Chilean sociologist Danilo Martocelli points out "The predicted weakness of the institution, as expressed in the deconstruction of the institution, means that everything that was entrusted in the past to the collective guarantee of institutions has now become more and more left to the individual himself, who alone has to bear his own destiny. "Therefore, the sense of inequality, injustice and inability to foresee the future. This forced interviewees, in the absence of ' "A horizon for personal and professional life" to manage their order and the option of illegal immigration falls in this respect.





I work as a butcher... If you don't work you will spend your whole day in coffee shops without being able to buy your coffee or a packet of cigarettes...If you work you will be able to buy your needs and your family's needs... this is my daily routine...I protested and met the state's delegate hundred of times in 2008... You don't have any rights... in other words, you are not a Tunisian citizen

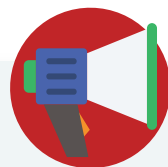
Mnawer, 26 years old, Redeyef



I am jobless... sometimes I work as a mason or a painter... sometimes I work... sometimes I remain jobless... as I told you... I don't like working under a supervisor... It is humiliating

Adel, 38 years old, Kelibia





Since I returned from Italy I started looking for a job, my mother told me to look for a job and settle here...there is nothing... even highly graduated people did not find any... I quit in 9th form... I looked in the municipality, the factories and many other places... I did not find anything

Yassine, 25 years old,
Cité Tahrir, Tunis

These testimonies lead us to the fact that the deportees are not sufficiently engaged in the world of work and are marginalized which this them in a constant fear of the future. This pushes them to think about the experience of Illegal immigration. Most of them work under informal and unorganized sector called "the survival economics" which is expressed by the interviewees during the interviews by "struggle to live" i.e. getting money in all possible ways (illegal sale of drugs, sometimes theft, small marginal occupations) to solve personal daily problems. This creates a kind of moral economics linked to the economy of self-management and survival, an economics that is one of the essential components of forcibly deported young men. It is seen as a "struggle" to ensure a minimum of personal dignity and no reliance on family. They live on the search for opportunities and daily improvisation, which makes their jobs a temporary stage and a means to ensure personal needs only. Most of the interviewees said that they live life day by day in a way that makes them live the present without hope in the future which pushes some of them to feel like they are dead

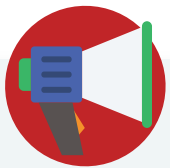




I feel like I am dead.

Adel, 38, Kelibia

4. Impact of the neighborhood

Most of the interviewees live in the margins of cities and slums. These are places with poor infrastructures and a lack of public services. It stigmatizes the individual paths of the young people living there, making them feel cramped to "dirty places", lacking transportation, governed by urban violence and arbitrary politics. Police, that plays the role of security and social control of these spaces, contributes to stigmatizing them in a manner that hinders the "mass mobility". Some of the interviewees we spoke to are viewed with disdain in terms of clothing, behavior and facial features, which makes them vulnerable to permanent and arbitrary verification of identities by security.

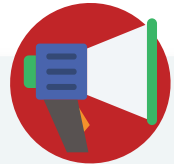


Police officers bother us.. if we are caught drunk, we need to pay money to be released...If you don't give money, you get imprisoned for at least 15 days... the second time I got caught I had only once one bottle of wine... he asked for 150 Dinars.. when I refused I was taken to superintendent and I was imprisoned for 3 months... they scapegoated me...I spent 3 months in prison... I spent them day by day

Arbi, 28 years old, Kabaria



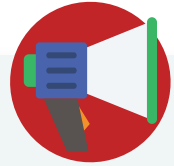
Their neighborhoods constitute refuge and protection and the place where they create daily, special and common memories. Interviewees conceive neighborhood as a "social pillar" in which relations and feelings of belonging, shared memories and emotional groups as named by the French sociologist Michel Maffesoli. In such groups, the "desire to leave" is common, and illegal immigration is a way of departure. The desire to leave the neighborhood as it represents a place where youth is oppressed. Therefore, the relationship with their place of residence is a paradoxical one. On the one hand, it is a place that shaped their identities and where common memories are shared. On the other hand, they are motivated by the desire to immigrate and leave a place where respect and personal dignity are not respected.



the neighborhood has no value... the country itself has no value... we have nothing.... I decided to meet the mayor... I couldn't meet him for a whole month...I surrounded

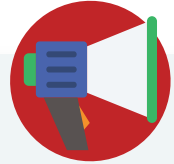
Mohmaed, 37 years old





What can I do...this is my neighborhood... It's popular and I have spent my childhood there...I have no other options...what I hate most in my neighborhood is delinquency... a lot of delinquency problems

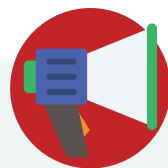
Arbi, 28, Kabaria



I live in Kabaria...I have spent my whole life here... what I hate most in my neighborhood is delinquency and ignorance

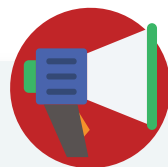
Housseem, 27 years old





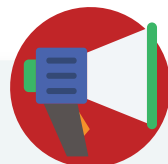
I used to live in Cité Ibn Khaldoun, in my grandmother's house, then I returned to El Omrane Supérieur... but I'm not satisfied with the neighborhood I live in

Oussama, 25 years old, El Omrane Supérieur, Tunis



Our neighborhood is clear compared to other slums... sometimes we get bothered but globally it's good

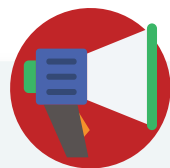
Yassine, 25 years old, Cité Ettahrir, Tunis



Of course there is no Tunisian satisfied with the neighborhood he lives in

Mnawer, 26 years old, Redeyef





I like my neighborhood...It's the place where my family, relatives and friends live in...it's a popular neighborhood...It lacks lighting and public roads... even the infrastructure is poor (mocking)... I desire to leave the neighborhood and the whole country

Hichem, 27 years old, Redeyef

The negative image that most of the interviewees adopt reflect a negative image of the self, as the way they perceive their neighborhood deepens their feeling of inequality and inferiority compared to others. Others are "the bourgeoisie" who are fully integrated into the world of work and consumption, Their perception of "the bourgeoisie" is not based on class struggle, they are not seeking "to destroy the existing system, but rather they want to gain the opportunity to have a "diplomatic passport to life" and engage in the values of the consumer society, As they feel that they are on the margins of society, they resort to immigration and since legal immigration is not available for them, illegal immigration and "breach of boundaries" are the solutions, a breach that reflects according to their own perspective a form of challenge, resistance and protest. This is what we will discover through our interviews with those who were forcibly deported from Italy.

5. Intermittent personal experiences

In general, the experiences of the interviewees seem to be intermittent: early drop-out of school and integration in the fragile world of work, in addition to the recurrent unemployment, give them a "negative identity" about themselves and their surroundings. An identity associated with what can be called "losing the identity".

". Identity refers to the idea of self-esteem and the degree of respect that others confer on the individual, which becomes meaningless when " unemployed" and having no clear horizon for the personal future. Identity according to Didier Demaziere "is only built in a relational context" Thus, illegal immigration is perceived as a "resistance " and an attempt to self-restoration and the formation of a positive identity through "building a future", improving the economic situation and responding to the expectations of others; It is a desire that is not only enhanced by the difficult economic reality of the interviewees, but also by the comparisons made with their predecessors in illegal immigration who achieved their "personal successes", whether through marriage, work, car and home. This does not mean that economic factors are the driving factor for illegal immigration. There are several interrelated factors among which is the representations and perceptions of the "European dream." As some visions, representations and perceptions have been widespread about "Southern societies" also other perceptions about the North or the West are common. In order to understand the mechanisms of illegal immigration, we must not limit ourselves to structural determinants, but we have to penetrate the subjective dimensions of the interviews by listening to their visions and perceptions and how they tell their experience of illegal immigration and forced deportation.



SECOND CHAPTER

Stories about the trip and the road to Lampedusa



SECOND CHAPTER

Stories about the trip and the road to Lampedusa

I. Before departure

The decision of illegal immigration is not only a decision that takes place at a certain point in time and carried out directly. It is merely an irrational decision although its results are unexpected. On the contrary, it can only be understood by perceiving the meaning it brings. That is, its rationality derives from the rationality of the actors themselves, and therefore can only be understood as a process of completion and takes place in a complex and multidimensional context. Illegal immigrants appear to be the "main actors" on the "illegal immigration scene", and they may be, but the "audience" is always in the backstage, and what happens in the scenes is not usually seen but re-discovered. Sociological work is in a way "a discovery of the scenes". Thus, illegal immigration is a representation of a complex process, starting from the idea of experimenting to search for the immigration networks, the middleman that will organize the process who acts like a director who coordinates the roles of the actors, ensures their escape from the security control and chooses "the waiting area". Illegal immigration is essentially a collective act that goes through multiple stages, each stage has its own standards, so it is necessary to think about illegal immigration from the sociological point of view, which opposes the simplistic approach through which they aim at excluding the dynamics that drive many young people to opt for illegal immigration.

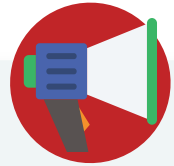
4. How did they think about illegal immigration and opt for it?

There is no specific time to think about the experience of illegal immigration, but the issue becomes serious when it becomes the reality experienced by interviewees as an economically difficult reality, mainly at the individual level, and the potential for change is difficult in Tunisia due to lack of employment. Hope and "the best way" despite "awareness of risks." The risk does not arouse fear, but is, as perceived by interviewees, justify the "the decision of illegal immigration", especially after the revolution, which they assume did not fulfill their hopes. Most of the interviewees said that they participated in the events of the revolution, which is their only involvement in public scene. Later, they

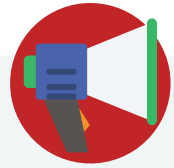


no longer have any "political or civil association" in public scene. They are drowned in a "political negligence" of public scene in the organizational sense. "Illegal immigration" is not only a "political expression" of this estrangement and "protest," but also an attempt to escape from an intolerable reality.

Hichem talks about how he started thinking about illegal immigration as a solution for employment problems in Redeyef

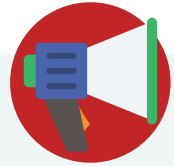


I have never thought about immigration until the age of 16. It is at that age that I started thinking about illegally immigrating. I was studying. My performance at school was good." He added concerning his experience with legal immigration: "I started thinking about getting a visa then staying in the foreign country and not returning to Tunisia...but middlemans who grant visa require 6 or 7 million... at that time, there were visas with 3 million. I asked my father to provide me with the money. At that time, we faced financial problems. My father works as a mason, my brother had heart disease and my other brothers were unemployed. My father told me that he doesn't have enough money. That was in 2006. To get a visa you have to pay 3 million and a half. I couldn't gather enough money, but I was determined to immigrate. Then the visa price was increased to 7 and 8 million. I submitted an application in 2012 to visit a girl I know, I spoke to her, she visited Tunisia then I decided to visit her. I submitted an application. I was a university student then. Then they demanded that I need to provide a guarantee that I will return back to Tunisia. I didn't understand anything. I provided all the needed documents mentioned at their website and when I submitted the application they didn't



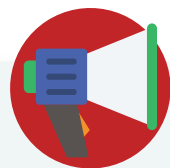
tell me that there are any missing documents. I got fed up and I even left my passport there for two years in the Embassy, but I started saving money and I found a way to illegally immigrate. I was not thinking about illegal immigration at that time. I heard that some of our friends reached Lampedusa, were released and they went to France. I started looking for an intermediary to illegally immigrate. I paid the needed money. My brother got a loan to provide me with the money. He took 5 million and illegal immigration costed me 3.700 million. The loan is still unpaid

Hichem, 27 years old, Redeyef



I live in Sidi Mansour... I am 29 years old and I have never thought about Illegal Immigration...then I started thinking about it... when I stayed 10 days in Sidi Mansour, I used to stay at the beach and started seeing illegal immigrants taking the boats. Once, I saw one of our friends among the group of immigrants... a childhood friend...I told him that I want to immigrate... he agreed

Farid, 30 years old, Sfax



One of our friends has a relative in Sfax (Sidi Mansour) who coordinated and encouraged me to illegally immigrate. I have never thought about illegal immigration but 30 of my neighbors have immigrated. I was then tempted to try. I spent 28 days in Sfax, we took the boat the first time, we spent 2 hours in the sea. Then, due to technical problems, sea water started drowning the boat. So we returned back. Thirteen days later, we took the boat again and arrived

Farid, 30 years old, Sfax

These testimonies show that the decision to illegally immigrate is taken outside the official institutions (the family, the school and the state), but in places and informal frameworks where institutional control is absent such as the group of friends and neighbors whom we meet daily and share the same dreams and motivations. In order to understand the dynamics of illegal immigration, it is necessary to think from the perspective of the daily life of "this marginalized youth", the margin here refers to anything outside the norms, values and representations imposed by the "dominant elites." The daily relationships woven into the daily lives of the young people we interviewed is based on integration, but their integration is an "integration in the margin", forming their culture and their own language, which means that illegal immigration is part of their culture, standards and values. Thus, to be an illegal immigrant, you have to be engaged and integrated in the group (Friends, neighbors, virtual friendship groups). The groups of affiliation, insofar as they provide protection and encourage youth to take the decision to illegally immigrate, also provide information regarding the times of organizing illegal immigration, starting points, information on access and how to act and deal with it. It as well ensures the possibility

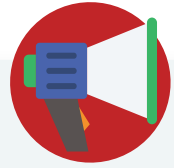
of communication with middlemen who organize "illegal immigration" and the network always needs a link to multiple nodes. They are "key actors" in illegal immigration; they coordinate, link, receive money and ensure protection from security control. They contribute in making the process of departure successful.

2. We started looking for middlemen: the waiting area and sailing

Middlemen in illegal immigration are part of the "economics of illegal immigration" but does not mean that we are talking about globalized transnational networks like the "global mafia", but about primitive or literal networks composed of only a few individuals who have acquired knowledge of the world of "illegal immigration". Most of them are former young sailors or have good relations with the authorities. Finding an middleman is a key stage in the process of illegal immigration. Middlemen determine the waiting areas, the date of the trip and decide for the price of illegal immigration. The price depends on the guarantees, the proportion of risk to be taken and the hope of access to Lampedusa. This does not mean that they are not aware of the risks of illegal immigration and the possibility of drowning at sea. That is the reason why they talk about the experience "proudly" as they reached the edge of death and survived. Through our interviews, we discovered that despite the failure of the "immigration project" which ended with deportation, interviewees talk about immigration as a personal story, these young immigrants want to have stories, even an unsuccessful one. The personal struggle is a struggle to achieve self-recognition, and recognition may be from the personal perspective to "create a personal story."

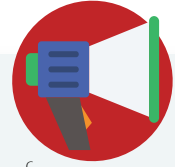
After contacting the "middleman" and paying the price, which ranges from two thousand to four thousand dinars comes the stage of "staying in the waiting area" before sailing. The "waiting area" is a place chosen by the middlemen. It is close to the place of departure to Lampedusa. It is located in a deserted house or a house rented by middlemen far from any security control. The illegal immigrants gather in the waiting area and wait to leave. The middlemen are the ones who take such decision. The waiting period depends on several factors like the weather and the security situation. Immigrants who live next to the waiting area are exempt from it. An immigrant who lives in Sfax is not required to stay in the waiting area.





"I paid the middleman... he told us that at 2 p.m. a car will take you... I prepared my suitcase and got ready and waited for the car... The car was there...we ate our lunch and took our dinner in Sfax... we arrived at the waiting area at 10 PM... it was a forest in an airport road...we couldn't see anything as it was dark...at the waiting area we found people from Redeyef... we stayed for 3 days and most of the people were from the region of Redeyef... there were two from Tunis Capital who fled when they saw people from Redeyef gathering... the situation in the waiting area is miserable... we sleep on stones, we barely eat or drink or smoke"

We arrived at 4 a.m to the station of Redeyef... one of our friends saw us with suitcases ... everyone knew about immigration. Our friend warned us from taking the public transport to avoid police... he suggested we take the collective taxi...we decided to take the bus... we reached Sfax at 11. A.M...we had no idea where to go... we stayed in a coffee shop...it was so hot and we were wearing winter clothes...people noticed that we are strangers...so we started hiding until 4 PM...we called the middleman to tell him that we are in Sfax...he came and asked us 'You are the people from Redeyef? we said 'Yes'... he told us that a taxi driver will take us to the waiting area...the taxi arrived...we passed through a police station... the taxi driver warned us to act normal...It is worth mentioning that after we arrived, 15 groups of people arrived in the same way and the taxi driver used the same road... in the waiting area, they warned us to be quite... it is a deserted place with no WC... we ate only half a bread...the middleman asked each of us to give 10 Dinars or 5 dinars to buy food for us...



some problems happen when sharing the food... for example, I give 10 dinars while another immigrants pays only one Dinar then we share the same food... It's unfair... at 11 PM... people were not obeying... everyone was smoking... everyone was talking loudly... the middleman called the "big boss"... the "big boss" is known even among police officers... when he arrived with his car, one of the "spies" saw him and went to tell the police... after thirty minutes, we left the waiting area... actually, after we left, police officers came to the waiting area and found it empty... we went to another deserted place... disputes regarding meals were frequent...we stayed for one day or one and a half day at the first waiting area... and one day in the second waiting area

Bilel, 29, Redeyef

The "waiting area" appears, according to the interviewees not only as a "place to wait" but as a transit area that forms part of the border sequence in the complex process of illegal immigration. The idea of borders in its symbolic and physical sense seems to be essential to understanding illegal immigration as a social experience from within, as well as from the perspective of the actors themselves. Borders are usually breached and must be crossed. The "waiting area" as a place may hinder the journey if it is prolonged and if precautions are not taken sufficiently, especially in terms of security. Thus, "waiting area" can turn into an "unsafe transit zone." but on the other hand, it may be conceived as a "moment of doubt and uncertainty." That is why the length of the waiting period has increased the potential of failure and this is recognized by organizers of illegal immigration the waiting area here resembles the shelters in which the "illegal immigrants will be held "in Lampedusa

. They are preparing themselves in advance by arming themselves with the experiences of their predecessors. The waiting area is the middle stage of illegal immigration process, not all lived in the same way as it is determined by the quality of the illegal immigration and the security and climatic conditions. Therefore, leaving the waiting area and moving to the sailing stage shows an intense emotional moment and has sociological significance. Therefore the feeling, as described by the interviewees, is mixed with a sense of fear and joy, hope and pessimism, especially during the first moments. Some of them recite verses of the Quran while others contact a family member to tell let them know that he will leave, especially if we know that the price of the immigration for some of the interviewees was provided by their families, as illegal immigration in recent years has turned into a "family investment" due to several cultural and economic data.



Third chapter

Sailing, uncertainty and arrival Moment of departure



Third chapter

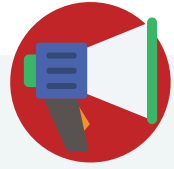
Sailing, uncertainty and arrival

Moment of departure

1. Mixed feelings

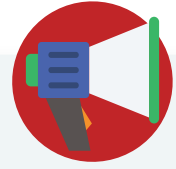
The moment of departure is the defining moment in the path of the "illegal immigrants." It is the moment of "hope" and "fear, preceded by "waiting moments" in the waiting area. It is the moment of intense feelings and transitory stage. The paradox of hope and fear is the dualism that governs the feelings of the illegal immigrants. The hope that they will reach Europe and achieve their dreams and fear of failure whether by drowning or getting caught by security authorities. However, all these feelings are perceived by interviewees as an integral part of the "illegal immigration" as an adventure and "breach" of the borders. It is a highly-risked experience. According to the words of French sociologist David Leberton, they accept death and reach their borders, making the story of illegal immigration a "story of survival", a fight for recognition. The struggle of illegal immigrants is a struggle for recognition within a "society of contempt" according to Axel Honneth, where "illegal immigration" is an attempt to restore "self-identities" among people who suffered social exclusion. Illegal immigrants take no precautionary measures and leave things to chance, fate and feel sometimes mixed moments of remorse in the depths of the sea. When the weather changes and death becomes imminent, ultimately one the destination is Lampedusa or Cecilia. These are transit points and waiting areas that constitute another phase of illegal immigration experience. Mohammed talks about the experience of departure, trip and sailing.



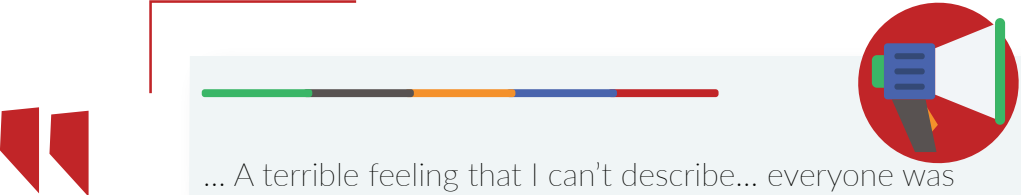


we sailed at 10 PM... after some miles I started wondering 'What am I doing?' I cannot return now... there is no turning point...I did not what to do... I started crying silently... before sailing, I was encouraged...but once we started sailing I started thinking of 200 thousand things... and starting asking each time 'how much time is it left?'...he started getting angry warning us not to ask him anything... the middleman is the owner of the boat... he started driving and staying Allahu Akbar and astaghfirullah although the weather was nice and the sea was calm... he told us to say Allahu Akbar and astaghfirullah... I got frightened... I thought that we would die...Thank God there were no waves... we spent more than 36 hours... we arrived to Cecilia... when the sun started shining, I was relieved...I spent the night sleeping on the edge of the boat...you start imagining bad scenarios... we ate bread, sardine, cheese and sandwiches...we actually lost our appetites... we had biscuits and milk...we were 18 person and each one might eat 3 packets of biscuit...At night, we were told that we are close to Cecilia

Mohamed, 25, Sfax



" we were waiting for the boat... we were the last to take the boat with two other people...we waited until midnight...we took the boat...everything was ok...we arrived to number 4... a place close to Lampedusa... we started with number 1 then 2until we reached number 4...after some miles, the weather conditions were worsening...people refused to return back...especially those who were wanted for crimes in Tunisia...No one wanted to return...they told the driver to carry on...he was driving slowly...after 2 hours, we found the merchant marine of Bizerte crossing our way... days before our trip there was an accident involving the drowning of illegal immigrants in Zarzis ... They started asking us about our destination and telling us not to worry...they asked us how many we were and if we are all Tunisians, are there any women or girls?... they released us and showed us the way to Italy. One hour later, the boat was broken...the engine stopped...we spent three days in the middle of the sea without any lights...we narrowly escaped death... rain, cloudy weather ...we were unable to see anything...My friend looked at me and said "we are done"...everyone was desperate... we could do nothing but face the reality...Thank God we escaped (He sighs) I regretted everything at that time...I was home in miserable conditions but at least it is better than dying in the sea and being a good meal for fish... I saw my past life as a film...If I didn't drop-out of school, I could have been in better conditions... If my parents took care of me, I wouldn't have been here...If my country provided me with a job and a decent life, I would never think about immigration...



... A terrible feeling that I can't describe... everyone was feeling the same... I started looking at the sky and praying...I wanted to survive...many things in my life were still not achieved...many ideas... but it's too late... when I arrived I felt like I was born again...despite all that, I didn't regret anything and I wish to return there... it's better than living in Tunisia

Wael, 30, Sfax

2. Arrival, reception centers, departure and unreported employment

- Reception centers: Control and punishment policies

Arrival means that the border was successfully crossed, despite the moments of fear and suspicion and reaching the limits of death. Crossing is a transition at the geographical level, while other impediments are still needed to be overcome as illegal immigration is a complex process that overlaps the geographic and symbolic levels. Those who arrive through Lampedusa waiting for the Italian reception centers or transfer to Catania pass through Cecilia security surveillance and the reception centers. They will not find themselves immediately after arriving on the streets of Rome and Palermo as they will be placed in shelters with tight security; nationality, identity and fingerprints are also taken with some medical procedures. Some illegal immigrants opt for a strategy of changing their names and nationalities. Most of them do not carry their identity cards or mobile phones. They are somehow integrated into globalization and their choice of illegal immigration is in fact a reaction to the unfair global mobility of the South

South and the North and a desire to participate actively in the "global consumption community". Some of those who reach to Lampedusa give their real names, and the issue here is subject to multiple strategies, investigations and past experiences.

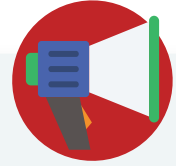
Reception centers in Lampedusa (Italy) and France, where illegal immigrants are accommodated upon arrival are places of detention, transit and waiting. It is, however, one of the mechanisms for managing and monitoring flows of illegal immigrants of the European Union. The European Union's policy in this respect is to select and monitor the "unwanted" migratory movements in the border areas of illegal immigrants. Two discourses are adopted at this level; the security discourse (Immigrants as a threat to Europe) and humanitarian discourse (immigrants as victims). This combination is supposed to involve several interlocutors, primarily security and civil society actors. Illegal immigrants have been viewed as undesirable since the 1970's when the EU closed its borders. Reception centers are symbolic boundaries for entering and exiting the Schengen space. The exaggerated media focus on these areas has, in one way or another, enhanced the security vision of flows of immigrants. Lampedusa appears as a small but symbolic island, reflecting the European Union's policy on dealing with immigrants, especially in the case of illegal immigrants. In 1997, the integration of Italy into the Schengen space prompted the Italian government to tighten border controls to reassure the rest of the EU member states, who were worried about poor control at the southern border of Italy. This concern was exacerbated by the fall of the regime of Ben Ali following what became known as the "Arab Spring". In 2011, there were about 51,000 illegal immigrants, mostly Tunisians. The flow of illegal immigrants to Cecilia pushed Central authorities to request financial assistance from the local authorities in Rome. In order to understand EU policies regarding illegal immigration, we need to take into account the conflicting policies between the different actors and the interlocutors on the issue of illegal immigration.

Departure or reception eventually emerge as a result of a conflict between multiple actors within the Schengen space. These actors often unite to produce a common meaning of the policy of "resistance to illegal immigration." Among the main actors in this system, alongside the actors, civil society that administers horizontally the issue of illegal immigration unlike the official actors who administer it vertically.



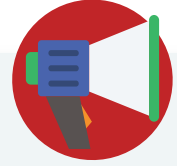
. However, civil society does not place border accountability as a mechanism for the selection of migrants, as it does to provide a human and non-politicized dimension to illegal immigration. Most associations provide health and social services to illegal immigrants, both at the moment of arrival or departure. Thus, they work in one way or another to close the gap left by official intervention in this regard, and thus convert illegal migrants from the border actors to mere "social situations" similar to the unemployed, and homeless. On the other hand, another part of European civil society struggles to change the dominant view of the border as a selective tool for migration flows by condemning Italian human rights violations in centers and deportations, criminalizing immigration and restricting the right to movement. The descriptions used to describe immigrants such as "illegal immigrants" and "undesirable" are also condemned. The associations consider that there is no law in Italy that considers individuals without any official documents to have committed a misdemeanor or crime that can be held in a place that looks like a prison as reception centers, in which illegal immigrants are arrested and isolated until it is decided whether to be deported or allowed to stay. Generally, illegal immigrants detained in shelters often escape using multiple tricks. The perceptions are divergent about the "Centro" as an experiment and stage of the illegal immigration. Accommodation there is described as a painful experience, as shown in the testimonies of the interviewees who expressed their dislike of food, sometimes the lack of hygiene and the harsh treatment of translators and police, especially during their forced deportation process. Yasin talks about the experience of arrival and detention in the center, who some immigrants perceive it as a transit area to be bypassed while others are worried about the possibility of deportation, a possibility that means the failure of the immigration project. The illegal immigration is not only an experience, it is a personal and family investment as well.





Honestly I liked the reaction of my friends (laughs)...some started protesting, others were happy...personally, I felt nothing, but when I saw them glad...I felt happy...security officers came and welcomed us...at that time they didn't yet start applying harsh security measures on Tunisians...they welcomed us... They took us to the Centro and took care of us... I found so many friends I know... we used to stay together and sometimes eat outside... everything was normal in terms of humanitarian behavior.

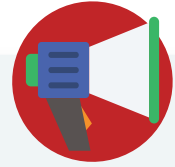
when police officers started checking our identity they behaved in disdain as do Tunisian police officers... when they took us to the buses, they were pushing us and holding their weapons as if they are dealing with terrorists... It is due to what they usually hear about Tunisians... Because in the past some Tunisians burned the Center and left nothing... the center is located in Lampedusa... At that time, we, the Tunisians, were more than the inhabitants of Lampedusa themselves.... We started protesting and wandering in Lampedusa for a week... then, they started taking us one by one... each one holds a number... I was taken by plane from the airport of Lampedusa to Bari with 12 other immigrants... I stayed there for a week... the conditions were very poor as we were numerous... we used to sleep in the streets but food was provided... the food was awful and inedible... always tasteless pasta pasta pasta.... In the morning, they give us bread, milk, a piece of cheese and jam and at lunch, pasta or rice... then we stay in Lampedusa freely because the Center was overcrowded...



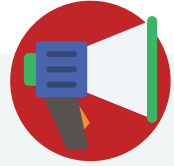
we were 22.000 immigrant... police officers were very careful ... sometimes when immigrants fight they try to calm them down using batons... sometimes innocent people are beaten in such fights...One would better stay isolated from trouble makers... concerning food, pasta is served packed... when you open the pack, it smells bad... personally, I don't eat it... they serve us also packed sausage or chicken or bread... I open the bread and put the ham... even when some ham is left, I kindly ask them to give me more bread... for breakfast, we are served butter and jam... the problem is not in police officers... the problem is with Tunisian troublemakers... after eating, some leave their tables dirty... They don't clean...

Wael, 30, Sfax

On the other hand, the experience of crossing Lampedusa seems to be different from crossing Cecilia. Cecilia is the cross point before reaching reception centers in Lampedusa. Mohammed talks about the moment of arrival to Cecilia.



they took us to a mountain... I was wearing shorts... my clothes were dry...I didn't touch water...when we arrived, we divided ourselves into groups... 4 people from Tunis went together... I went with one from Ariana and another one from Sfax – Airport road... It was the first time I see him... I didn't see him even in the boat... we didn't move from that place... we couldn't see anything but roads with fast cars... we went in the direction of the countryside... we encountered a Moroccan... we told him our story and he directed us... he recommended we take the bus rather than the train as it is cheaper... we told him that we don't have money... he gave us 40 Euros... but the Euros when shared between the three of us, isn't worth anything...fortunately the bus was cheap when you travel from Cecilia to Palermo... we arrived and were afraid to get caught by the police...When one of our friends from Ariana saw a police officer, he started running without even warning us... He was so fast and, as we were afraid, we ran too...they followed us... when we were caught, we couldn't understand a word... he started yelling and speaking Italian and we were yelling and saying in Tunisian " We have nothing... we have nothing"... we couldn't understand them and they couldn't understand us... one of the police officers caught my friend and tied his hands as if he were a terrorist (an expression of disgust in his face)... they were talking and we couldn't understand anything... we put our hands over our heads... when they discovered that we were illegal immigrants, they released us... the trip was very very tough...



with 40 Euros to Palermo and G.P.S on our mobile phones.... We reached the borders of Ventimiglia... I couldn't think it will be hard there as well... you live in a mountain with no money... I called my cousin who lives in Nice, France... Nice was not far from there ... I told him that I am in the borders and that I have no money and I didn't take a shower for a week... My cousin arrived to Italy and gave me 200 Euros... he was about to take us through the borders but then told me that he is not responsible for my friend who is from Sfax – Airport road

Ahmed, 25, Sfax

Italy rather than providing linguistic middlemen to facilitate communication. Official violence in the centers is a reflection of the mass deportation decisions, which is a sudden and undeclared decision pushing immigrants sometimes to commit suicide, escape or protest. The decision to deport is a defining moment in the personal trajectory of illegal immigration. It is an exclusionary decision that marks the end of the immigrants' dreams and hopes.



Chapter 4

Deportation and the stages after deportation from the boats to the plane



Chapter 4

Deportation and the stages after deportation from the boats to the plane

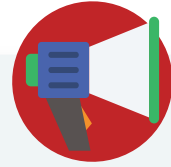
I. Deportation

1. Deportation bureaucracy

Deportation is a subject to bureaucracy and strict security measures by the Italian authorities who coordinate with the Tunisian authorities in this regard. Deportation is executed via Palermo airport usually to Enfidha airport on Mondays and Thursdays. The security authorities ensure deportees' reception without the presence of the media and civil society organizations. They don't transfer them to their places of origin, which puts them in danger especially when the arrival is at night. The Tunisian authorities often do not resolve to violence when they receive deportees but rely on a kind of psychological restraint associated with the investigation. Security authorities deal with deportees as a source of information only.

The process of deportation is carried either collectively or individually. Some are deported individually when arrested by the Italian security authorities and are usually sentenced for misdemeanors or crimes and others are deported collectively namely those who did not leave the reception centers. The deportation process is a "disappointing experience" for illegal immigrants. It means "returning". Returning to the first moment, as if nothing was done, it means "loss" and "failure". Illegal immigrants, ironically enough, accept death at sea as part of "illegal immigration adventure" and refuse to be deported and resist in every way and sometimes end in attempted suicide and escape from centers. They compare deportation to death.



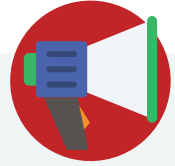


We were in the plane and we were praying and wishing the plane to crash rather than take us back to Tunisia" said Hicham of Radeef, 27, he added: "I did not wish to die at sea, but I wished the plane would crash and we would die."

Hicham, 25, Radeef

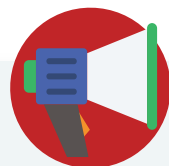
Passengers forcibly express their dissatisfaction with the treatment of the Tunisian consular authorities in Italy, which also deal with them with security logic and show no cooperation and understanding of their situation. Before deportation, illegal immigrants sign documents in Italian language, which are often not translated or helped to understand, including commitment to never return to Italian territory. Failure to translate the documents to people who have been sentenced without understanding them constitutes a violation of their judicial and legal rights. The deportation process begins from the detention to the plane that will take them to the airport. Police often use force in cases of resistance.

Wissam, 28, from Kelibia, speaks about the experience of deportation, which was due to his illegal presence on Italian territory:



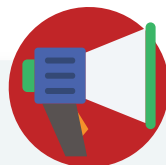
I was taken to the police station... after two hours they took me to an office... they took my fingerprints and investigated me... I stayed there all the night because I told them that I am Syrian... I think they called the Tunisian authorities because they knew my name and identity... I was then taken to the airport and stayed at an office until the plane arrived...two police officers took me to the plane...but before departure, I gave them a wrong identity as I told you... I told them that I'm Syrian and I'm seeking asylum... They told me that they will bring an attorney... the interpreter was not translating everything... there was a Tunisian interpreter but she was not was not translating everything...because I talked too much while she translated only few words... she didn't pronounce the word lawyer... I signed the documents at the station... when I asked the translator about the content of the documents she told me that these are my confessions

Wissem, 28, Kelibia

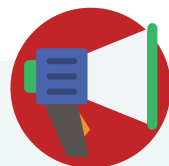


I was deported because I was caught in a fight at a bar... I didn't have any identification papers... deportation was the worst experience I have ever had... I felt oppressed... I have been hiding for a year... then I get caught in a fight... I was not part of the fight... I was meeting an Italian to discuss about signing a work contract... when I got caught, I resisted at first then calmed down... at the airport, there was a judge, an attorney and an interpreter, the attorney defended me but the judge insisted on deportation... the attorney kept telling the judge that I was there by accident and that I'm not part of the fight, but he refused... I didn't sign any document... I didn't try to escape... I was accompanied with two police officers

Aymen, 26, Kelibia



I was caught in the train and taken to police station then to the court... they investigated me and I admitted that I stole the suitcase... I was imprisoned for a year and two months then was released... when I was arrested by Italian



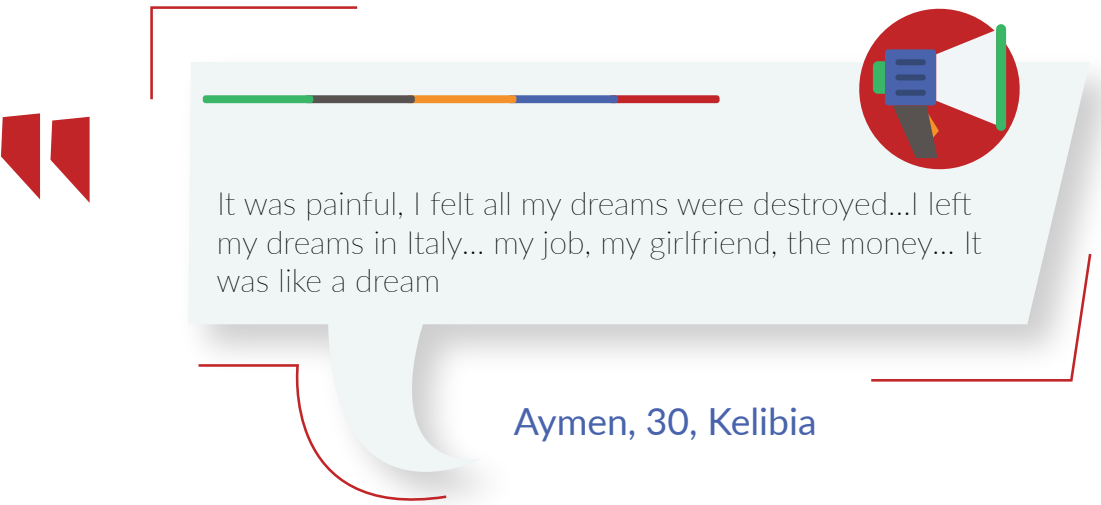
police, I refused to put handcuffs, one of the police officers used violence and broke and hand... the day I went to the court, I asked them to take me to the hospital... after imprisonment, I was deported... they took me to the airport and was detained until the arrival of the plane... I felt that I stayed for decades in the detention room

Ahmed, 30, Kelibia

Authorities take all security measure to deal with forced deportees by checking their identities and police records to catch former delinquents and those involved in terrorist attacks. The immigrants who are deported collectively arrive at the airport of Enfidha on Mondays and Thursdays while immigrants deported individually arrive at Tunis Carthage Airport. There is no specific reception policy for deportees. After investigations, they are released. Many of them find themselves forced to rely on themselves for transportation to return to their homes, especially those living in the interior regions such as Gafsa and the southern regions of Tunisia, where the authorities do not provide any assistance to provide transport. Only sometimes a bus is used to transport them to Tunis or Sousse. This deepens the feeling of injustice and impression that the state deals with them as infiltrators of the law. Therefore, during the reception process, there is no assistance or interference from civil society. There is no press coverage, which makes the deportation process of a purely security nature.

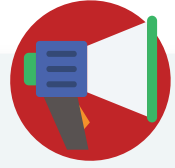
2. In the plane to Tunisia: Feeling of hopelessness and pain

The moment of riding the plane is highly emotional. The return to Tunisia is irreversible, the feelings of pain and disappointment escalate, and the feeling of hopelessness and failure intensifies, which leads to the desire to die. Disappointment reflects the personal and material loss and a return to Tunisia is a "return to the unknown" a return to the "first moment". These feelings may push some deportees to react violently at the airport with the security authorities, which maintain the same security view of the deportees, seen as potential criminals and perverts. They return without any legal or psychological aid and without a civil society presence. The Tunisian authorities, despite the democratic trend, have largely obscured the number of deportees to the extent that they do not know their exact numbers.



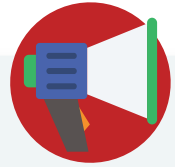
It was painful, I felt all my dreams were destroyed...I left my dreams in Italy... my job, my girlfriend, the money... It was like a dream

Aymen, 30, Kelibia



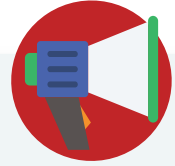
That was the moment of departure... I was deported with two other immigrants and I was sitting next to the window... during the trip, I felt weird... 36 hours or more on the boat... 7 months in Italy and France... All I did has been destroyed in a moment.

Wael, Sfax



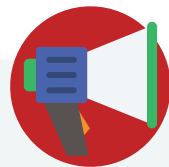
I felt the opposite feeling... It's controversial... when I was on the boat I prayed to survive...now on the plane I wished to die... I hope today... there is still no hope... you get fed up from everything...after all the suffering and the hopes of your parents... you find yourself on the plane returning to Tunisia... at that moment, everyone hopes that the plane would crash ... everyone was praying for the same thing...after the desire to survive you wish to die

3. Security measures in Tunisia: Arrival to the borders



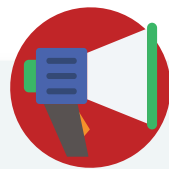
We were deported from Palermo at 10... and arrived to Enfidha Airport at 11... Police officers were waiting for us... we went through the hall... once we arrived one of them told us "we want you to collaborate with us. Those who are wanted must tell us... we will ask you a few questions... that is all... then you will be released... that was first... then he started saying bad words... he wanted to show us that they may behave in a good manner as they may use force... they started calling us one by one... they investigated us... do you pray?... do you drink alcohol?... they wanted to know if we are terrorists... the investigation lasts 15 minutes... we finished at night... at midnight... they brought us two buses one to Sousse and to Tunis... there was another one to Redeyef... at midnight, I found myself in Tunis

Hichem; 27, Redeyef



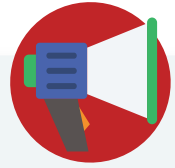
I was not disturbed... everything was normal... I remember that they talked to me a little... the only problem I faced was that I didn't find a mean to return home... my father is deceased and mother and sister live alone at home... I waited for my friend to take me home

Housseem, 27, Tunis



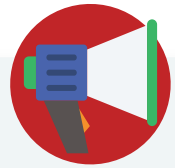
They did not beat us... but they yelled at us and told us that the one who will give us a wrong name or identity will be punished... they understood our feelings and told us that they themselves want to illegally immigrate if they find the opportunity... even police officers do not want to live in Tunisia

Mnawer, 26, Redeyef



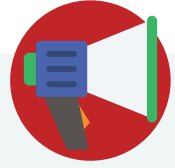
As expected from the Tunisian Police... bad word, disdain, orders; come here, go there... after half an hour they started asking us: from where and how did you migrate?... how did you get the money...who was the middleman... then we were released and returned home

Yassine, 25, Tunis



We arrived to Enfidha airport from Italy...but I did not queue... police officers took me downstairs... they checked my passport... they were mocking me and were not aware of my state...they took me with another immigrant to the police station at the airport... they asked about my name and surname... I told them you have my file you can check...I gave him my name and surname... I was not wanted for any crimes...I stayed there for 6 or 7 hours... they worked actually for an hour... they didn't beat me but they behaved in a provocative manner... they asked me why did you want to immigrate illegally? I told them that if you were not working you would think of immigrating... I arrived at 3 PM... I left the airport at 6 PM and I had no money to return back home

Mohamed, Sfax



We arrived to the airport... we found Tunisian police... they confiscated our mobile phone... they insulted us... they told us that we are not worth Europe... as if we were residing in Italy and illegally immigrated to Tunisia, as if Tunisia was not our country of origin... we left the airport at 9 PM... we were left downstairs... they quickly checked our passport...we crossed the airport and were taken to the police station of Enfidha airport... they left us in a corner... one of the police officers started hitting the wall as a way to threaten us... we were like slaves...we told them we want our mobile phones, they refused... they did not give us the mobile phone that the Italian police gave us

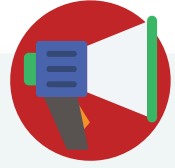
4. Feelings of failure

After investigation and leaving the airport begins another life. The interviewees call it a “rebirth”. It was a tough experience for deportees. Psychological and social repercussions that may lead some of them to suicide and self-immolation, especially for those who have spent a long time in Europe. Their acceptance of the old-new reality is difficult. They perceive deportation as a violent personal event that led to a break with reality and a burial and failure of their projects and personal dreams. Immigrants live their first days in a state of self-denial. Some of them refuse to leave the house and others live in a state of psychological tension, feeling constantly pressured while others try to accept reality and seek attempts for social integration. However, the common aspect among them is that there is no local reception policy for the deportees and there is no psychological and social follow-up after their deportation. Forced displacement increases the psychological and economic vulnerability of the deportees. Many of them refuse to work at low wages and start comparing their life with the European style. Others find themselves stigmatized by their social environment (family and friends). All of these factors push them to start rethinking about immigrating again. Our interviews have expressed their desire to return if they have the opportunity and have enough money. In fact, some of them have experienced illegal immigration more than three times as a challenge. This perception is due to the fact that they consider immigration as a solution to their personal problems (unemployment and living on the global periphery of work and consumption). Families of the interviewees were also involved in such process, which makes illegal immigration a family investment, especially with the decline of the purchasing power of the middle classes, and the inability of the labor market to receive more employees. Those who dropped-out of school do not have enough institutions to absorb them.

4. Assessment of deportation experience:

Most interviewees perceive immigration as a failure experience and a burial for their personal dreams and hopes. On the other hand, they consider it as a rich one that became part of their personal life and gave them an experience they might use if they rethink about immigrating. It also gives them the legitimacy to talk about it to others namely as they were people without experience





I failed a whole stage of my life... It was a turning point... I planned all my future life there...the house and job were ready (silence) everything changed... I planned my life for five years in advance and lost everything...My friend was waiting for me there...my cousin used to live in an apartment...he moved to a bigger apartment when I told him that I will migrate... (silence)... I even had a girlfriend there... everything was planned...My girlfriend is in Belgium.. I had everything... I can't forecast the future but I think that everything would have gone in the right way...- suddenly, I lost everything... now I can't rethink about illegal immigration again as I don't have money... I'm rethinking about immigrating but not in the same way... with the experience I had and the new vision, my second experience will be better... now I understand many things... now I'm not thinking about my future... I think only about my daily coffee and packet of cigarettes... I can't think about the future when I am unemployed.... I don't plan for a month or two months in advance here... I think only about next hour.

Hichem, 27, Redeyef

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

Although governments and European Union policies regarding illegal immigration succeeded in reducing the number of illegal immigrants, they proved unable to limit the flows of immigrants to Europe because the two main reasons for immigration from the southern Mediterranean to the north are still influencing. The first reason is the selective policy adopted to limit the number of immigrants and the second reason is the economic conditions, the escalation of conflicts experienced by the countries of the South. In Tunisia, the crisis of democratic transition and the disappointment of youth regarding the new political reality of a country left without an economic horizon pushed Tunisians to look for solutions to their personal problems (problems of political nature as well) in illegal immigration to express their dissatisfaction with the economic and political reality. In this respect, after the revolution, the "networks of illegal immigration" flourished in Tunisia in a way that became part of the informal economy. Only some security measures were left as a formal way to fight illegal immigration. On the contrary, Tunisian authorities tend to renounce their social obligations, as part of the implementation of neoliberal-oriented IMF policies, which, among its social entanglements, have forced the survival of fragile labor for vulnerable groups. Thus, illegal immigration does not appear to be the first option for youth groups but rather a result of economic and political context. In contrast, it reflects the desire to participate in a globalized world through mobility. The youth groups in Tunisia are part of the "youth of the world" and tempted by the idea to move smoothly and without limits. Most of the interviewees are young people facing unemployment, professional fragility and lack of positive representation for the future added to marginalization in the political, civil and official scenes. In addition to the feeling of inequality and injustice and the constant desire to change their reality, the desire to illegally immigrate is of daily existence among friends and groups of friends who share experiences. The decision of illegal immigration is taken outside the institutions. The added issue is the involvement of the family in such decision, which is related to school failure, as a social barrier, the collapse of the middle class and the beginning of the state's disengagement from its social obligations.

As for illegal immigration and forced deportation experience, it is perceived among immigrants as a complex process subject to multiple stages and ends with the arrival of Italy, specifically in the island of Lampedusa. It is an experience



of borders crossing (geographical and symbolic) that begins with the ability to escape security control in Tunisia and then crossing the territorial sea. The boundaries of the "reception society" begin where reception centers that represent the physical boundaries, as well as the limitations and constraints of living without official identity papers. Thus, the success of the illegal immigration means the ability to transcend all physical and symbolic boundaries. Immigration appears as an exclusionary policy envisaged by the European Union and the authorities in a way that enhances the notion of the borders as a selective tool for immigrants. Deportation by the Italian authorities represents a mechanism for migratory flows and appears to be imposed on the departure countries that receive the deportees. Tunisian authorities seem to be actively engaged in the deportation as it does not reject the deportation procedures, which appear to be in most of the cases illegal. In return, the Tunisian authorities are not engaged in any reception policy as no follow-up of the social aspects of the deportees who live after the deportation process in difficult psychological situations and its role is limited to purely security procedures.

Based on the foregoing, we can draw the following recommendations:

1. Work on developing a statistical data list for deportees from Italy and Europe.
2. Put pressure for the involvement of civil society and the media in the process of receiving deportees, whether through air or sea ports.
3. Forge a collaboration between the Italian civil society and the Tunisian civil society for the purpose of monitoring the policies of deportation and the reduction of forced deportation.
4. Legal advocacy of illegal immigrants
5. Conducting a quantitative and in-depth study on forced deportees from Europe to Tunisia.
6. Review immigration laws and agreements between Tunisia and the European Union



