

Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights

IN SEARCH OF DIGNITY



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Thwarting social protests and the Project of irregular immigration: A sociological study about the causal link between social protests and irregular immigration

Tabbabi Khaled

Introduction

All the reports of scientific research centers, international organizations, human rights associations and press articles spoke about the tragedies happening in the Mediterranean since the nineties. Thousands of people tried to cross the Mediterranean irregularly but the journey was dramatic, ending with the sinking of an infinite number of boats and the drowning of many, many people. The dangerousness of the adventure, didn't keep Tunisian Youth from embarking in a deadly journey, fleeing from poverty, marginalization and exclusion and seeking their dream even after the passing of more than 8years in a flustered transitional process. It should be mentioned that many experts and human rights activists insisted on the necessity of reviewing governmental policies, but sadly, the government kept following the same choices causing increased economic downturn and recession. These impacts could be clearly seen through some technical indicators such as; the deepening of unemployment crisis, the deterioration of the Tunisian currency, the high cost of living,

the precariousness of basic public utilities and infrastructure in the whole country in general and in the interior regions in particular. All of this deepened class and regional disparities even further, and all of these factors (even if they were cited generally and concisely) were a direct cause of the outburst and growth of social protests especially, after the revolution of January 14th 2011, claiming the creation of new prospects and perspectives for employment, freedom, democracy and regional development. These realities combined with the context of the economic, social, and political crisis led to refraction and desperation and nurtured, as a result, the flow of irregular immigration especially among the youth.

When trying to explain the immigration phenomenon, we cannot overlook the causal factors related to the economic and social situation; neither can we ignore the cultural and political factors.

This article aims to find new factors, and to determine the causal link between social protests and irregular immigration. We noticed that the government always tends to break the increasing wave of protests by making promises without keeping them, or by ignoring the claims of the protesters, or criminalizing the activists. The thwarting of social protests always ends with an increase of the irregular immigration flow.

Thus, this article aims to explain the irregular immigration phenomenon through connecting it to the protests' dynamics.

First Chapter: Conceptual and Methodological Framework

PROBLEMATIC

Youth from all categories always seek to achieve higher social status. Unfortunately, in Tunisian society this status was far from reach before the revolution of January 14, 2011. For this reason, the majority of the categories, and especially the youth, chose to accompany the opposing political parties and syndical and human rights movements in their protest against the ruling model. The 2011 revolution was a continuation of previous movements, such as the mineral basin revolution in 2008, and it aimed to achieve sustainable development, social justice and democracy. However, the slogans defended by Tunisian youth since December 2010 and in which he believed in January 14th 2011, and kept fighting for, for years after the revolution failed to be achieved under the rule of the successive governments until today. Feeling despaired; the Tunisian youth chose another road to achieve the higher social status they desired, fleeing poverty, exclusion and marginalization and psychological and social fragility. They chose to embark in a deadly adventure, crossing the Mediterranean towards their dream. Based on the foregoing, we can present the central problematic of this article as follows:

To what extent can we consider that the scuttled social movements, especially after 2011 and in the mineral basin, Tataouine, Sidi Bouzid, Kebili, Kasserine and the island of Kerkennah, and the feeling of despair they left among the activists, a major factor for the youth involvement in irregular immigration projects and for renewing its flows?

HYPOTHESES:

Based on the above-mentioned problematic and the questions raised about it, and following the sociologist bases of a research which calls us to establish one or many hypothesis to test the key ideas and the fundamental questions, we established a work hypothesis stating:

The economic, security, political and social crisis that hit the Tunisian society exactly after 2011, the growth and increase of social protests, and the high feeling of frustration and disappointment combined together, pushed the youth to flee the country. Whenever social protests failed to achieve their goals the waves of irregular migration increase and the local network that organizes them expand to regions that didn't know such a phenomenon before.

THE QUALITATIVE METHOD:

In this article we followed a method based on studying the situation of some young activists who participated in social protests in Sidi Bouzid, Kebili, Tataouine, Redayef, Kasserine and Kerkennah after the revolution, and whose slogans and

claims haven't been achieved, so they chose to immigrate irregularly.

Studying only one case in each region can't allow us to deduct exact scientific results unless we follow a qualitative method. Analytical introspection abstracts essential features by studying only one case than standardizes them. Numerical introspection abstracts through standardizing whereas analytical introspection standardizes through abstraction. The French sociologist Raymond Boudon explains the analytical introspection when studying a case as follows: "There are specific situations when it is necessary to use qualitative methods for budgetary reasons and rapid completion of the research. For example, the research of Mirra Komarovski about the impact of unemployment on the status of the head of household within its family included a sample of a few number of cases. Yet, the researcher provided satisfactory explanations. This example can show that precise and deep inspection can compensate (to some extent) the tightness of the scope. The example also demonstrates that analyzing the cases is governed by the same principles that apply to quantitative studies."¹

¹ Ibrahim (Abdallah) « scientific research in social sciences”, Arabic cultural center, Morocco, Casablanca 2008 p221

RESEARCH TECHNIQUE: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

In our field research, we opted for the semi – structured interview technique, in order to establish a comprehensive conversation that would allow us to understand how did they experience the details of social movements and immigration? What are the circumstances surrounding protests and decision? Why and how did they feel disappointed and despaired? What did they think after feeling despaired and other comprehensive questions... In this technique the researcher guides the interview, and in the same time, he is free to choose the manner of asking the question as long as the subject remains defined. He also can ask further questions if the interviewee is saying something important or if he didn't really get what was meant. This technique allows collecting more specific information, grants freedom to the researcher on one hand and gives an opportunity to discuss matters that weren't pre-planned on the other hand². Therefore, the interview gives us more space to understand the circumstances of social movements, decision making process, the migration journey and the factors of exclusion and attraction.

² Debret Justine « the different types of interviews' » www.scribbr.fr, 08/06/2019, 16 :27 h

RESEARCH SAMPLE:

We are trying in this article to study cases. We chose the research sample according to the needs of the subject: Young people who were engaged in social movements that were later thwarted, and who felt despaired so they chose to immigrate irregularly. The sample is distributed as follows:

One person from each region: (Sidi Bouzid, Kebili, Jemna, Tataouine, Gafsa, Redayef, Kasserine, MajelBelabbes, Sfax and the island of Kerkennah), aged between 20 and 45, male, and from different education levels (from basic education to university graduates). Their experiences are also different whether regarding social movements or the crossing route. Some chose to cross the Mediterranean, other tries to immigrate across land borders (Moroccan Spanish borders). Some succeeded to arrive to the other shore, some were intercepted and others were deported. This diversity and difference enriches the results of the research. We are going to introduce every interviewee on the margins of the article.

MIGRATION THEORIES: THE SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES

In this part we are going to explain why we chose to analyze following a sociological theories. In general, **the economic approach** explained the phenomenon of immigration by presenting four major theories: the neoclassic theory (called also the renewed classic economy), the new economy of

immigration theory, the dual labor market theory and the world systems theory³. These theories explained the phenomenon of immigration but the explanation was limited because it didn't concentrate on the factors of exclusion and those of attraction. They only provide a classic analysis without really analyzing the role of social structures, social capital and the context of social movement with relation to decision making. Even if they mentioned these aspects, they didn't really focus on them in the content of the analysis.

Political and systemic theories didn't focus on this aspect either. Since the beginning of the 20th century, most of the immigration policies are considered immutable and once uttered cannot be changed: Immigration is a privilege and not a right. Immigration policies are based on the economic needs of some countries. Thus, they are oriented to the job market. Immigration policies are also based on the principle of national sovereignty⁴. Many other theories were also drafted to explain the international immigration phenomenon. These theories reflected the complexity of the matter on one hand, and the necessity of its integration on the other. Thus, the systemic theory relies on establishing a concept for the immigration system, such as a group of countries related to each other through migratory exchanges and which dynamics are created mainly through the work of different networks that unites the

³ Mabrouk (Mehdi), Sails and salt, culture, households and the organization of clandestine migration in Tunisia, Sahar edition, 2nd edition, Tunis 2012 p19 - 20

⁴Piché (Victor), *Migration Theories*, Ined Editions, Paris 2013, P 44

major actors of the field of immigration by different levels of networking and by using a group of micro and macro variables⁵.

This method also studies immigration movements following the system of the different flows between the source and the origin: the flows of immigrants but also the flows of ideas, services and merchandise⁶. Since immigration creates a **unified space** between the origin and the destination regions, we should take the system, or the systemic method into consideration in order to understand migration, its causes and the obstacles it confronts. The main constraints for which we didn't use a systemic method are the shortage of complete and comparative data and the lack of information about international immigration in some countries. It should be mentioned that political and systemic approaches didn't speak about many aspects, especially with relation to the social depth, whereas the **sociological approaches** always tend to dig deeper in the explanation of the phenomenon. It considers the different factors (economic, social, cultural, and political) and enriches conclusions by publicizing exclusion and attraction factors, circumstances of the decision, family position and analyzing the migration networks. It also tries to understand the importance of the role played by the social scene and environment in the decision making process. This approach also analyses information relying on social psychology approaches such as motivation approach and the approach of expectations

⁵ Mabrouk (Mehdi), sails and salt... opcit, p30-31

⁶ Piché, (Victor), « Contemporary migration theories through the prism of foundation texts », Population Vol68, n1, 2013, pp153-178 p14

and values⁷. The sociological method is unique, because it tries to depict the migratory project⁸.

Chapter Two: Social Movements and irregular migration flows

1. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF SOCIAL PROTESTS ACCORDING TO THE GEOGRAPHIC ORIGINS OF THE INTERVIEWEE

It is useful and epistemological to start with a general description of the protest movements in all the regions mentioned above, in order to depict protests and to conclude that when these movements were blocked and felt depressed, they fed the flow of irregular immigration. In general, protest movements escalated due to the “failure of the prevalent development modal, which was implemented in the context of the structural reform in 1986, with compliance to the dictates and recommendations of world financial institutions and specifically the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank which are responsible for disseminating the neoliberal choices designed in the Washington Convention⁹.”

⁷ Piguet (Etienne) « Migration theories, synthesis of individual decision making” European review of international migration, Vol 29 – n3, 2013 pp 141-161 p148

⁸ Mabrouk (Mehdi), Sails and Salt ...opcit p27

⁹ Bedoui (Abdeljelil) « Economic and social problems and challenges during the democratic transition process in Tunisia – For an alternative development” / “Tunisia: the troublesome democratic transition” Cairo center for human rights studies – reform cases series 36, 2017 pp 61 – 103 p 62

Thus, the fragile social policies were a major cause of the escalation of protest movements. In its contemporary history, Tunisia experienced the longest revolution in 2008 in the mineral basin. “The question that was raised in all the media was if the mineral basin events would be the beginning of a priority changing process and the sliding of Tunisia in a dangerous path because of the impacts of the international economic crisis and the continuing increase of prices (foodstuff and hydrocarbons) and the repercussions of the structural reform on the social security of a vast category of Tunisians¹⁰.

Essentially, the raised claims were economic and social, but they faced police repression and many people were injured, many people died. The number of prisoners increased, and the region was besieged by security forces, media and politicians. All of this didn’t extinguish the flame of protest: the activists of the mineral basin joined the revolution of January 14th, 2011 and the social protest movements escalated again. **Khalil¹¹ told us:” I participated in protest movements from 2008 until today (2019). The majority of protests have three main demands: Development, Employment and condemning the frequent disruption of water supply... I participate as a political activist and as an unemployed citizen on the same time...”** We can conclude from this testimony that the social

¹⁰ Tabbabi (Hfayedh) The Mineral Basin Revolution in Gafsa (2008) Tunisian Books House 2012 p07

¹¹ An interview carried out in June 09th 2019, at 11o'clock with Khalil: a young citizen from Redayef, aged 27, a social movement and political activist, has a secondary education and a vocational training certificate. He tried to migrate irregularly once in January 2019 through the Moroccan Spanish borders but he was intercepted.

claims raised in 2008 are still on hold, and the youth of the region is still fighting for this claims until now, accompanied by opposition political parties and syndical and human rights organizations.

The Mineral basin revolution was the seed that brought protest movements to what they became. Social Movements were at their peak in Feriana, Sekhira, Bengerdane and finally in Sidi Bouzid in December 17th 2010, when the movements prevailed over the whole republic which resulted in civilians casualties, but also in the end of a totalitarian regime that ruled the country for 23 years. The system that couldn't respond to the economic and social needs of the population was displaced, but protests persisted after January 14th, 2011 and continued to grow stronger until today (2019). Claims were essentially related to development. During the last years for example, the teachers of the black forest school in Regueb protested in 2015 against the sanitary situation. Protests increased after the death of a student. Demonstrations related to the sanitary situation also reached the region of Saida following the death of a student after contracting hepatitis. Citizens of Ouled Boudlala also protested to demand the enhancement of regional roads' infrastructure whereas the protests in Ouled Zid in Bir Lahfay delegation demanded to start the works of the irrigated area. Peasants in Sidi Bouzid protested against the smuggling of sheeps from Libya and against the poor quality of fodder that led to the death of an important number of

sheeps¹². The suicide attempt of the young man “Ridha Yahyaoui” in Kasserine in 2016 led to a series of protests that covered all the delegations of the governorate and kept growing to reach all the regions of the country. These movements mostly demanded employment and the improvement of the economic situation. Thus, employment became the main claim of all social movements in the area.

The beginning of the year 2017 was marked by the increasing number of social movements in the delegations of Manzel Bouzayen, Souk Jedid, Mezouna and Bir Lahfay to claim development, employment, the enhancement of infrastructure and providing irrigation and drinking water...”. The situation in Tataouine governorate was really heating up since April 2017. The pace of protests escalated and the levels of anger and friction reached the peak. Protesters blocked the main roads of the city and all the routes leading to the petroleum production fields. Citizens marched to the Kamour region in response to the government’s silence and disregard of their demands, and they blocked the roads to the gas fields...

This protest movement was the most important one that took place during that period, and it mounted again at the end of May of the same year when the employment minister visited protesters. The activists tried to block the roads again but they were repressed by the police forces. The police used excessive

¹² Sahbani (Abdessattar) and a team of work “Social protests in Tunisia in 2015”, The Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights, the Tunisian Social Observatory 2015 pp 220-221

force including tear gas and truncheons, and confrontations resulted in the death of one of the protesters after being hit by a police car. Tension and anger grew stronger, but the General Tunisian Union for Labor mediated to solve the problem by signing an agreement that was accepted regionally in June 2017¹³.

However, the agreement didn't stop protests in the region. They are persisting until today, claiming employment, health and social justice.

In general, it could be said that the feeling of injustice and exclusion is the main motive of the rise and growth of social movements. **Walid**¹⁴ tried to explain this feeling when he talked about his experience as one of the activists of the Kamour movement: **“A young Tunisian citizen, when I was told that our petroleum is being exported to France, while I’m suffering from unemployment and from being marginalized by the state, while I visit the governorate’s headquarter regularly and they always answer me that there are no jobs for us ... I decided to protest....”**. **Ahmed**¹⁵, from Sidi Bouzid also told us:

¹³Sahbani (Abdessattar) and a team of work “Social protests in Tunisia in 2016 and 2017”, The Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights, the Tunisian Social Observatory 2017 pp336, 349, 383, 384.

¹⁴ An interview carried out on June 1st 2019 at 22:13 with Walid, a young man from Tatouine aged 27, and one of the activists and founder of the Kamour movement, university graduate, tried to irregularly immigrate by crossing the Mediterranean in October 14th 2017 but was later deported.

¹⁵ An interview carried out in June 6th 2019 with Ahmed, a young man from Sidi Bouzid, aged 25, participated in the protests in the region, a university graduate, immigrated irregularly by crossing land borders from Morocco to Spain and lives now in Madrid

“We are always seen as unequal citizens, people from interior regions are considered as second class citizens, and that’s why, even when we tried to rebel they are always trying to distort and to erase the revolution”. Samir¹⁶ from Kasserine, Majel Belabbes delegation said: “I want to live my life... I’m 24 years old now and I never felt alive even for one day.” This feeling of **contempt** generates an internal fight for **recognition**. When an individual feels that he has no value in social institutions, it’s is not only about him, but it’s the same feeling experienced by a vast group of population who are suffering the same situation. That’s how the fight between the groups that are seeking social privileges and political systems that are incapable of enforcing human rights is generated. The governorate of Kebili also knew the rise of social movements claiming development, employment and social justice, and it also hosted a radiant movement that was highly supported by the civil society activists and human rights’ organizations. We are talking about the movement of Jemna. “It is a fight between some strong private employers, supported by the state’s laws and authority and some citizens who felt that they are more entitled for exploiting the land of their ancestors. In January 14, 2011, and in the middle of the revolution, tens of Jemna citizens went to the “Land of Steel” to get it back, and since then, the region’s inhabitants fought for their right to regain the land until they did, and started to exploit it voluntarily

¹⁶ An interview carried out in June 11, 2019 at 21:42 with Samir, a young man from Majel Belabbes in Kasserine, aged 24, participated in the movements of precarious workers, primary education, tried to immigrate by crossing Moroccan Spanish land borders but was intercepted

under the supervision of the “association for the oasis of Jemna”¹⁷.

The experience was successful to a certain extent, in spite of the legal, administrative and financial obstacles, but protests kept going on until September 2016. The workers of the Land Steel, civil society activists and some Jemna citizens protested when the ministry of the state’s properties annulled the permit of the association to manage the land. The experience of nationalizing land didn’t solve the region’s crisis which is still suffering from poverty and exclusion, and protests rose again. For example, “the citizens of the area stood in protest in front of the governorate headquarter in April 2017 to demand development and employment. The month of May was also marked by an increasing pace of protests in conjunction with the Kamour movement¹⁸” to designate employment and development as the main slogan of social movements in Kebili. During the following years of the revolution, the island of Kerkennah also knew a strong wave of protests, from which the Petrofac company crisis in April 2016, which escalated to confrontations between protesters and security forces, and then to the declaration of a general strike. The repercussions of the crisis reached Sfax city, where citizens also protested in solidarity with Kerkennah activists against the violent police

¹⁷ Ben Khalifa (Ghassen) « the Land Steel of Jemna: public interest before private profit” 19/06/2019 « nawaat.org » 17:18h

¹⁸Sahbani (Abdessattar) and a team of work “Social protests in Tunisia in 2016 and 2017”, The Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights, the Tunisian Social Observatory 2017 pp 412-413

intervention¹⁹. Employment and development were among the demands raised by the people of Kerkennah, but their movements were marked by **the fight for environmental rights**. Environmental movements are a significant part of the social protests in the region. **The sailor Amor²⁰** talked to us how the environmental pollution and catastrophe caused by the **Thyna Company for Petroleum Services** forced him to go out to the streets to stand up for his living and for the future of the island. He said:” **I’m defending my children’s food, fishes are dying, and pollution is destroying everything. Even when the environment protection agency and the state demanded compensation, when the company paid 50 thousand dinars because it polluted the sea, this money can’t help the people. We want to protect our fishery resources and our children’s future....”**

The environmental crime is destroying fishery resources, and that left the citizens of the island with a feeling of persistent anxiety and fear for their future and their living. That’s how environmental movements became the major force that made the difference between the protests in Kerkennah and other regions, to a certain extent. Pollution and especially how to deal with pollution is a detail that allows many categories of the island’s citizens to guarantee their economic and social rights

¹⁹ N.m Dito p 307

²⁰ Interview carried out in June 14, 2019 at 21 :44 with Amor the sailor, from Kerkennah, aged 41, an activist and influencer in the environmental movements of the region, primary education, tried to migrate irregularly across he Mediterranean in June 2018 but was deported.

since this category is living from the bounties of the sea, and if they are destroyed they will be destroyed too.

In general it could be said that employment, development, social justice, reducing pollution and controlling frequent water interruption, and promoting health and education sectors are the major claims of all interior regions and the island of Kerkennah.

2. SOCIAL PROTEST : A CHALLENGE AND AN ORGANIZATION TO FIND THE PATH FOR TRANSFORMATION

Despite the fact that each one of the interviewees is different in terms of age or geographic origins or academic achievements, the most striking element is that they all originate from modest families composed of high number of members and with a low – income. Most often, the father is the only one who works to provide for the family, or his children are engaged in precarious works to help him. For example, **Ahmed** told us: **“My father is retired. He gets 300 dinars monthly and he has 11 children”**. **Ramy**²¹ said: **“Actually, our family is composed of two families. My uncle died and my father had to provide for the two families”**. **Samir** was obliged to drop out of school because his family couldn’t afford to buy him school supplies. He said: **“There was only one shoe that I must share with brother, so I let him wear it and go to school because he had better**

²¹ Interview carried out in June 06th 2019 at 14 :00 with Ramy, aged 29 from Kebili – Jemna, participated in the movement of Jemna, primary education, irregularly immigrated by crossing the Mediterranean in October 2017 but was deported

grades... and I had to quit.” Khalil said: “we are a humble family, our father is dead and we are still spending from his salary of 600 dinars. We are 8 members and all of us are unemployed. Only one of us got a job lately in the environment company, after he got married.” Amor, the sailor explains:” we have no stable income, what we earn differs from one day to another.” Walid also said: “My brother lives in France, he is an undocumented immigrant, he immigrated irregularly, my other brother was deported and I was deported too, and my father is paid half of his salary now because he applied for early retirement.” The common thread among all interviewees is the difficult social situation of their families. This economic downturn generates a feeling of contempt, as explained by **Axel Honneth**, and is the predominant motive that is driving these people, in order to **obtain recognition** from the other. The other in this situation is nothing but the regions, which are employing material and symbolic violence on them, by robbing them of their economic rights and marginalizing them in social institutions. This condition drives them to join social movements that aim for rehabilitation, whether as individuals by providing employment, preserving their dignity and their physical integrity, or as regions by fighting for an equal distribution of resources, ensuring the rights to development and healthy environment. **Charles Tilly** also considers that these social movements that destitute different social groups sharing the same feeling of injustice and oppression; translate the tension into a common action that aims to establish a new order of life.

In this respect, he explains that: "Social movements, as the name suggests, are comprehensive regulations, composed from different groups with various interests that include pillar categories of the community, such as women, workers and university students. The common thread uniting all these various social categories that are defending different interests is their common feeling of injustice."²²

These marginalized categories chose to engage in a protest course, to express their anger on one hand and to claim their rights to employment and development on the other hand and they found themselves fighting among other groups suffering the same tragedy and having the same dream. Then, the mobilization process starts through communication techniques, diversifying the forms of protests and organization and the political and syndical support. **Khalil** told us: **"the Tunisian General Labor Union, especially the local union in Redayef and some opposition political parties (especially left wing parties) are the most prominent supporter. They helped us in different ways"**. He also explained that their support has a militant dimension, and said: **"they are patriotic, and they care, I didn't notice any political agenda in their support"**. And he added, with relation to mobilization and organization of social protests: **"we organize meetings and negotiations and we determine the approach and the form of the protest. Our meetings take places in the labor union headquarter or in one of the political parties' offices and we negotiate with**

²² Charles Tilly, « social movements », translation Rabii Wahba, Haigher Council for Culture, Cairo 2005, p33

everybody not only with political parties...". Ahmed spoke to us about his experience as an activist in social movements in Sidi Bouzid, and about the techniques of organization and mobilization: "political parties support us only when elections approach. But we only follow our own path, we are all conscious and we know our rights and our responsibilities. Even if we use an underdeveloped method, throwing stones or blocking roads, burning wheels or protesting at nighttime, it is only because snitching is still widespread, like it was under the past regime". The Kamour movement was created through coordination and organization between the different protesting groups, and they started at first by presenting the movement. **Walid** spoke about the movement saying: **"we started the sit – in slowly, beginning with placing only two tents in the people square, in the city center. We wanted to demonstrate that the movement is not about tents, we wanted to say that all the city of Tataouine is angry, and then the number of tents multiplied... we created the coordination of El – Kamour sit –in, according to the tents (the tent of Ennoor Neighborhood, Mahrajan Neighborhood, people square etc...).** The leader of each coordination assists to the meeting and we coordinate together. **When we decide to block a road, we block it. Everyone suggests an idea and then we vote, we distribute tasks and we appoint someone to manage communication, another to speak to the media and so on...".** The movement of Jemna started just after the revolution, and **Ramy** spoke to us about it: **"We burned the police office at the beginning of the revolution, and we**

headed to the Steel land, we were very angry. We established a committee and its members were mostly politicians. They were always at the front, they decide and we apply, but when we are not convinced of something we don't do it. We had an understanding, we listen to each other and then we got the support of important politicians."About the circumstances of the movement and about the love of the oasis **Ramy** told us: **"we organized it – ins, we placed tents, we blocked the roads, we spent the nights awake guarding the oasis, we irrigated palm trees to keep them alive because the movement took almost two years to reach an understanding, we volunteered to work our land, we organized cultural activities during the protest..."**. The environmental movement in the island of Kerkennah wasn't only limited on defending their living, considering that pollution is threatening fishery resources, but it was also patriotic and guided by the ecological motive. **Amor** said in this respect: **"Kerkennah citizens love their city, we want to live in a safe environment, we want our sea to remain clear, and that's our right. Pollution is not threatening Kerkennah alone, we are exporting fish from Kerkennah, Safx, Tunis and our fish is crossing the national borders. It's an international matter, it a national interest and all of our country is losing."** The awakening of the citizens of Kerkennah and their awareness of the impacts of the environmental catastrophe on their living in particular and on the national interest in general, led them to engage in an environmental social movement in order to put an end to pollution and to protect the sea resources. It should be mentioned that the

marginalized categories and the victims of environmental pollution participate in social protests in order to find a path that leads towards positive change. This pace and this solidarity between social movements can be described as an internal change, and we should remind of the fact that every change begins at an internal level and not externally. When an individual or a group feels, threatened, impoverished or deprived, he starts thinking of alternatives to reach a state of comfort and stability. The protest organization is led by a rational strategy, and in this respect, **Michel Crozier and Friedberg** said that: “the pace is a concrete technique used by individuals to structure power relations, and to organize them while preserving their freedom.”²³ **Crozier and Friedberg** both denied any interference or external pressure in any organization. Pressures only affect the organizations and lead to their failure. The process of management and change is only directed by activists within the organization or the network and never from the outside. The strategic school shows that the activist builds his strategy without regard to the constraints of the structure. The need for change is an internal need: when the poor categories felt deprived, they spontaneously engaged in groups and organizations of people who have the same feeling and who live the same tragedy in order to find an alternative.

Almost all the interviewees were unanimous in acknowledging the major role played by the social networks in raising

²³ Crozier (Michel), (Friedberg), *the actor and the system, collective action's constraints*, Seuil Editions, Paris 1997 pp 97 - 98

awareness and mobilization. In this context, **Ahmed** said: **“Facebook is the alternative media, it’s the revolutionary media”**, and we understand from this declaration that they don’t trust media institutions. **Amor** confirmed this conclusion when he said: **“Television is censored; they reported a small part of the truth and didn’t transmit the necessary information.”** We can further explain the role of social networks today according to **Darin Barenly**²⁴ who presents them as a website that provides different services for the users, such as Facebook and Myspace and Google. These websites made a significant difference in how to communicate and interact between people and communities and in the exchange of information.

Based on the foregoing, we can say that the social categories with low income, impoverished materially and economically, engaged and organized community circles in order to claim their right to dignity, decent living and social justice, in search for a dignified social status.

They invested all their resources to mobilize and this explains that: **“Protest and social movement are nothing but a policy by other means. The groups poor in resources or weak in position, use them to gain the power and the ability to influence political decisions and to enroll in a political process**

²⁴ Darin Barenly, the network community, translated by Jamaaoui Anouar, The Arab Center for Research and Policies’ studies – Beirut 2015

by invading the streets, or sometimes, by participating in collective violence²⁵ .”

3. WHEN THE ARSENAL OF PROTEST BUMP INTO DESPAIR AND FRUSTRATION:

It can be said the concept of **relative frustration** is inspired from knowledge and theoretical frameworks, since this concept analyses a range of social and community cases and phenomenon. The first framework of the relative frustration has a psychological nature and dimension, while the second conceptual framework is that of democracy: when democracy takes into consideration social comparison, and becomes supportive of the legitimate equity of class communities, and equality is replaced then by democracy. Lastly, the theories of collective action and social movements assigned a central role to the concept of relative frustration, which on based on two major axes: the first axe is about **structural tensions**. It is when an individual commits to achieve his dream and reach personal success, but he is socially unequal, which means that other people are more likely to succeed because of the social disparities. This generates relative frustration. The second axe is about social change especially in the context of the economic crisis that is causing frustration because of the interval between ambitions and satisfaction. Relative frustration occurs when the gap widens between ambitions and the possibility of their

²⁵ Johnston (Hank) « countries and social movements” translated by Ahmad Zayed, National Center for Translation, Cairo 2018, p51

achievement²⁶. Accordingly, we can say that failing to achieve social equality, in the context of the social and economic crisis creates a feeling of despair, but the marginalized youth chose to protest in order to provide their legitimate needs, according to the interviewees. When the marginalized categories engaged in protest organizations or social movements they were blocked by unfulfilled promises, or by repression, criminalization and arrests, or by governmental solutions that don't correspond to their expectations. **Khalil said: "Security and judicial treatment are not the same compared to the pre – revolution period. Before, security forces raid the homes of protestors, now; whoever organizes a sit in is called in by the police for questioning. There are protestors who discover that they are wanted by the police when they are about to travel, there are protestors were imprisoned for almost a year...".** When asked about the government's responsiveness to their demands, he answered: **"Too many protests and sit in(s) were organized but they always overlook them"**. He added with regards to the governments solutions: **"Environmental companies aggravated the crisis; they are not productive at all. The state manipulated social demands"**. **Ramy** told us that when environmental firms opened their doors, the benefits of the Steel Land of Jemna increased remarkably. Opening a youth center and improving the local market of the region also improved the situation but the problem of unemployment remained unresolved. He said: **"The problem is that they don't**

²⁶ Dubet (François), « Relative frustration and the individualization of inequalities », OFCE review, n150, p11 p26 2017 p3, 4, 5.

accept that two members of the same family work in the company, so I let my brother work in the Steel Company.”

Walid, one of the founders of the Kamour Movement faced the same problem, and he didn’t get a job. With relation to the social protests of the precarious workers in Majel Belabess, Samir told us that: **“The Mayor didn’t convince us when we met with him, he didn’t give us any promise and he said that he can’t do anything for us. The labor union negotiated with the government and they gave us a health booklet... but we want to be enrolled in the public sector, we want to help our families. Our salary of 300 or 400 dinars doesn’t cover our needs; I suffer monthly to make ends meet.”** Samir and his colleagues dream to be enrolled in the public sector, to enhance their financial and legal status, but the state couldn’t respond to these simple demands of some categories who didn’t claim the impossible. **Amor** thinks that the police are harassing him because he is an influential agent in the environmental movement of Kerkennah. He said: **“they told me; either you stop calling us and you stop calling radio stations or we are going to frame you.”** **Ahmed** expressed his discontent of the current situation and the current political scene. He said that the revolution carried out by the youth of the country didn’t do them justice and he spoke about the symbolic violence of the senior category on youth. He said: **“How is it acceptable to be ruled by a 90 years old president. I don’t care about his political orientation. We want a young president who can understand our demands.”** He also talked about the methods of repressing the social movements: **“Even**

when do nothing the security team arrests me, they ask me about what I did today and yesterday... they know that I always participate in protests. They harass me so I do nothing, and even when I do nothing they harass me so I don't think about doing something". It should be mentioned that frustration is multidimensional. We can't always link it to the material beneficial side. **Ahmed** for example said: **"I had a project to live from; I own five cows and three calves. I can cover my needs."** And **Ramy** said: **"I own a small coffee shop"**. Frustration, as an emotional situation, can be related to achieving the intrinsic value of the human being. Most of the interviewed said that they are losing hope and don't think that the situation is going to change. Furthermore, these movements are aiming for recognition, as analyzed above. **Ramy** summarized the whole idea when he spoke about the difference between the police treatment in Europe and in Tunisia. He said: **"in Europe you are treated as a human being, in Tunisia you are treated as an animal."**

Based on these testimonies, we can say that collective protest crashed into despair and frustration on various levels: the repression of protests and their criminalization and the employment policy followed by the government and based on providing precarious work. These solutions can't break with the economic crisis. Successive governments also failed to put an end to the ecological disaster, pollution and the continuous disrupt of drinking water. The government couldn't solve the problem of precarious workers and couldn't address their legal and financial problem. It failed to find permanent solutions to

promote the sectors of health, education and infrastructure. Despite the fact that human rights organizations, syndical institutions and political parties supported the social movements, they nonetheless crashed into a feeling of despair and frustration when they saw that their dream can't be reached. False democratic and social disparities, as we explained above, are democracies that fail to advocate for economic and social rights. They spread a feeling of frustration among marginalized categories, who find themselves engaged in communitarian circles to achieve their dream. And when they still can't achieve what they are aiming for, they start to look for another alternative that can help them reach a higher social status.

4. FROM THE FEELING OF FRUSTRATION TO THE ENGAGEMENT IN IRREGULAR IMMIGRATION PROJECTS:

a. Making the decision to immigrate

Based on the above analysis relating the social movements, their organization and mobilization, to the feeling of desperation and frustration, we conclude that it's when their actions fail to provide their needs that the activists start thinking about an alternative that can help them achieve the dream. According to the interviews carried out, the frustrated activists start looking for other horizons and better worlds. We can say that the feelings of frustration and desperation of the social movements' activists was a **push factor**. Thus, **push**

factors are more than the pull factors, since they are looking for higher social status in their homeland but they can't find it, and host countries become the destination to achieve their lost dream. We reached this conclusion when **Walid** described the feeling of frustration: **"I lost hope, I don't believe that the situation of the country is ever going to improve, neither my own situation."** **Ahmed** said: **"This country will never develop, I saw the laws written but I never saw them applied"**. **Khalil** expressed his feeling of desperation saying: **"Nothing changed; the situation is always the same"** and he added as a political activist: **"I struggled for years but the crisis deepened and our frustration became huge."**

Frustration is considered as a generator of the irregular migration decision. Passing to the implementation phase can take many forms as explained above. **Khalil** for example, was mainly motivated to embark in this venture in order to find a job and he said: **"I was primarily motivated by unemployment. When they told me about how people are living abroad, the living conditions there, I felt more motivated to migrate."** **Ramy** thought the same, and he explained that the idea arises when an individual tries repeatedly to find a job that preserves his dignity without success. He said: **"I applied to every job offer I could find, I filled every form, but I can see now that I won't be able to find a job without paying a bribe."** The motives can also be related to the failure to achieve the claims of the social movements. **Samir** said: **"I'm 24 years old and I never felt alive."** His feeling of frustration was so deep that he can't feel his humanity anymore. On another level, the motives

are related to the unchangeable general situation of the country; the permanent social reality, corruption, injustice and the lack of horizon. **Khalil** said: **“we voted before and even if we vote again nothing will change.”** And **Ahmed** said: **“everything is the same, even snitching still prevails.”** This is what pushed most of the interviewees to choose irregular migration. They feared to be charged of malicious prosecution and be imprisoned, and even this fear is nothing but the outcome of frustration and of the lack of trust in justice and in the judicial system. **Ahmed** said: **“the police encourage me to migrate irregularly when they sent me three summonses.”** And he added; **“I just want to have peace, I will go crazy if I stay in Tunisia because if I speak against injustice I will end up in prison.”** **Walid** said: **“the state is cruel. They are watching every one of us and it’s possible that they charge falsely and we end up in prison for many years.”** And he added **“the police want revenge, they want to break our spirit. They arrested one of us and he is still in prison.”**

With relation to the environmental movement in Kerkennah that rose against sea pollution, **Amor** said: **“I choose Kerkennah over Europe. All the citizens of Kerkennah love their region.”** However, the repression of the environmental movement pushed him to engage in the deadly journey despite that he has a residence permit that allows him to enter Europe regularly. Harassing the movement and harassing him personally because he was a social activist were the motives that led him to decide to migrate irregularly. He said after expressing his love to Kerkennah: **“I have a residence permit but I migrated**

irregularly. **I was maliciously charged and they could have arrested me at the airport.**” Besides of the fragile social situation and migration policies, the immediate entourage (family, neighbors, and friends) is also a motive that creates the decision of migrating irregularly. **Ramy** for example told us: **“My parents encouraged me”**. **Ahmed** said: **“my friends who live abroad told me to just join them and they will take care of everything there.”** And **Khalil** talked about how his family financed his migration project. He said: **“When my family was reassured that the journey won’t be dangerous, they encouraged me to migrate. We are still repaying the money they borrowed until today.”** We can also conclude that the frustration and desperation felt by the social movements and by the youth category created a **push atmosphere**, and thus, it could be said that there is **a causal link between repressing the social movements and the engagement in irregular migration projects**. Furthermore, all of the interviewees told us that they **made the decision to migrate when the revolution and the protest process let them down**. They chose to escape what their country deprived them from and flee to Europe. This frustration damaged Tunisian psychologically especially after the revolution “53.6% of the Tunisian youth category think that the situation of the country is unstable, 50.1% find it boring and 44.7% find it tiring. This demonstrates that the Tunisian atmosphere is full of pressure and boredom. **Tuniscope magazine** published in February 13th, 2013 the comments of **Doctor Soufien Zribi, the president of the association of Tunisian psychiatrists for private practice**. He said: “Tunisians

consume more sedatives and anti anxiety medication since the revolution. The number of Tunisians visiting psychiatrists is persistently increasing since January 2011²⁷.” Based on the sociological theories that we presented in the context of the theoretical framework, we can conclude that the push factors prevail over pull factors (push and pull factors). Relationships and social capital also played a major role in the decision making process, and also the difficult psychological factors that can be explained in the context of the theories of stimulation, expectations and values enshrined in social psychology where individuals are seeking for higher value, wealth, independence, affiliation (to be associated to other people) and ethics ... all of these factors facilitated the process of the decision making. Lastly, we conclude that the frustration of social protests in the context of the security, political, social and economic crisis provided a pushing climate and a motive to make the decision.

b. Repressing protests and renewing the waves of immigration:

We started the article by describing social protest in general, and we talked about the first protests that started in the mineral basin area in 2008 in order to understand the causal link between social protests and irregular immigration. To enrich our study, and since immigration waves increase after repressing the social movements, it's important to say that “The policy of repressing the revolution of the mineral basin in

²⁷ Ibn Hmida (Moez), calvi (Jermano), Gomez Bont (Vencent), Brina (Franco), Folechli (Stephano), a report about minor Tunisian, Moroccan and Egyptians'immigration tendencies and experiences IOM 2013 p48

2008 continued for six months (January – June 2008), during which tens of activists and national, regional and local leaders were arrested and charged. This strengthened the feeling of desperation and frustration among Tunisian youth in general and among the mineral basin youth in particular. During the summer of 2008, the ruling political authorities made many promises which weren't kept and that pushed many young people from the mineral basin to engage in irregular immigration. There were two roads that lead to the island of Lampedusa: either through Tunisian Libyan land borders or through crossing the Mediterranean from Libyan shores. The number of newly arrived immigrants to Lampedusa increased in 2008 in comparison to previous years (they reached 31.250 immigrant in 2008 compared to 12.184 immigrant in 2007). In 2008 and for the first time, Tunisians were ranked first in terms of the total number of irregular immigrants. Their number in the island of Lampedusa reached 6.762 immigrants among whom we find 52 women and 184 minors. The number of Nigerians was 6.084 immigrants, from whom 1787 women and 351 minors. In 2007 the number of Tunisian in Lampedusa was 1100 immigrants and they were ranked fourth in terms of the irregular immigrants' nationalities²⁸". In the context of the economic crisis and the repression of social movements in the mineral basin region, the Tunisian republic recorded a high wave of immigration in the beginning of the year 2008, however, by the end of the year 2010 "the northern and

²⁸ Boubakri (Hassan), « International Migrations and the Revolution in Tunisia », Migration Policy Center, research report n1, 2013 pp1-37 p3

southern coastal Mediterranean countries were able to control the irregular immigration phenomenon coming from the Maghreb, African and South African countries towards Europe. The total number of 39.800 immigrants in 2008 decreased to 11.000 immigrants in 2009 and to 4.500 irregular immigrants in 2010²⁹.”

With the beginning of the revolution in January 14th 2011 in Tunisia, and during the period between January and April 2011, nearly 30.000 irregular immigrants reached the Italian shores³⁰”. “According to the Tunisian Interior Ministry, the number of irregular immigrants in 2011 reached 22.000, whereas according to the stats of the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights they reached 35.000 irregular immigrants excluding drowned and lost victims³¹”. Thus, it could be said that the revolution of January 2011, which resulted in civilian injuries and casualties and in the fall of dictatorship, wasn’t able to produce a political government that supports economic and social rights which aggravated the feeling of despair and frustration, and renewed the irregular immigrations waves. Besides, protest movements increased after the revolution, “they reached 4960 protests in 2015, 9532 protests in 2016 and 8000 protest during the last nine months

²⁹ Boubakri (Hassan), « Migrations in Tunisia two years after the revolution: asylum management and international stakes” Mediterranean confluence. Mare Nostrum for migrants n87, 2013 p5

³⁰ Boubakri (Hassan) Potot (Swanie), « Migration and the revolution in Tunisia” Tunisian Social Sciences Review n141, 2013, p51-78 p60

³¹ Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights, Observatory of Migrations in the Maghreb, report: irregular migration Tunisia 2017, p6.

of 2017³²”. After realizing the causal link between the increase of protests and the rise of irregular immigration waves the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights published a study entitled “**Youth and irregular immigration in Tunisia**”. The study covered six popular neighborhoods in six different governorates (Ezzouhour city in Kasserine, Zarzis City, Ezzahra in Mahdia, Taieb Mhiri city in Kef and Sourour city in Gafsa). The sample included 1168 interviewees, 53.3% males and 46.7% females at a rate of 200 interviewees per neighborhood. Having different educational levels and social status, 53% of the interviewees confirmed that they talked about their friends about the possibility of engaging in irregular immigration, 29.7% considered to immigrate irregularly before the revolution, 25.1% thought about it with the beginning of the revolution and 45.2% are thinking about immigrating irregularly at the moment (2016). The study showed that 30.9% of the interviewees are ready to engage in irregular immigration if they can't find a way to immigrate regularly. Also, 9.2% of the total number of the sample tried to immigrate irregularly and 29.6% of them (those who tried) failed to reach the other shore³³”. Despite the number of the people missing at the Mediterranean Sea, that reached 350 in 2012³⁴ and in spite of the tragedy that occurred in September 6th, 2012 which resulted in the disappearing of three women, a child aged

³² Ibid, p2

³³ Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights, Rosa Luxemburg (North Africa Office) “Youth and irregular Immigration: Field study of social representations, practices and expectations” December 2016 p5, 7, 9.

³⁴ Report of the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights –Tunisians missing at the sea in 2012, Mars 2013

between 5 and 8, and 74 other people and the death of 9 other immigrants whose bodies were found floating on the waters separating between Sfax and Lampedusa³⁵, irregular immigration waves still increase after every protest ending with repressing and arrests. “According to the stats of the United Nations Delegation, 10 thousand people died in the sea between 2014 and 2016. The International Organization for Migration confirmed these numbers and added that 3500 people drowned in 2014, 3771 people drowned in 2015 and 2814 during the first semester of 2016³⁶”.

In spite of the dramatic data and numbers, immigration waves kept increasing in Tunisia, and we recorded “119369 immigrants who reached the Italian shores in 2017, from whom 9329 Tunisians tried to cross the borders, and 6151 were intercepted in Italy, 3178 Tunisian immigrant were intercepted before crossing the borders during the first trimester of the year 2017³⁷”. The year 2017 also recorder that a percentage of 89% of the total number of irregular immigrants, were arrested in detention centers in Italy. The Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights published on his official page on Facebook that during the period between January 1st 2018 and July 31st 2018, 3221 Tunisian irregular immigrants reached the Italian

³⁵ Lefèvre (Grégoire), Quivy (Pascale), « When Europe pulls and pushes” project review, Migrations: What other policies for Europe? N335, 2013 pp14-21 p15

³⁶ Sahbani (Abdessattar) « Youth and irregular immigration in Tunisia, a field study of the social representations, practices and expectations”, Boats for People project – Rosa Luxemburg Foundation and the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights, December 2016 p10

³⁷ Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights “annual report: irregular immigration in Tunisia in 2017” pp 1,2

shores, compared to 6150 during the year 2017. This number ranked Tunisians first of all other nationalities arriving to Italy. The Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights also published that from the beginning of the year 2018 until April 2018, the number of minors reaching Italian shores irregularly reached 309, which is 30% of the total number of arrivals. In general, Tunisian authorities intercepted 1053 border crossers in 2015, 1881 in 2016, 3178 in 2017 and 7046 border crossers during the period from January 1st 2018 and December 10th 2018. 569 Tunisians reached the Italian shores in 2015, 820 in 2016, 6151 in 2017 and 6006 immigrants in 2018 from which we find 1028 unaccompanied minors and 120 accompanied minors and 138 women. The age group that prevailed between January 1st and December 10, 2018 was that of 21 years old³⁸.

Based on the above and since the revolution of the mineral basin in 2008, we can conclude that immigration waves increase after every social protest ending with repression and criminalization. According to the previous numbers and to the testimonies of the interviewees with relation to the feeling of frustration after the failure of their protests, we underlined another time the causal link between repressing the protests and the increase of irregular immigration waves.

³⁸Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights "Numbers and stats of the migration department of the FTDES from January 1st to December 10th 2018"

5. THE EXPANSION OF THE LOCAL TRANSMIGRATION NETWORKS

a. The birth and the forms of transmigration networks

It could be said that the birth of irregular immigration networks took place in three main regions, which can be defined as **migratory centers**. This can be related to the geographic origins of the immigrants: the **first** is the North eastern center. It gathers the regions of the northern coast, Tunis, Bizerte (more specifically; Jarzouna, Ras Jbal, Ghar elmelh), Rades, Raoued, Kaleet Landalous, La Goulette, Kelibia and Menzel Temim and Beni khir in Nabeul. The **second** geographic origins are the middle coast and Sfax and it includes Chatt Sidi Abdelhamid in Sousse; Moknine, Sayada, Teboulba in Monastir, Chebba in Mahdia and Sidi hamed, Skhira, Sidi Mansour, Abebsa, and the island of Kerkennah in Safx. The **third** category of geographic origins of the immigrants include the regions of the far South and the regions near the Libyan borders, which are the governorates of Gabes and the island of Djerba in Medenine³⁹. We notice then, that the first generation of irregular immigrants cross the Mediterranean for economic reasons, but also because they are familiar with the nature of the sea and the migratory route. Immigration networks developed from one generation to another and they prevailed over three decades and throughout three stages as follows:

³⁹ Mabrouk (Mehdi) Sails and Salt, opcit p125-126

- **Amateur Immigrants:** this group includes popular neighborhoods inhabitants, friends and neighbors who collect the fees of the journey by threatening their families by suicide, theft or extorting the family. Then they buy a vessel from the black market. The biggest black market of vessels and boats is based in Menzel Kamel in Monastir and vessels cost about 5000 Tunisian Dinars.
- **Mid – level networks and organizations:** among which we find professionals and in which there's a kind of roles' distribution such as machinist, secret member, captains. Revenues are distributed among all leaders and it's expensive.
- **Transcontinental networks:** they emerged in the south, and they include different nationalities. The Tunisian Interior Ministry recorder 70 to 80 nationalities entering and crossing Tunisian territory every year. Among this category we find professionals and a mixture of nationalities. For example, the captain can be Egyptian while the leader can be from another nationality. Slavery prevails within this category and it can be said that it's a form of gangs⁴⁰.

In general, we conclude that the networks of immigration started during the nineties. It started with the first generation of irregular immigrants and it was mainly due to economic and social motives on one hand and to the familiarity of the immigrants with the waters nature on the other hand. These networks expanded after two decades in the context of the

⁴⁰ Mabrouk (Mehdi), a round table entitled "Irregular immigration, the economic crisis and the proposed solutions" – the center of Islam and democracy, June 28, 2018 – Africa Hotel Tunisia

security, political, social and economic crisis and with the increase of social protests that crushed into the feeling of frustration and desperation.

b. When migratory pressure and security tightening supports the crossing rituals:

In the context of the social and economic crisis and the increase of protest dynamics especially after 2001, and following the choice of the successive governments to follow security approaches instead of economic and development approaches, and with the increase of the number of irregular immigrants, two migratory routes appeared according to the interviewees: the first route isn't really dangerous. It consists on travelling to Morocco, then heading to the Mellila border and asking for asylum in Spain. **Ahmed** explained: **"A Moroccan prepared my false passport. I wore a running suit and passed with a group of foreigners. When I arrived to the border police I gave my Tunisian passport and asked for political asylum."** **Khalil** also tried to cross the Moroccan Spanish borders through Mellila. He said: **"A Moroccan prepared a false residence permit for me. When we arrived to the Spanish borders, Moroccan police intercepted us. I tried to pass by bicycle in the weekend, since many Spanish people are used to do it, but it was January and the weather was bad so there were no Spanish people entering Morocco."** Travelling through this route costs about 5thousnads to 6 thousands Tunisian dinars. The second route is really dangerous. It consists in crossing the sea borders and it's organized by immigration networks. **Ramy** talked about the

dangers of the journey: **“70% of the immigrants die and only 30% arrive to the other shore”**. He added: **“we didn’t eat or drink for three days, and there were children and old people among us. It was windy and we couldn’t reach Lampedusa. Then two immigrants volunteered to swim and declare our boats to authorities so they can rescue us. In the middle of the way, one of them was no longer able to swim, he said to the other let me drown and go ahead. Save them they are many and I’m only one. Then he surrender to the waters and died.”**

In general, local transmigration networks expanded and crossing rituals varied in the context of the socio economic crisis especially with the repressive security approach against social movements which coincided with the elevation of migratory pressure and the increase of irregular immigrants’ number. Youth engaged in these networks after being disappointed and frustrated when the revolution and all social protests failed to meet their hopes and aspirations. Repressing protests facilitated the enrollment of youth in the migratory and smuggling networks, which led to their expansion and prevailing and that is due to the unresponsiveness of the government to the claims of social protests. The government only responded by providing precarious solutions or by harassing and arresting the activists. Thus, protesters engage in irregular immigration as the only hope left to achieve their dreams. Migratory and smuggling networks become the alternative and the refuge from a harsh reality of poverty and repression.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The French sociologist **Alain Touraine** summarizes the three communal principles of every social movement: “the principle of identity, the principle of inconsistency and the principle of inclusion⁴¹.”

The first principle demonstrates that every movement should grant an identity to itself, which means defining the people, or category it is representing and the interests it’s defending. The principle of inconsistency is related to the fact that social movements emerge when certain ideas or interests are not recognized to claim them. Since every movement would face opposition, the principle of inclusion is about the high noble values that the movement is defending. These three principals were marked in the social movements that rose in the regions of the interview. These movements were supported by political and syndical forces but they weren’t able to achieve their goals and the activists ended up feeling frustrated and depressed especially when their fight was faced by repression and precarious solutions that couldn’t cut with the economic crisis. Frustration became a push factor, and thus there’s a causal link between repressing protests and the renewal of irregular migratory waves and the expansion of transmigration networks. The phenomenon of irregular immigration cannot only be explained through economic and political hypothesis or by cultural or causal factors alone. It could also be explained by

⁴¹ Touraine (Alain), the sociology of action, Seuil Edition, Paris 1965 p466

the frustration that follows the repression of protests which highlights the causal link between protest and immigration. Every increase of tension and social movements' number is followed by high waves of immigration. This article doesn't disapprove the other explanations, but it adds another angle from which we can relate immigration to the protest dynamics. The interviewees told us that they are willing immigrate again, some are planning to do it regularly while others are considering irregular routes. They all expressed their desperation of obtaining their claims by engaging in social movements and they don't trust any political party.

It should be said that the socio economic crisis will deepen uncontrollably if the government doesn't review its policies and doesn't cut with the dependency and with the attachment to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. "Arab burghers are determined in general as colonial burghers that evolved and developed in consequential link with the capitalist market. Their structural dependence caused its failure in solving national social problems. This failure is not temporary but structural and historical. They weren't able to develop into a capitalist independent model. Thus, the renewal of Arab systems and their transition from classic burghers to small burghers only caused more problems since this transition didn't include a real change of the colonial production system that is still controlling the moves of Arab burghers⁴²."

⁴² Aamel (Mehdi) « Discussions about the cases of National liberation and the specificities of the Marxian concepts in the arab world" Farabi House, Beirut , Lebanon 1990 p 14

Finally, it should be underlined that following the same precarious development model, which is unable to provide economic and social needs, the fall of the Tunisian currency, the fragility of the middle class, the prevalence of unemployment, the lack of development, repressing social movements and the incapacity to shoulder economic and social rights, along with the precarious policies of employment and the failure to review immigration policies in a way that guarantees the right to free circulation we can expect a further increase in the immigration waves, and thus, more tragedies in the Mediterranean sea.

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المنتدى التونسي للحقوق الاقتصادية والاجتماعية
47، شارع الحبيب بورقيبة الطابق الثاني، تونس 1001،
الهاتف: 71 257 664 - الفاكس: 71 257 665
البريد الإلكتروني: contact@ftdes.net