

# REPORT

## August 2022



**Forum Tunisien pour les Droits Economiques et Sociaux**

2, Avenue de France Imm Ibn Khaldoun (la Nationale),  
2ème étage Apt325-Tunis Bab Bhar 1000

TEL. : (+216) 71 325 129 FAX : (+216) 71 325 128  
contact@ftdes.net www.ftdes.net

**FRIEDRICH  
EBERT  
STIFTUNG**

**CCFD** **TERRE  
SOLIDAIRE**  
Soyons les forces du changement

## August 2022 report on social protests

---



The map of protests observed during the month of August confirms that the state of social congestion with socio-economic origins has become a generalized situation in various areas of the country. The regions with the highest number of protests during the month of August are located in the East, West, North and South of the country with a minimal difference in terms of congestion:

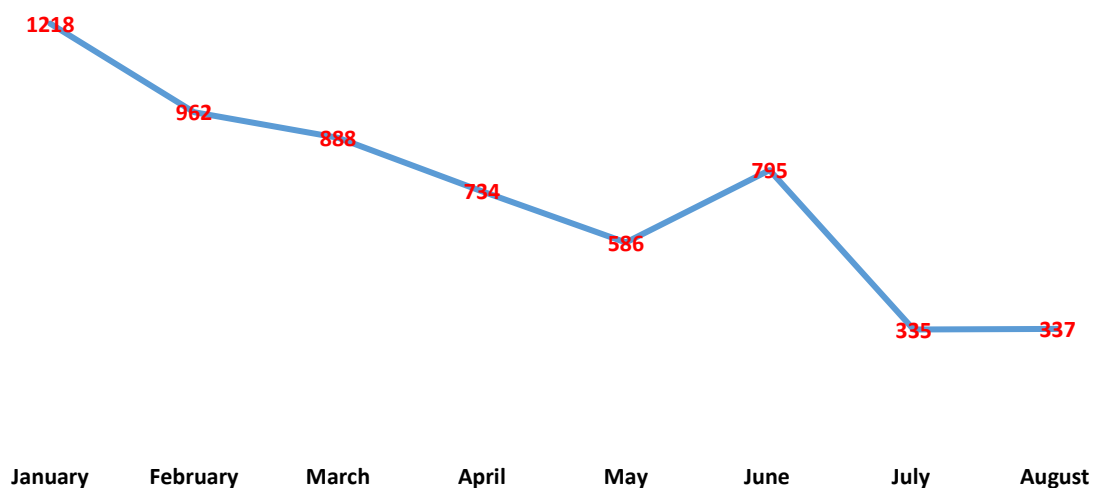
The capital Tunis witnessed 93 protest movements (3 protest movements per day) 73 protest movements (2.35 protest movements per day) occurred in Gafsa, 56 protest movements (1.8 protest movements per day) in Sidi Bouzid, 36 protest movements (1.16 protest movements per day) in Sousse and 25 protest movements in Kebili.

This dynamic of protests in various regions reflects a state of dissatisfaction with the further deterioration of economic and social conditions and the deterioration of primary services due to the shortage of some basic provisions and drinking water, as well as power outages during heat waves.

Employment demands have resurfaced, as well as the persistence of movements calling for the resolution of so-called traditional issues, such as unemployed graduates, workers in precarious sectors and horticultural workers. However, the way in which these issues and social demands in general are addressed has not changed. Instead, the government has moved towards implementing a series of economic reforms that could exacerbate the suffering of vulnerable groups and widen the circle of poverty, further weakening the middle class. If we look at the harvest of the first eight months of this year, we see an apparent decline in social protests:

There were 1,218 protests in January, 962 protests in February, 888 protests in March, 734 protests in April, 586 protests in May, and then the curve rises again in June to 795 protests (which are mainly related to politically motivated protests about the content of the new constitution before the referendum on July 25),

and then the number of protests decreased to about 335 in July, with a slight resurgence in August to reach 337 protests.



This regression is not due to the decrease of social, economic, health, environmental, legal, security and human rights claims that the demonstrators demand in an organized or spontaneous way, but rather reflects a collective disappointment that accumulates tensions, which is already a dangerous indicator that threatens social peace.

In general, there is a reluctance to express anger about economic and social conditions. This climate can be explained by several reasons, including ambiguity, uncertainty, and the absence of a responsible authority that can carefully respond to their demands, as well as the fear of political instrumentalization and the return of the elements of the former system.

All indicators confirm the general state of concern over the rapid decline in economic indicators including high inflation resulting from sharp price increases, as well as the shortage of basic commodities and the deterioration of all basic health services, education, transportation, and infrastructure. This state of concern is not only felt within the Tunisian General Union of Labor and the Tunisian Union of Industry, Trade and Crafts. Thus, we cannot consider that the reception of their representatives by the President of the Republic and perhaps the conclusion of an agreement with these two organizations would be an effective solution for the required social stability, as it is rather related to the most vulnerable category: namely the unregulated and invisible sectors.

## ON THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL LEVEL



During August, the rate of inflation continued to rise to 8.6%, due to increased prices, according to data from the National Institute of Statistics. Food prices increased by 11.9%, manufactured goods by 8.8% and services by 6.1%. Economists explained these unprecedented increases due to an inflation of imported products, as the national economy is highly correlated with European countries, where inflation reached at the end of August 9.1% due to the significant increase in energy prices (due to the Russian-Ukrainian war), as well as the inflation rate in the United States of America which reached 9.1% at the end of July.

Economists show that the rate of imported inflation from Tunisia's economic partners in the world has worsened Tunisia's trade deficit to 13.7 billion dinars at the end of July, compared to 8.7 billion dinars in the same period last year. Faced with this crisis with major social repercussions, the President and the Government have not taken any protectionist measures to reduce the impact of imported inflation and prevent the national economy from its economic and social impact. On the other hand, the government is seeking to implement its commitments with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), in particular to increase support and control the wage bill in the public service by adopting layoffs to alleviate the wage roll, such as early retirement and other disguised dismissals. ... It is also about suspending allocations to the public service and reforming public institutions or eventually divesting them.

All this is happening in a disastrous social situation where poverty and economic vulnerability are increasing, and social congestion and delinquency are increasing towards violent and blind reactions. If this situation is treated with such harsh reforms as the lifting of subsidies, suspension of hiring and privatization of public institutions and other reforms demanded by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in order to reach an agreement with the Boden government, we can say that we are not far from a predictable social explosion that could be marked by violence.



## ON THE POLITICAL LEVEL



The political climate in August was not conducive and appropriate to address the deteriorating economic and social conditions. There was no constructive debate on possible national solutions to the crisis. The political rhetoric was characterized by violence, hatred and separation between Tunisians and dominated by conspiracy theory. Everything that happens, whether it is the rejection of decisions or the denunciation of the president's policies, is understood as a kind of conspiracy against him. Even the shortage of basic commodities and the increase in their prices is simply a part of this conspiracy.

The president also adopts a discourse of victimization and does not act as a decision-maker who acquires solutions to urgent issues or even a realistic and concrete assessment of all crises. This exacerbates the ambiguity of the omnipresent situations and worsens the general state of anxiety.



## AUGUST PROTESTS :

The protest scene during the month of August was not different from previous months, representing a slight increase compared to July, with no significant proportion of the level of protest and with a similarity in terms of demands for basic services such as drinking water, electricity, wages and improvement of professional status.

In August, demonstrations emerged in response to seemingly ill-conceived official programs, such as the extension of the third part of the highway, linking Tunisia and the Algerian border. A project against which the farmers of Bou Selem protested by refusing to give up their farmland. Civil society activists have supported their protest. The inhabitants of Almaamoura have also demonstrated in Nabeul, supported by civil society activists, against the project to protect the city against flooding, which they consider "a threat of environmental and social disaster in the region. The movements have adopted the blocking of roads as a form of protest.

In the military zone of Balta Bouawan in Jendouba, people protested against the thirst and the permanent rupture of drinking water and blocked the road. One of the protesters was arrested and was prosecuted along with three other

protesters. This indicator, as we mentioned in our previous report, confirms that in the coming weeks the security approach will play an important role in dealing with the protest movements.

There is also a clear decline in the sustainability of basic services by government institutions, including drinking water cuts and power outages, which occurred during the recent heat wave, during which record temperatures were recorded in a number of regions such as Medenine, Kebili, and most of the delegations of Kairouan such as Menzel el mhiri, Kairouan south, Al ala, Sbikha and Bouhajla.

The movements of unemployed covered by the law No. 38, which was abolished, have resurfaced and a wave of suicides has been observed in the region of Cherarda in Kairouan. The victims were young men and children, and according to the media, the reasons are related to the deterioration of the social situation and the inability to pay the irregular migration journey.

The allocation of licenses for "cabs" is still an ambiguous issue and a source of protests. Demonstrators in Makthar in the governorate of Siliana revealed that some of the owners of these permits are residents abroad, and that the allocation of licenses is not legally compliant.

In the first few weeks of August, the wave of price increases continued, pointing to a further rise in inflation rates, which reached 8.6 percent during August, but the perceived inflation rate could be much higher. The coming weeks portend more deterioration in living conditions, especially as we move closer to a difficult back-to-school season in terms of costs due to high prices.

As expected, the protests related to education reappeared in late August as the start of the school year approached. These movements were mainly related to access to the pilot high schools, where parents of students who had averages below 15 out of 20 have demonstrated in Gafsa, following the decision of the Ministry to enroll those who had averages below 14. Although the pilot school is short of capacity, estimated at 100 places, the parents' protests continued. Parents in Sfax have also come forward to demand the opening of an eighth-grade class at the pilot school Sfax 1 to save students the trouble of moving to Sfax 2.

Furthermore, the government has not been able to manage the file of subsidizing flour in bakeries and several cities, such as Kasserine, Gafsa, Tozeur, Kairouan,

Djerba, Tataouine and other areas, were suffering from hunger in the absence of bread, which prompted the inhabitants to demonstrate.

The sit-in of the unemployed in Sousse continues for the eighth month (having begun on December 27, 2021 at the headquarters of the delegation to education). The sit-inners have entered a hunger strike and threaten to escalate in the coming months.

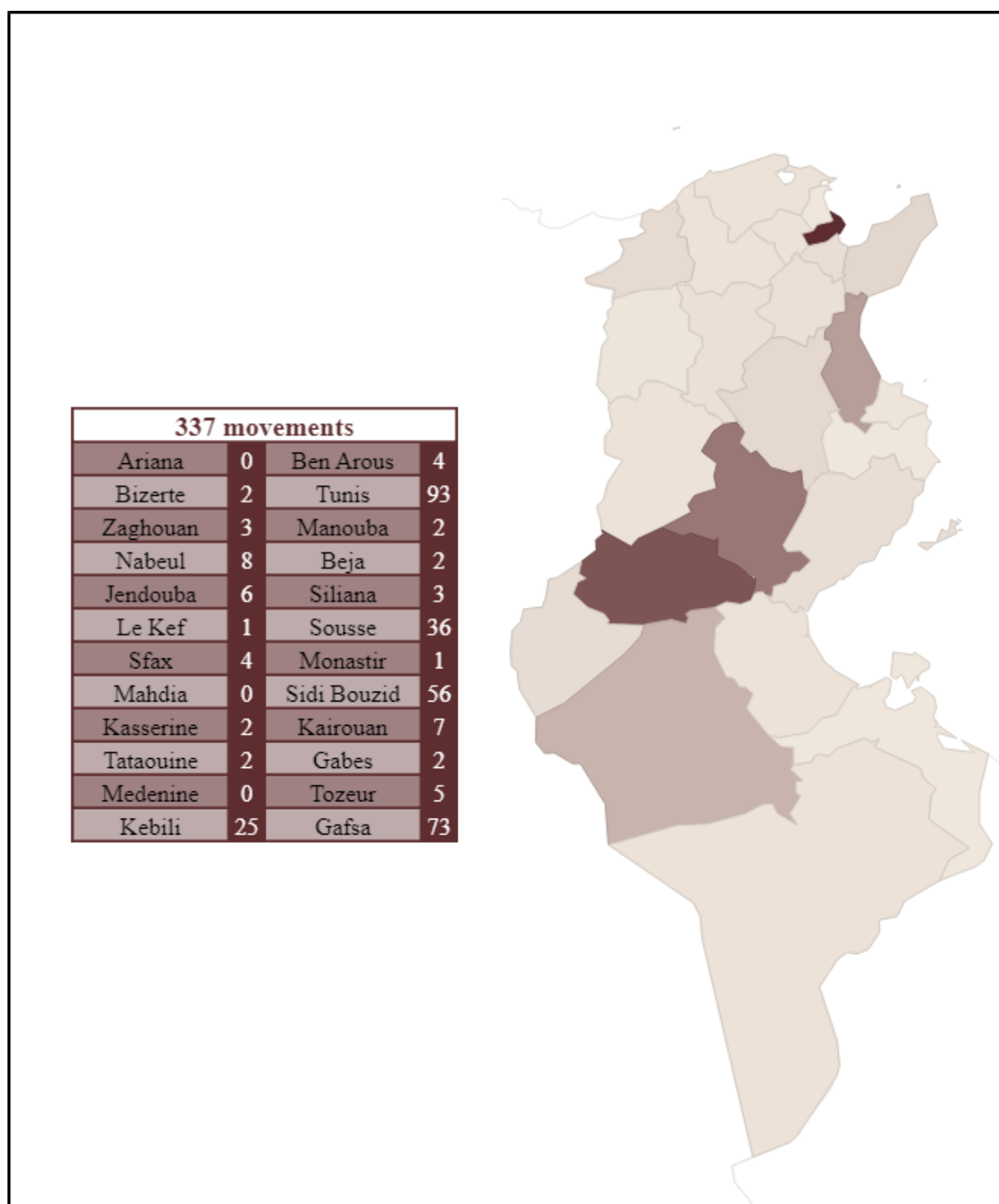
A group of young people have organized a march from Henchir Alchaal (olive forest in Sfax) to the palace of Carthage to demand the improvement of the situation and to put an end to corruption.

Kebili too, which had been in a quiet area for a few months, turned into a protest zone, when employees of the gardening and planting company engaged in continuous protests. Individual cab drivers in the area also protested against the wave of violence against them. The situation in Kebili is likely to worsen in terms of social mobility and the state of anger and congestion.

The return to school is proving difficult due to the lack of drinking water in 410 schools, as well as the lack of toilets and fences, in addition to the lack of staff in 200 schools and vacancies estimated at 5 thousand teachers in various regions, including the capital, which means that the return to school will not be equitable and that the scenario of delay in the return to school in some institutions will recur.

## **Mapping of the August protests**

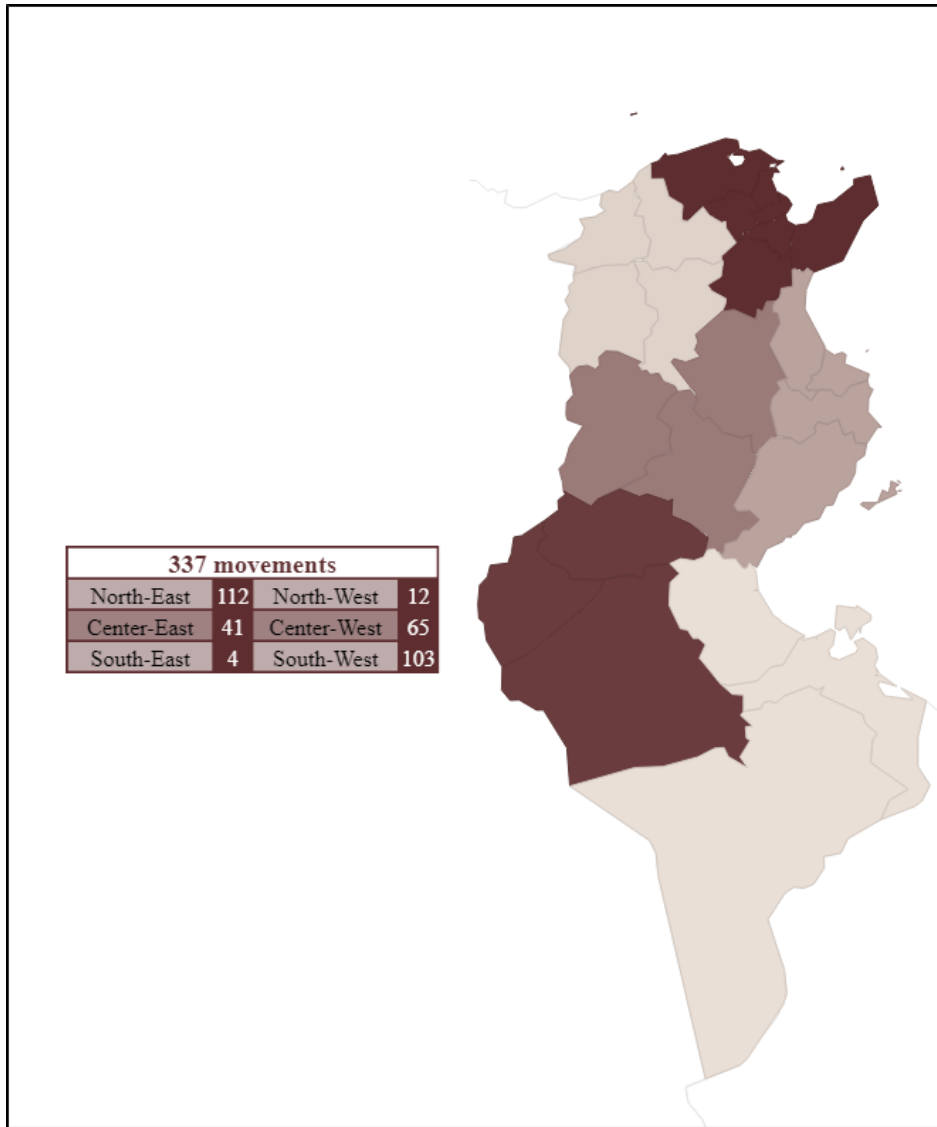
The number of demonstrations observed during the month of August reached 337 protest movements distributed according to the traditional map of protest, the governorate of Tunis in first position (93 protest movements), considering that it is a central city for political decision-making and also given the magnitude of economic and social problems posed in many of its marginal districts, followed by the governorate of Gafsa in terms of the most contested areas because of the nature of social and development problems posed in the region, including high levels of unemployment (73 movements of protest).



Sidi Bouzid ranks third with 53 protest movements, followed by the governorate of Sousse in the east with 36 protest movements and the governorate of Kebili in the extreme southwest with 25 protest movements.

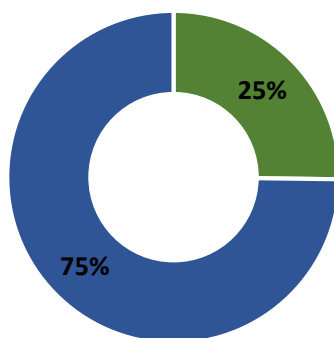
The map of protests observed during the month of August indicates the similarity between all regions in terms of deteriorating social and economic conditions, deteriorating living conditions and declining services provided to citizens.



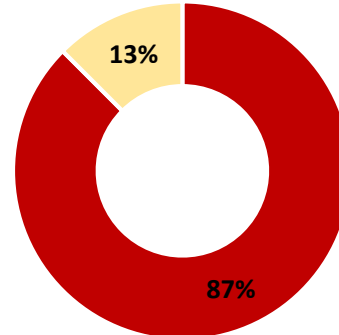


Spontaneous demonstrations, that is to say those that start spontaneously and disrupt the services provided to citizens and hinder the work of the administration, have declined and are estimated at 74.8%, which is certainly related to the decline in the total number of demonstrations.

■ Non Anarchique ■ Anarchiques



■ Planifiés ■ Instantanés



However, the number of this form of protest remains important in some traditional protest areas, as it represents 96% of the total number of demonstrations observed in Sidi Bouzid, 94.5% of the number of demonstrations observed in Gafsa and 84% of the number of demonstrations observed in Kairouan.



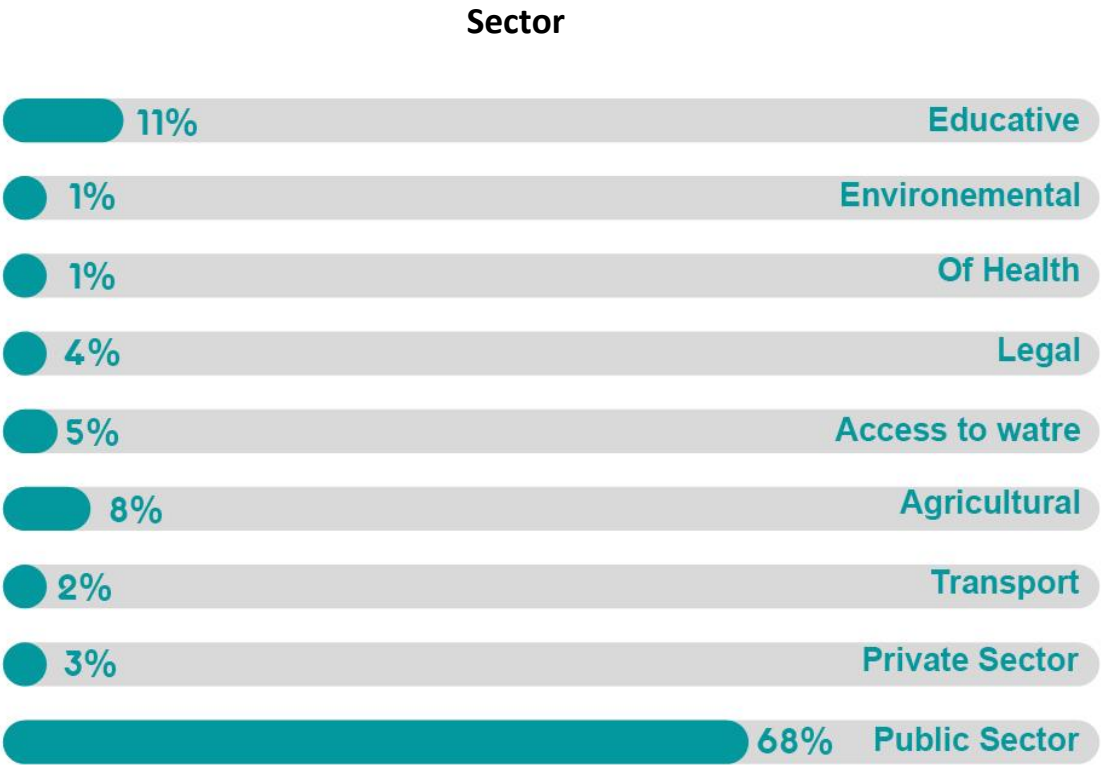
The proportion of mixed demonstrations reached 86.1% of the total number of demonstrations observed, while the proportion of demonstrations led only by men was estimated at 13.9%.



The increasing pace of public sector-related protests continued, from less than 25 percent in June to 57 percent in July and 68 percent in August. This increase is explained by the state of dissatisfaction with public policies, including administrative services and their quality, as well as with public policies regarding the equitable distribution and provision of services such as drinking water, electricity, health, transportation and basic services.

This situation, as mentioned earlier, accumulates social tensions and deepens the gap between the social actor and the state institutions. The expectations of the social actor towards the state institutions have decreased and he has entered a phase of searching for solutions for his individual salvation, including irregular migration, parallel trade, suicide, drug addiction and joining organized crime.

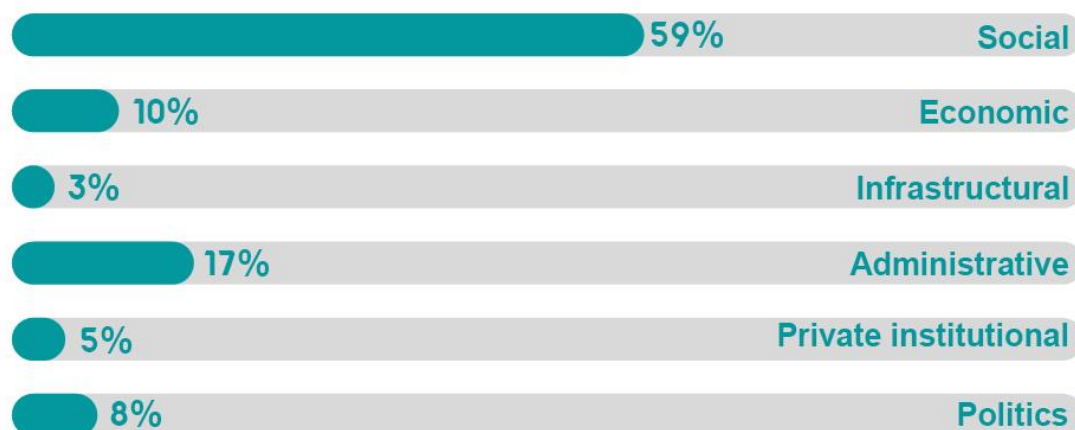
11% of the August protests were related to the education sector, particularly in relation to the preparation of the return to school, including the problem of the high cost of school supplies and the high cost of private kindergartens, as well as the problem of access to pilot colleges. 8% of the protests were related to the agricultural sector, 4% were related to legal demands and 5% were related to the right to water.



## The demands

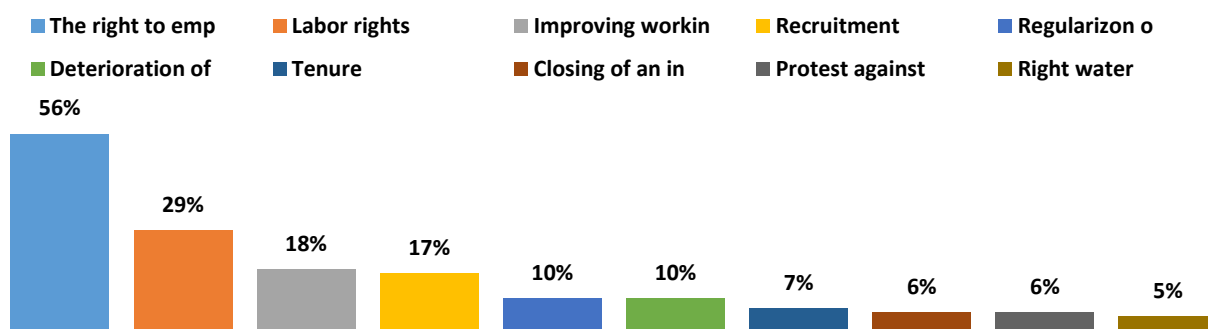
Economic and social protests accounted for 69 percent of the total number of demonstrations observed, followed by administrative demands at 17 percent (a slight increase over the percentage recorded in July), political demands at 8 percent, and demands for infrastructure improvements at 3 percent.

### Typologie



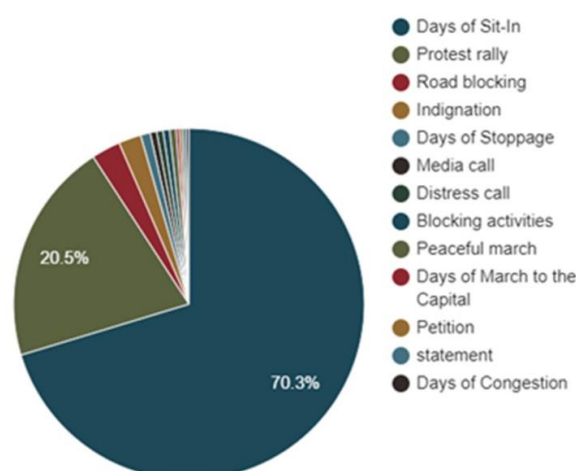
The causes of most protests were related to the right to work at 56%, a percentage that was about 39% during July. Followed by protests related to workers' rights at 18%, the right to recruitment at 17%, the improvement of working conditions at 10%, and also for reasons related to the deterioration of social conditions at 10%, and protests rejecting official decisions at 9%, the right to water at 7% and the right to electricity at 2%.

For the eighth month in a row, development-related protests have disappeared, which means that people's hopes and demands have been reduced to the first level of human rights, which, as we mentioned, is the right to food, health and water.

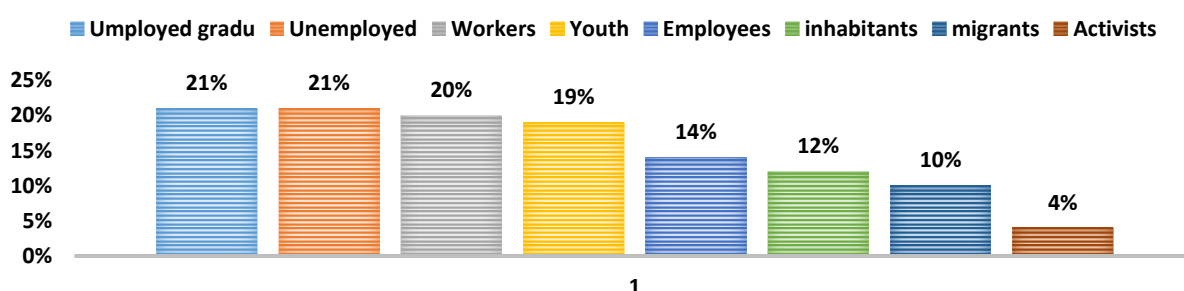


## Social actors and forms of protest:

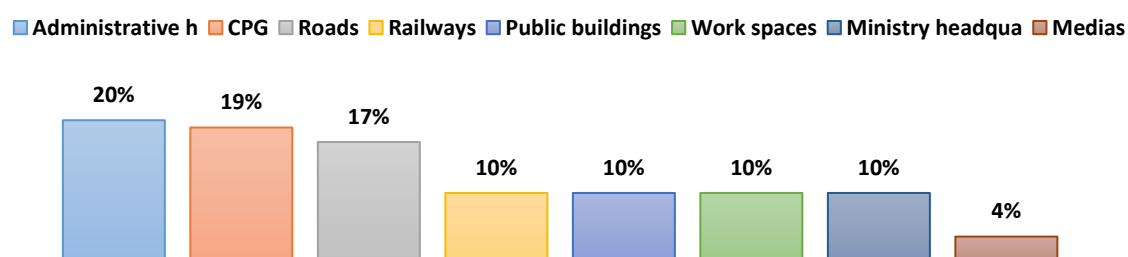
The sit-in was the most important form of protest adopted by the demonstrators in their expressions, with a percentage of 70.3% (the percentage was 48.1% in July), followed by the protest vigils with a rate of 20.5% (19.7% in July), and then we find in varying proportions the rest of the forms of protest such as road blockades and expression of discontent through the media throughout August.



The unemployed were the main actors in the August protests, with a percentage of 21%, followed by workers with 20%, then employees with 14% and citizens with 12% (the percentage was around 26% in July), followed by immigrants with 10%.



The administrative headquarters represented the most important spaces of protest with 20%, followed by the Tunisian Company of the Chemical Complex with 19%, then the roads with 17% (the percentage was about 23%), followed by railways, seats of authorities, seats of ministries and workplaces at a rate of 10% for each space.





# Irregular Migration in August 2022



The waves of irregular immigration continued with intensity during the month of August, with the number of arrivals on the Italian coast reaching 4,284 immigrants, with a slight increase of 6.1%, and males represented the largest proportion of the number of arrivals with 80%, while minors represented 17%.

The proactive approach adopted is proving to be effective, as we note an increase in the number of intercepted operations, which reached 411 operations, compared to 226 operations the previous month, which is an increase of 45%.

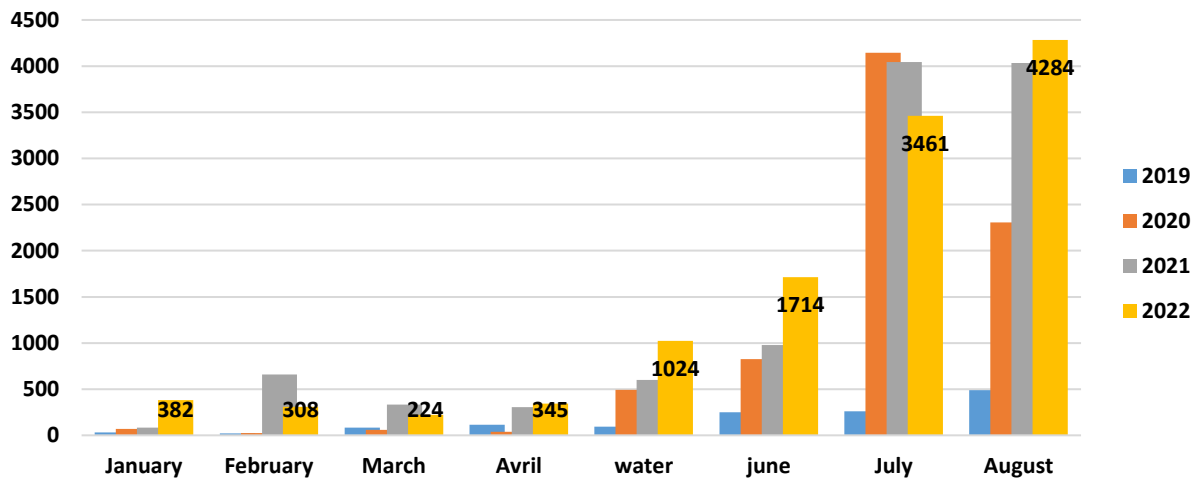
5713 immigrants were intercepted, an increase of 43% compared to the previous month, including 57% of non-Tunisian nationalities, most were arrested during sea crossings at 84% and 12% during land journeys. The region of Sfax continues to rank first in terms of intercepted operations with a rate of 25.3%, the governorate of Nabeul in second place with 17% and Mahdia in third place with 16%

The number of victims and disappearances so far has reached 475 victims and missing persons out of a total of 948 victims and missing persons in the Mediterranean. The figures confirm that this human tragedy is progressively multiplying while the State is content to adopt a security approach without giving any importance to the high number of victims.

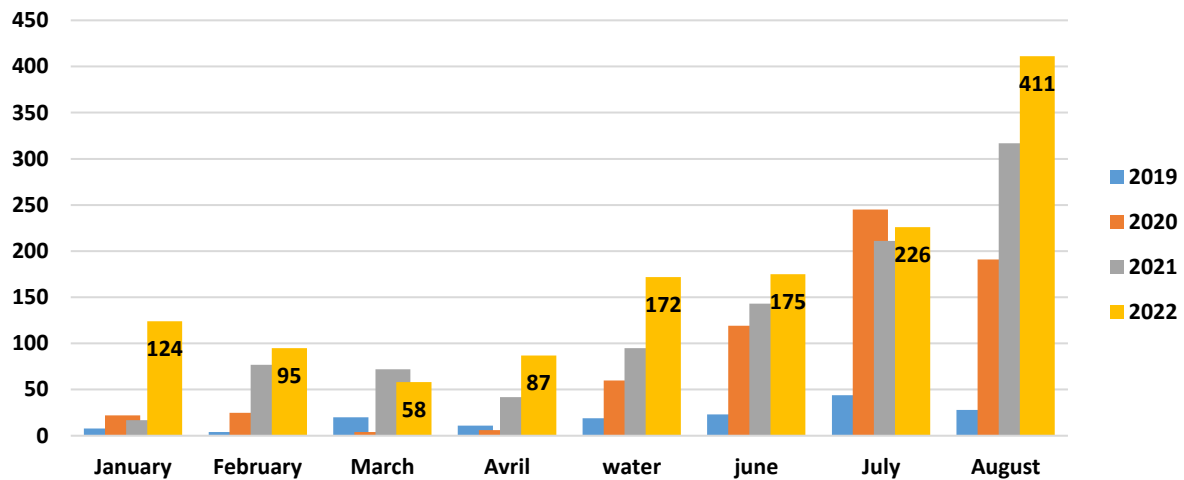
## Comparison In the same period during the years 2019–2020–2021 - 2022

2022			2021			2020			2019			the month
Number of passersby suspended	Number of frustrating passes	The number of arrivals to Italy	Number of passersby suspended	Number of frustrating passes	The number of arrivals to Italy	Number of passersby suspended	Number of frustrating passes	The number of arrivals to Italy	Number of passersby suspended	Number of frustrating passes	The number of arrivals to Italy	
1155	124	382	463	17	84	316	22	68	177	8	31	January
1036	95	308	1273	77	660	571	25	26	46	4	21	February
886	58	224	882	72	334	137	4	60	323	20	85	March
1515	87	345	409	42	307	99	6	37	166	11	116	Avril
2658	172	1024	2487	95	601	1243	60	494	249	19	94	water
2086	175	1714	2120	143	977	1611	119	825	254	23	249	june
3226	226	3461	2993	211	4044	2918	245	4145	608	44	262	July
5713	411	4284	5582	317	4035	1621	191	2306	515	28	489	August
18275	1348	11742	16209	947	11042	8516	672	7961	2338	157	1347	the total

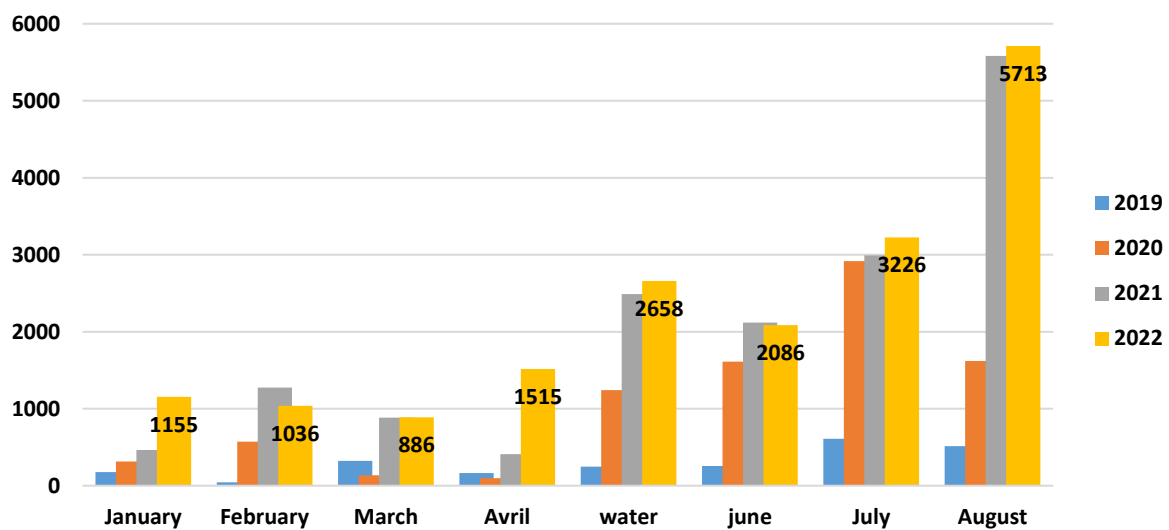
### The number of arrivals to Italy



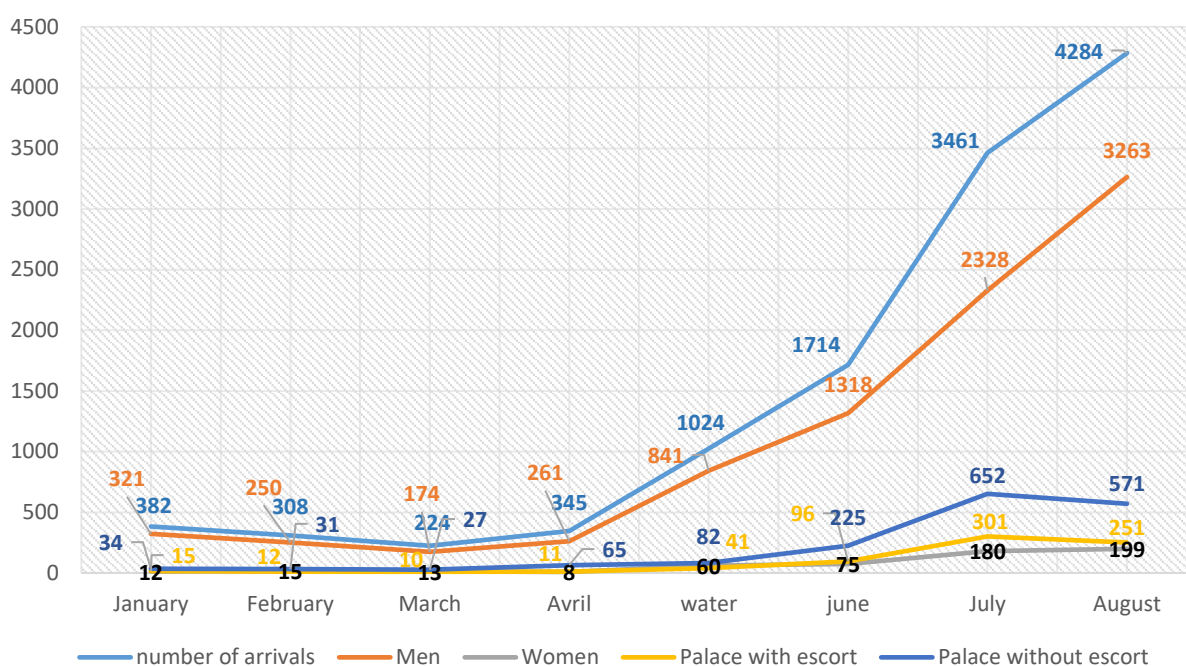
### Number of frustrating passes



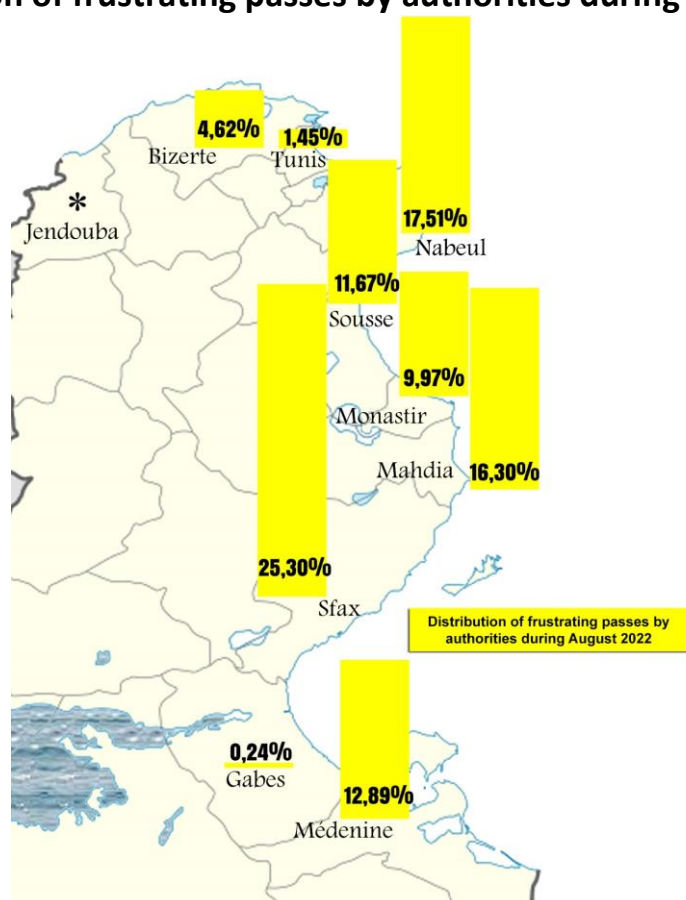
### Number of passersby suspended



## Distribution of arrivals to Italy by months during 2022

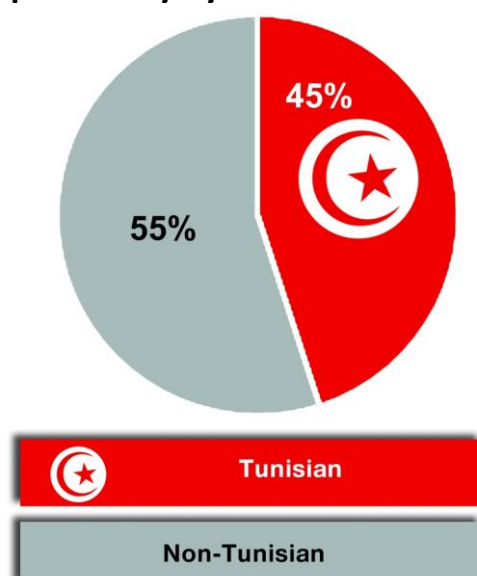


## Distribution of frustrating passes by authorities during August 2022



\*The presence of this sign does not mean that these authorities do not witness crossings, but the official data published in the notifications did not include frustrating crossings in these bodies.

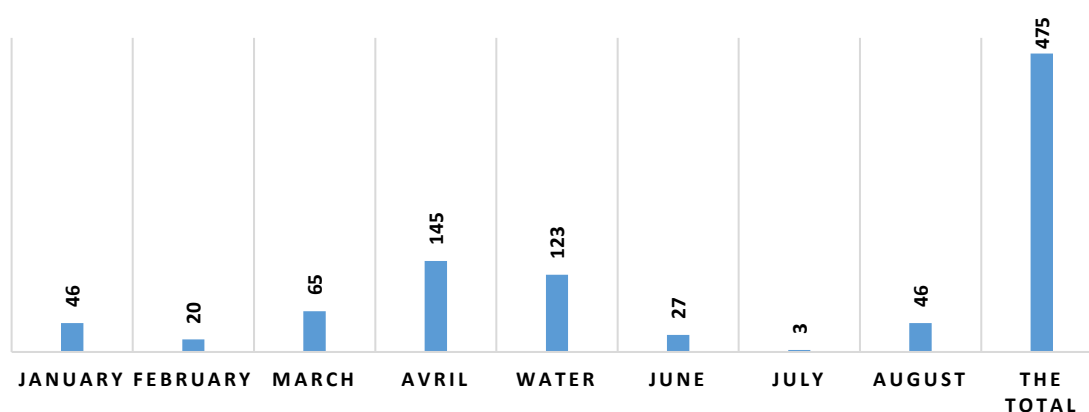
## Distribution of passers-by by nationalities During August 2022



## Distribution of frustrating passes during 2022



## The tragedies of irregular migration on the Tunisian coasts during 2022



The number of dead and missing on the Tunisian coast during 2022	The number of dead and missing in the Central Mediterranean Basin during 2022
475	948

## August Report on Violence

---



After the demonstrations and protests that took place in July 2022, restrictions, violence and arrests of activists and human rights defenders increased remarkably during August, where police violence played a major role.

As part of the "privilege" of impunity of the armed forces August recorded two new incidents that unfortunately resulted in the death of citizens.

"Tinja, Menzel Bourguiba" in Bizerte witnessed the suspicious death of a young man in his twenties in a police station. A few days later, the city center was the scene of a chase of a young man working in parallel trade by customs officers. The young man died after being shot.

According to the results of the monitoring, we can say that the violence during the month of August, is of the same intensity observed during the previous months. In fact, violent behavior has become one of the communication tools between different categories of society and in private and public places. A violence that spreads with diligence and in different forms: cyber, virtual, symbolic, physical, verbal, sexual, road, economic, security or police.

The Tunisian Social Observatory considers - as it has previously stated in its previous monthly reports - that the phenomenon of "violence" in general tends to intensify in a brutal and arbitrary way, especially in public spaces, moreover this pejorative phenomenon is strengthened by the economic and social crisis and by the instability that the country has been experiencing for more than a year, without forgetting the hostility and distrust that dominates our daily life and the political atmosphere for over a year. Indeed, the month of August 2022 has witnessed a series of violent, inhumane and cruel acts in which bladed weapons are used and have resulted in deaths. These weapons are used against children and parents, and often family members are the victims.

This includes the violence and sexual assault of a son on his mother, or the stabbing of an elderly man's brother and his subsequent attempt to commit suicide over a dispute about land ownership.



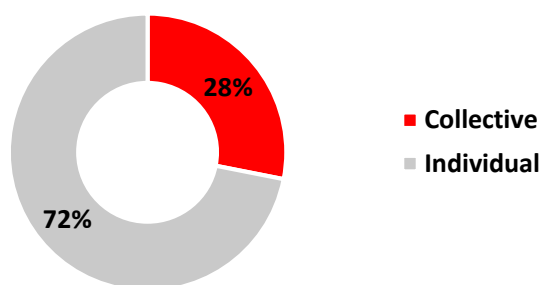
What is noteworthy in August is the change in sexual assault, rape and hijacking cases recorded throughout the month. This indicates that the level of security has deteriorated considerably, and public spaces have become dangerous places for women and children alike.



As always, criminal violence occupied the first rank of violence observed during the month of August according to the sample on which the Tunisian Social Observatory team works, where they represented about 85% of the total number of recorded violence. The public space, in particular, the street is the main place where 62% of these acts of violence take place.

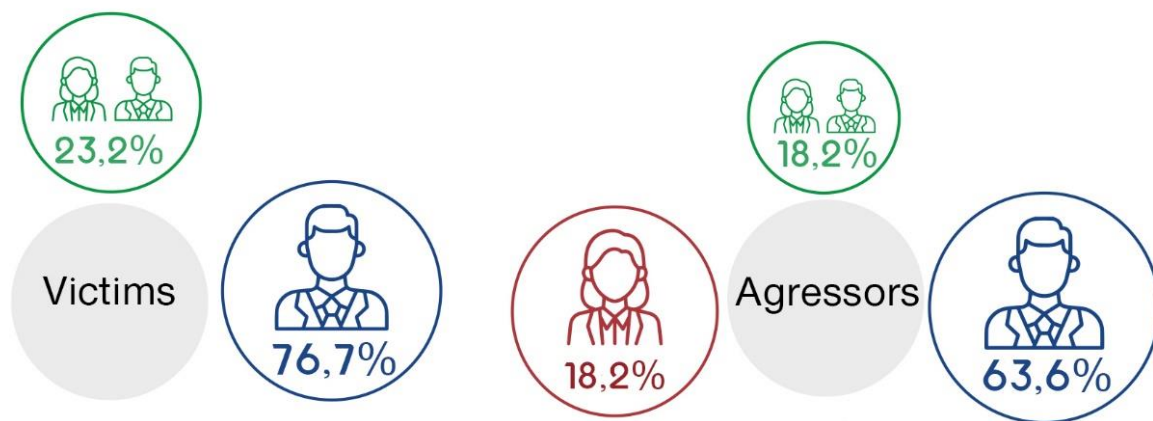


The home and housing space occupy the second place with a percentage of more than 31% of the observed violence, followed for the first time by the space of prisons and arrest centers because of the impunity of security forces and armed forces.



Individual incidents of violence are more numerous than those recorded in collective situations. Moreover, men are responsible for more than 63% of the violence observed in the sample of daily and weekly newspapers, websites, television and radio, while the rest of the violence observed is mixed or equal between the two sexes.

Violence in its various forms within Tunisian society, will take more inhumane and severe forms in the coming period that will coincide with the period of the enactment of the electoral law for the legislative elections that are scheduled for December 2022. Presumably, cyberspace will be the vast framework that will take the digital "armies" of political parties, as it has become today a setting of competition and a space for the spread of hate speech, violence and incitement.

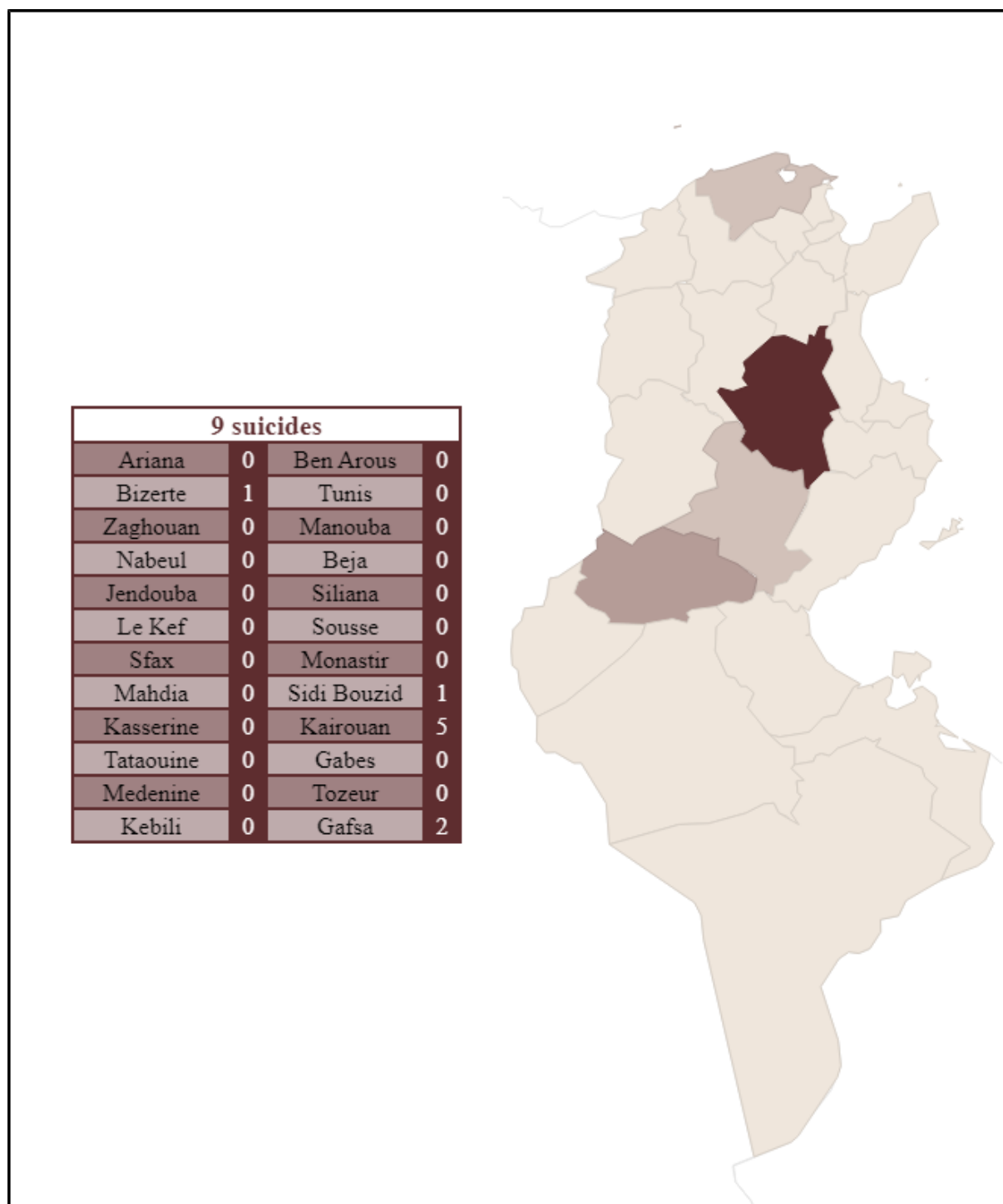


With the start of the school year and its impact on families, the persistence of price increases and the clear trend towards the partial lifting of subsidies, and the absence of any announcement of wage increases or social measures, it is likely that the situation will deteriorate further and produce more violence in various forms.

The Tunisian Social Observatory and the Tunisian Forum of Economic and Social Rights reiterates the warning against impunity and the absence of a true culture of equity, equality, justice and rights .

In the same context, the forum warns against the indifference of government officials and the shirking of social responsibilities by the state. It also considers that the instability experienced by Tunisians for more than a year will be a repulsive element that will push them to take the risk of irregular migration which will cause the prevalence of suicide. Moreover, a particular increase was

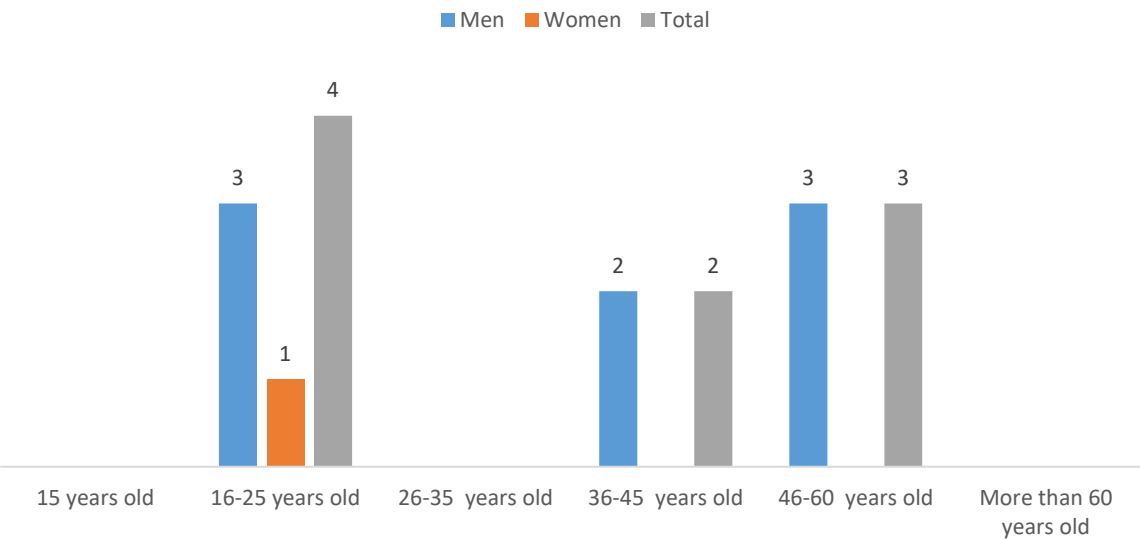
noted in Kairouan, estimated by 9 cases of suicide during the month of August, most of which were children and young people.



The phenomenon of suicide has increased during the month of August, especially in the region of Kairouan, mainly for economic and social reasons. Teenagers and young people frustrated by the inability to improve their living conditions and to immigrate illegally have attempted to end their lives. Nine cases, and about 55%

of suicide attempts, were recorded in Kairouan (5 cases), while two suicides were observed in Gafsa and one case in Bizerte and Sidi Bouzid.

At least 45% of the observed cases involve the 16-25 age group, followed by the 46-60 age group with 33%, then the 36-45 age group. Contemplating this distribution, we note that the active group is the most vulnerable to the suicidal "contagion". The more they are faced with ambiguity and uncertainty, the more their psychological state deteriorates.

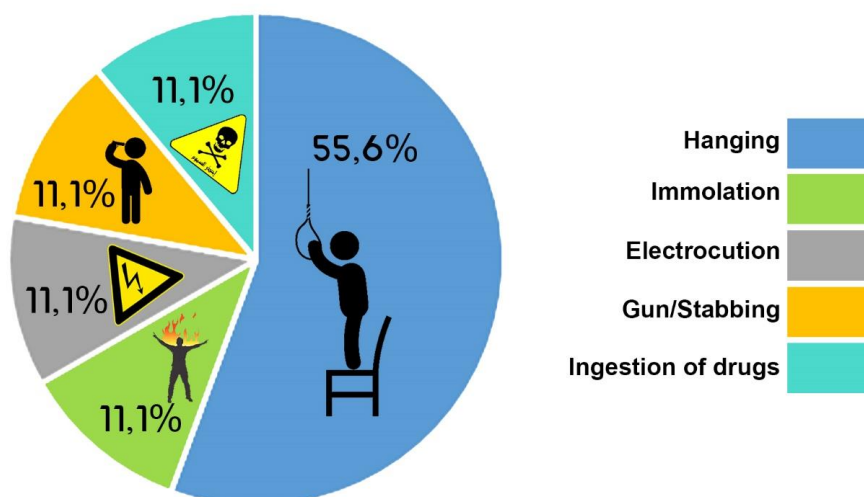


What must be remembered and emphasized is that suicide is a form of protest and violence directed against oneself, meaning that the victim puts him/herself in dangerous situations, just like the victims of drugs, smuggling and illegal immigration. All of these are mechanisms adopted by the victims as a culmination of despair, and they are dangerous individual solutions that the victims have resorted to due to the lack of collective responses and support mechanisms within the family and the community.

The proportion of males is estimated at 89% of the total victims, while one case of suicide was observed involving a female within the 16-25 age group.



Suicide by hanging was the dominant form of suicide observed, at a rate of 55%, followed by suicide by burning, electric shock, use of a knife or firearm, and intake of toxic substances at a rate of 11% for each form of suicide.



As a reminder, we stress that these figures do not reflect the exact number of cases and attempts of suicide, since we noted the lack of media reporting of many cases and attempts of suicide, which were documented in photos and videos and published on Facebook pages, that is, through citizen journalism, and only the state agencies have the exact figures of this dangerous social phenomenon for which the state has not yet established a clear strategy to fight in order to protect citizens.



## Conclusion

Unquestionably, the country is facing an unprecedented social crisis as shown by all the economic and social indicators that reflect the reality of today's growing intensity in Tunisia. Many of the growing social phenomena, such as irregular migration resulting in massive departures from the country, are not only the result of the economic and social conditions, but rather the result of the policies and the general state of frustration shared by most Tunisians and the loss of hope in the face of the new political situation that has brought no solution for the crisis.

Other alarming indicators are also observed related to the social situation in Tunisia, including high rates of poverty, violence, crime, and suicide, and the growing phenomenon of impunity, which has allowed many abuses, such as murder during arrest and prosecution, as well as excessive use of force against protesters.

Undoubtedly, the next quarter is the most critical since the revolution, as the state budget will not be sufficient to meet basic needs, considering that the declared budget was based on the possibilities of mobilizing additional financial resources that have not been obtained, which will disastrously affect the performance of the state in relation to the lack of food, water and fertilizer. The quality of basic services provided has generated a wave of anger that tends to escalate, especially since the president has excluded most of the traditional organizations, whether political, civil or social institutions, that were framing and directing the protest towards clear demands. We are facing massive popular anger that can take violent forms and embody individualistic solutions.

### **Monitoring methodology for irregular migration:**

The totality of the data contained in this report represents what the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights has been able to gather from various sources and by the available means. The digital data remains incomplete, not detailed and subject to updating and may not fully reflect reality, but in the absence of detailed and updated information from the Tunisian official side (number of passes - number Passengers - their distribution according to age groups and gender - defining where they come from - their social status - the number of missing persons...) These data may contribute to a clearer understanding of migration dynamics and significant transformations.

**Frustrating Passes:** Reliance is placed on the Ministry of Interior's communiqués and the statements of the spokesperson of the National Guard in the various media. Most of them do not contain detailed data (sex, age groups, the parties from which the immigrants come...)

**Arrivals to European coasts:** Many structures that emit digital data about arrivals to Europe, such as UNHCR, IOM, European countries' ministries of the interior and the European Coastal Control Agency.

The figures provided remain approximate and require continuous updating according to figures from official and civil structures that may be issued in subsequent reports but provide a reading of the evolution and change in the dynamics of irregular migration.

**Invisible numbers:** It's the number of migrants arriving in Europe across different routes without passing through local authorities or international structures does not have any effect on the census, which is important and varies according to the tactics of migrant smuggling networks. It also includes departures from the Tunisian coasts, which succeed in evading strict security controls, or those that are prohibited from passing them without issuing or without being announced.