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المرصد الاجتماعي التونسي
FORUM TUNISIEN POUR LES DROITS ÉCONOMIQUES ET SOCIAUX



المنتدى التونسي للحقوق الاقتصادية والاجتماعية

REPORT 20 JANUARY 21

1492

Protests

13

Suicides and suicide
attempts

61

Migrants

Forum Tunisien pour les Droits Économiques et Sociaux

📍 Adresse: 2, France Avenue, «Ibn Khaldoun» (Ex National),
2nd floor, Apt 325-Tunis Bab Bhar 1000

☎ Phone.: (+216)71 325 129 - Fax: (+216)71 325 128

✉ contact@ftdes.net 🌐 ftdes.net

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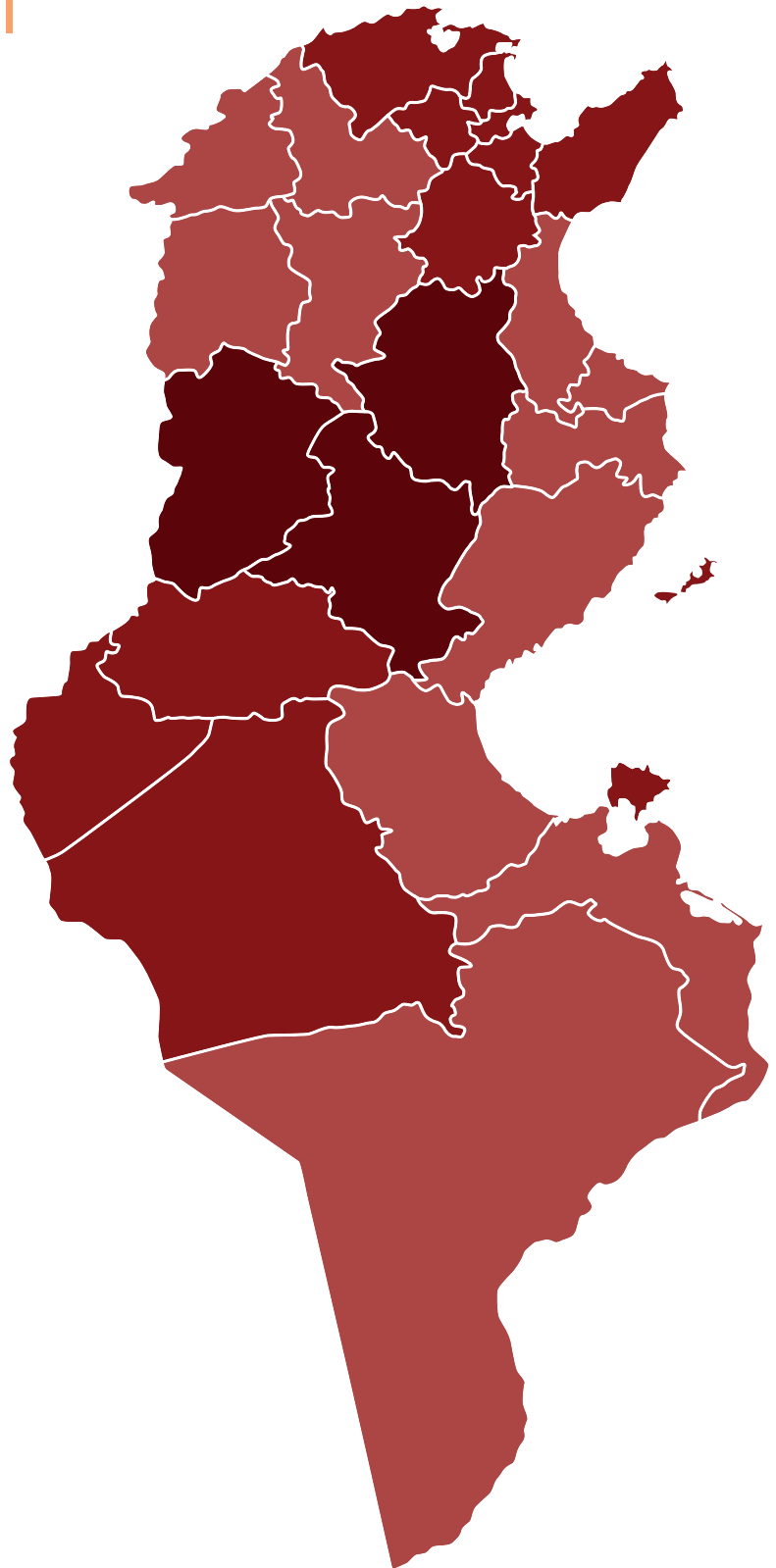
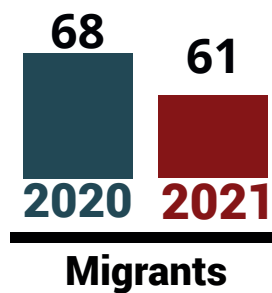
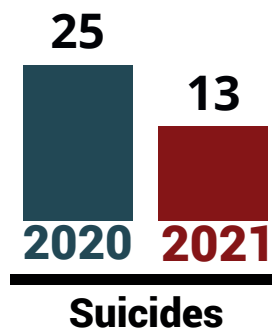
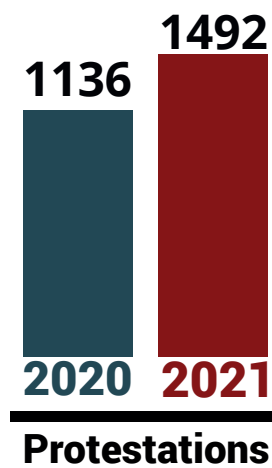
TERRE
SOLIDAIRE
Soyons les forces du changement

Tunisia

2021



January



INTRODUCTION

The events of January 2021 have confirmed, beyond any reasonable doubt, that the political elite is still unable to cope with the social crisis, both in terms of diagnosis and treatment. This minor treatment starts with a misinterpretation of the social demonstrations, giving them a conspiracy dimension, considering them as a form of conspiracy against the ruling power and treating the demonstrators as "subversives, infiltrators and criminal gangs" who deserve to be arrested and prosecuted instead of a favorable response to their economic and social claims.

This minimalist reaction coincided with the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the revolution to remind us of the atmosphere of interpreting the protests and absorbing them prior to the fall of the regime, and even go beyond this attitude by explicitly calling for the formation of militias and parallel security to support the forces of law and order in their repression of social protests. It is an abuse that opens the way for a new upsurge in social tensions and pushes towards an expected explosion in this context of blind diagnosis and incorrect vision in the handling of public affairs and in the search for solutions and exits to the global crisis in the country, the most important aspect of which is the considerable increase in the number of poor, unemployed and marginalized people.

The historical month of January:

It is not surprising that social demonstrations break out during the month of January and the fact is that the history of events in Tunisia confirms that January is a period of protest, social mobilization and it is during this period that the country usually experiences major events. This began on January 24, 1846, date of the emancipation of slaves and the abolition of slavery by Ahmed Bey, then on January 18, 1952, date of the outbreak of the Tunisian revolution against colonialism, Black Thursday of January 26, 1978, followed by the bread events on January 4, 1984, then on January 14, 2011, when former President Ben Ali fled to his exile in Saudi Arabia following social protests.

The month of January has therefore always been a time of contention, a tradition that has been perpetuated throughout history.

And if before the revolution, protest was associated with the enforcement of new finance laws and new fiscal measures, after the revolution it became a season for claiming economic and social rights, the most important of which is employment. These demands, which are constitutionally recognized rights, have been increasingly violated during the transition period due to the non-changing development model adopted, which has proved ineffective in employment and through the stagnation of the economic growth rate at almost zero in recent years, reaching -9% recorded at the end of 2020.

While what is dangerous today is not additional taxes but rather the continuous deterioration of the standard of living, January remains in people's minds as the beginning of the seasons of long and continuous protests throughout the year. This is confirmed through our monthly reports published for the past six years, which today provide an important database on the map of anger, social tensions, the demands of the demonstrators and the forms of protest they adopt against the authorities whose members are constantly changing but not their performance.

The January demonstrations were therefore not surprising, but their timing was surprising for everyone because no one today is able to predict the timing of the demonstrations, when and how people will demonstrate. What was more surprising for everyone was the presence of new actors in these latest protest movements, namely minors and teenagers.

Opportunism on the COVID crisis

It is likely that the political authority was betting on the four-day global confinement (January 14-17), which coincided with the tenth anniversary of the revolution, to prevent any form of protest in the streets in the face of the increase in social tension and collective discontent due to the deterioration of living standards and the increase in poverty, unemployment and marginalization fueled by the Covid crisis throughout the year 2020.

But the result of this misdiagnosis has been the unexpected night demonstrations by the ruling elite, repressive security treatment, violations and abuses against the demonstrators, whose number of detainees has reached about 1500.

It is a crisis management that paves the way for unexpected developments in the coming months. These profound developments are impregnated with the severity of social tensions and the rise in hate speech between citizens and the forces of law and order, a situation that can only produce violence in the coming days.

The security and oppressive response to the demonstrations proved that the authorities politicized the management of the Covid crisis and made global containment a plan to prevent social mobilization on the tenth anniversary of the revolution instead of being a preventive solution to protect people's lives.

Far from sensitizing the citizen, at least through a reassuring communicative discourse in the absence of strategies and a clear vision of reform, ensuring that his voice is heard and that his demands are prioritized and subject to the attention of the authorities, he is treated as a minor by the adoption of measures that are much more political than scientific.

These messages sent to the citizen increase the severity of social tensions and in the face of the growing crisis of the spread of the Covid pandemic and the transformation of the epidemic situation into a humanitarian disaster, the mismanagement and politicization of this crisis have become clear to the general public.

This reality has been translated into night demonstrations and attacks on public and private property by angry groups who have chosen a violent form of protest to defend fundamental demands that the political elite continues to ignore.

Returning to the COVID crisis, official figures from the Ministry of Public Health indicate an increase in the mortality rate during the month of January of 43% (2068 new deaths in January) and an increase in the contamination rate of 47% (67,804 new cases in January, an average of approximately 2,187 new contaminations daily).

The number of people under artificial respiration increased by 8.66% (11 injured), those in intensive care by 29.4% (95 injured) and those who had to be hospitalized by about 34% (533 sick people).

It becomes clear that these figures reveal the imbalance between the number of contaminations and the access to the necessary help at the right time since only 11 patients contaminated in January benefited from artificial respiration at a time when the curve recorded 67,804 new contaminations, among them, only 95 people had the chance to recover! While the rest of the patients were left to their fate facing the blackmail of oxygen merchants, the exorbitant price of renting oxygen bottle for a week (450 dinars and a guarantee check of two thousand dinars).

Furthermore, the Ministry of Public Health is currently unstable, since about 16 ministers have been appointed since 2011, including 4 ministers, during the Covid crisis.

The seventeenth (and fifth during the pandemic period) minister in charge of the health portfolio is still waiting to be sworn in at the end of January.

These aberrations in the management of the Covid crisis, in the management of public affairs and the management of the people's demands in a critical economic and social situation have imbued the people's mind with a dark image of those in power.

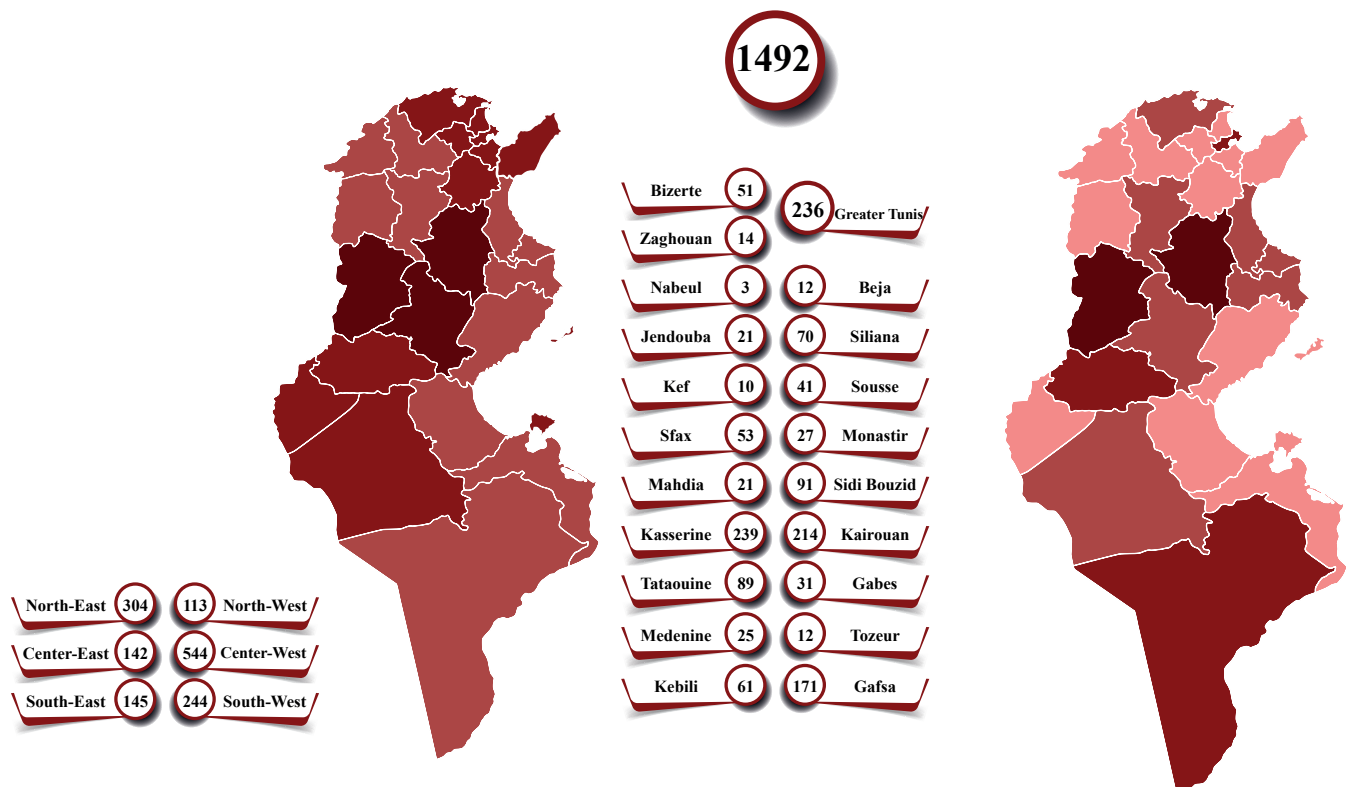
Therefore, the events of January were a prelude to a hot year and months in which the characteristics, triggers and forms of protests are not clearly predictable but will surely tend towards probable violence.

THE JANUARY PROTESTS

The mapping of social protest has not changed much during the month of January 2021, with the exception of the notable increase in the number of demonstrations recorded in the governorate of Tunis compared to December (by 105%), the map of anger remains largely confirmed in the West, since the western part of the country, recorded about 61% (901 protest movements) out of a total of 1492 social protests recorded throughout the month of January 2021.

1149 December
1492 January

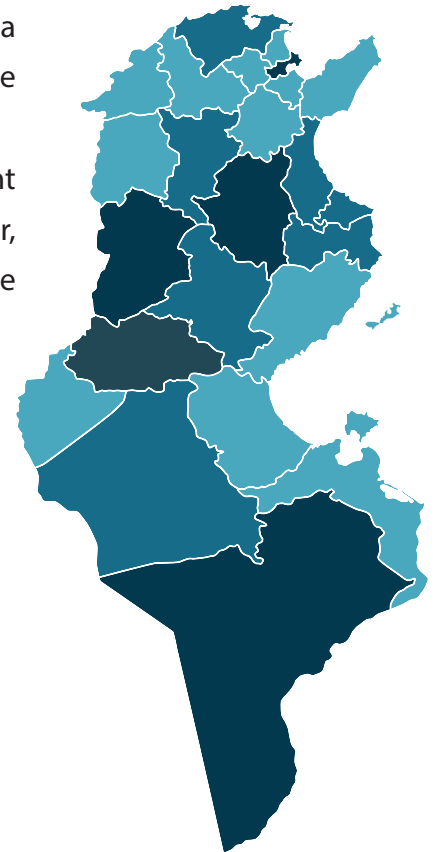
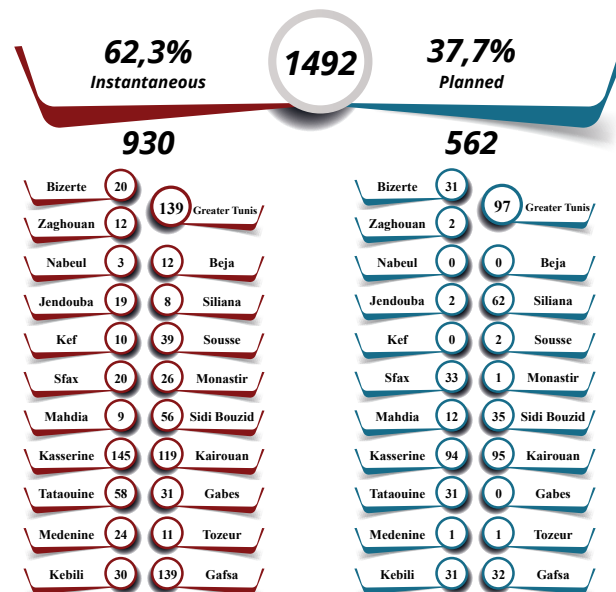
The governorates of Kairouan, Kasserine, and Gafsa alone witnessed about 42 percent of the total protests. These 624 protests were distributed as follows: 214 protests in Kairouan, 239 protests in Kasserine, and 171 protests in Gafsa.



The results of the protests and social movements for January 2021 showed the emergence of the spontaneous form of protest, with an increase of about 12% and a decrease in organized demonstrations, which means a probable evolution of these spontaneous protests resulting from impulsive reactions to violence unless they are framed and organized.

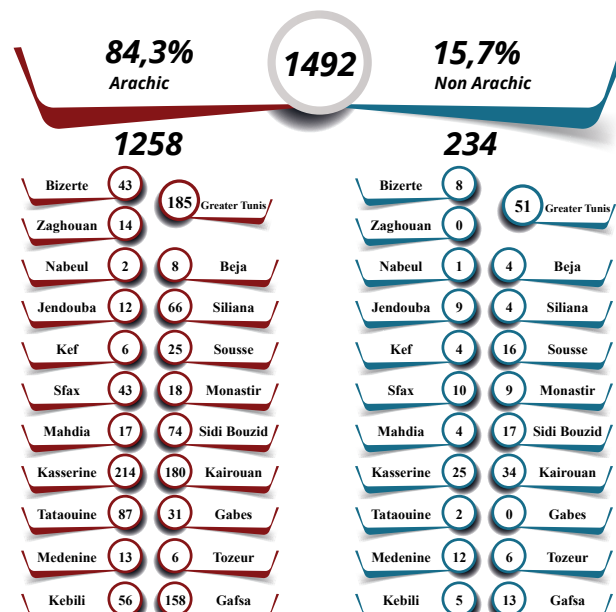
These spontaneous demonstrations were 100% of all movements in the governorates of Mahdia, Ariana, Nabeul, El Kef, Gabes, Beja and Menouba (a total of 89 protest actions) and were to varying degrees in the rest of the governorates.

It should be noted that the organized demonstrations remain predominant in the governorates of Bizerte, Siliana and Sfax since they reached, in order, 60%, 88% and 62% of the total number of protests recorded in these regions.



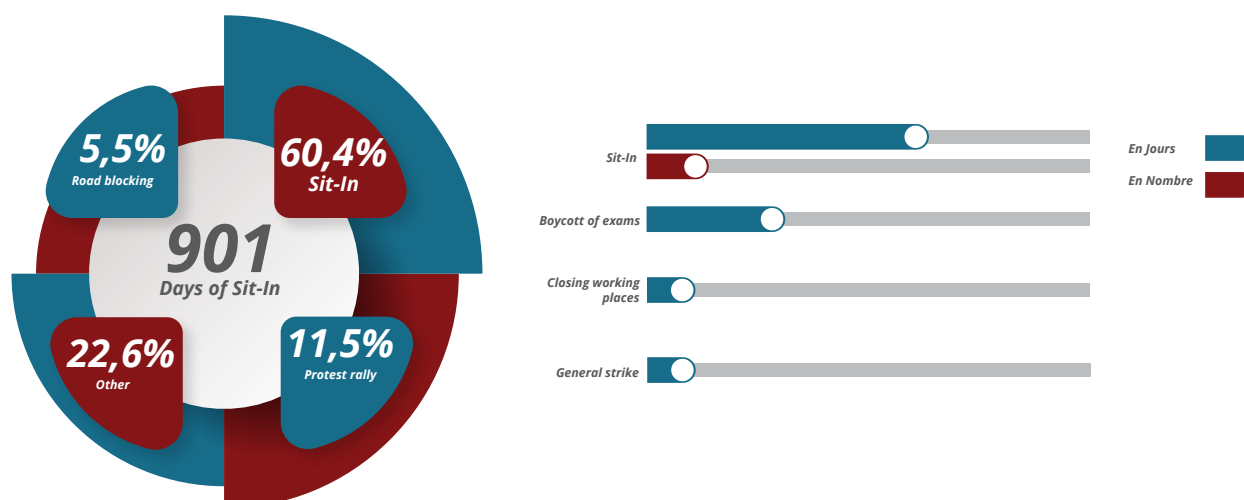
As for anarchic demonstrations, that is to say those that tend to be violent, they represented 84% of the total number of demonstrations recorded during the month of January 2021.

We recall that anarchic demonstrations with violent tendencies began to emerge during the month of May 2020 with a rate of about 73%, and marked the beginning of a change in the mapping of social demonstrations, so that the governorates of the Center-West became the most angry and most congested areas.

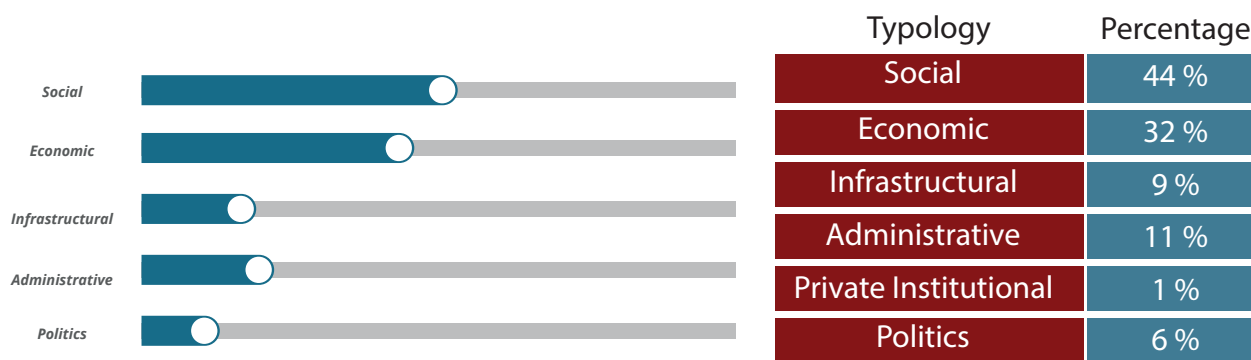


The January Protests

Anarchic demonstrations accounted for 89.5% of total demonstrations in the governorate of Kasserine, 84% of demonstrations in Kairouan, 92% of demonstrations in Gafsa, and 79% of demonstrations in the governorate of Tunis. Demonstrations in the governorate of Gabes were 100% anarchic.



With regard to the forms of protest, sit-ins represented the most recorded form with a rate of 60.4%. In fact, 901 days of sit-ins were recorded for sit-ins that had been going on for months and which continued during the month of January. Protest rallies accounted for 11.5% of the total number of protests recorded, road-blocks for 5.5% and various other forms of protest for approximately 22.6% of the protests observed during the month of January 2021.



Most of the demonstrators' demands were economic and social (74%), employment demands (23%), the right to development (19%), the right to water (4%), the implementation of a previous agreement (5%), as well as other legitimate demands that citizens, students, employees, unemployed, farmers, workers and others make before local, regional and central authorities that share a policy of non-interaction with the demands of the demonstrators.

Throughout the month of January there was an increase in protests from farmers demanding the fair distribution of subsidized silage and ammonium nitrate products that would allow them to have a climate and conditions suitable for production. These farmer protests did not meet with any significant interaction. This occurred at a time when the Corona pandemic in all countries of the world raises the priority of food security especially after the experience of the total and global closure of borders between countries.



Sector	Percentage
Educative	14 %
Environmental	3 %
Of Health	1 %
Security	3 %
Legal	17 %
Of Sports	1 %
Access to water	6 %
Agricultural	1 %
Transport	1 %
Private Sector	4 %
Public Sector	55 %

Protests have also been registered regarding the improvement of social standards and the right to a decent life, such as the improvement of infrastructures, access to drinking water, an end to occupational violations against workers, the payment of compensation, the improvement of health services and the approval of the fair regularization of the situation of urban construction workers.

As for the spaces of protest, roads remain the first theater of protesters with a rate of 38%, followed by the production and administration headquarters and the headquarters of the authorities with equivalent rates (10%). Even the hospital and the prison have become spaces for protest, with two protests in one hospital and 12 protests in one prison.

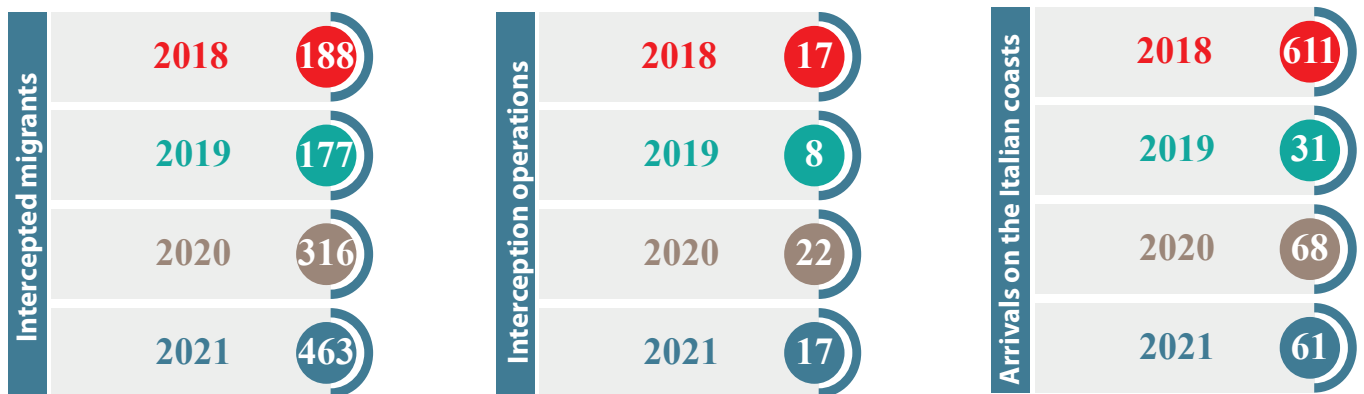
The initiating social actors movements

Citizens	25 %
Youth	24 %
Employees	13 %
inhabitants	9 %
teachers	8 %
Unemployed	7 %
Drivers	5 %
Parents	5 %
workers	4 %
Unemployed graduated people	3 %

Protest spaces

Roads	38 %
Production headq	10 %
Administrative headquarters	10 %
Public buildings	10 %
Governorate headquarters	9 %
Educational institutions	7 %
Headquarters of Delegations	5 %
Judicial Institutions	5 %
Medias	5 %
Ministry headquarters	3 %

IRREGULAR MIGRATION



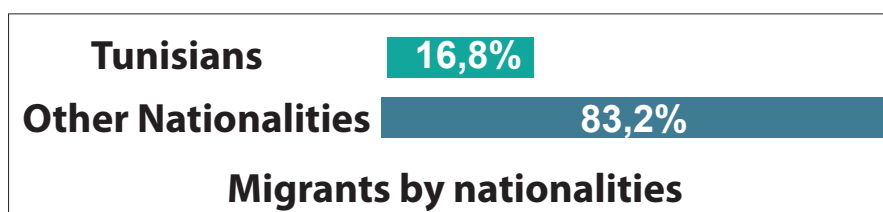
Comparative data for the months of January 2018 – 2019 – 2020 – 2021

The month of January 2021 began in a context of political, economic and social tensions that are constantly evolving towards unpredictable scenarios, but irregular migration has experienced a pace that comes as no surprise during the month of January, especially given the climatic factors of that month, since we have noted the arrival of 61 irregular migrants on the Italian coast, constituting a slight decrease compared to January 2020, 17 transit operations were intercepted and 463 migrants were prevented from reaching the Italian coast.

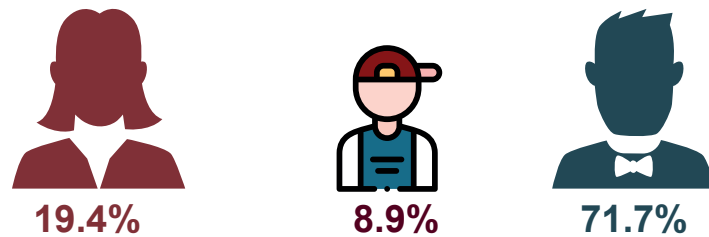
January	Bizerte	Tunis	Nabeul	Sousse	Monastir	Mahdia	Sfax	Gabes	Médenine
	5,8%	17,6%	11,7%	5,8%	-	17,6%	41,1%	-	-

Intercepted operations by region

The region of Sfax is still the first in the intercepted transit operations with a rate of 41.1%. This cannot be explained solely by the region's traditions related to irregular migration or the fishing crisis, nor by the presence of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa in abundance in the region or young Tunisians coming from inland regions, but also by the economic consequences of the pandemic on the region and the intensified activity of unorganized migration networks that have remained untargted for one reason or another.



Irregular migration has acquired a periodicity linked to climatic and security factors, but there is also a frequency related to nationalities, since sub-Saharan migrants account for the majority of those who leave during the period from October to March, which are the months when Tunisians' desire for their irregular migration project is less due to climatic factors, leaving room for the rest of those who wish to migrate. Consequently, sub-Saharan migrants become the target of the organizers because of the vulnerability they suffer, which deepens their desire to leave despite all the risks.



Migrants by gender

The percentage of women participating in irregular migration processes is continuously increasing and this is mainly due, during this month of January 2021, to the participation of migrant women from Sub-Saharan Africa, individually or as part of a whole family.

Operations intercepted in January

January	Terrestrial	Maritime
	23,5%	76,5%

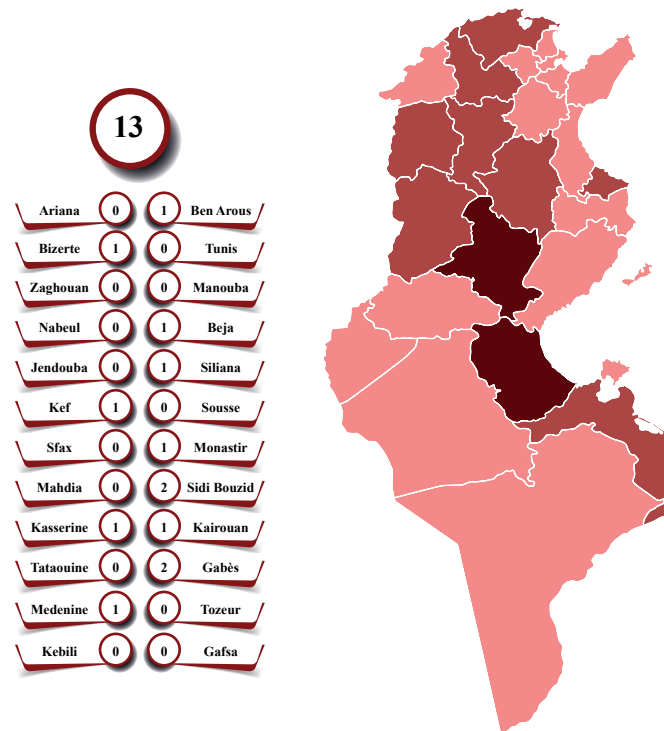
The increase in land arrests is due to the interception of operations involving sub-Saharan migrants, making their gathering subject to the suspicion of "attempted crossing" and the technical equipment chartered for surveillance plays an important role in the interception of crossing operations.

What is remarkable this month is the interception of a non-regulatory migration vessel outside Tunisian territorial waters by an army naval unit on January 11, 2021, after coordination between the Maritime Army Search and Rescue Coordination Center in Tunisia and the two Rescue Centers in Malta and Rome.

SUICIDES AND SUICIDE ATTEMPTS

The governorate of Kairouan is no longer first in terms of acts of suicide and attempted suicide, yet this phenomenon has not disappeared either.

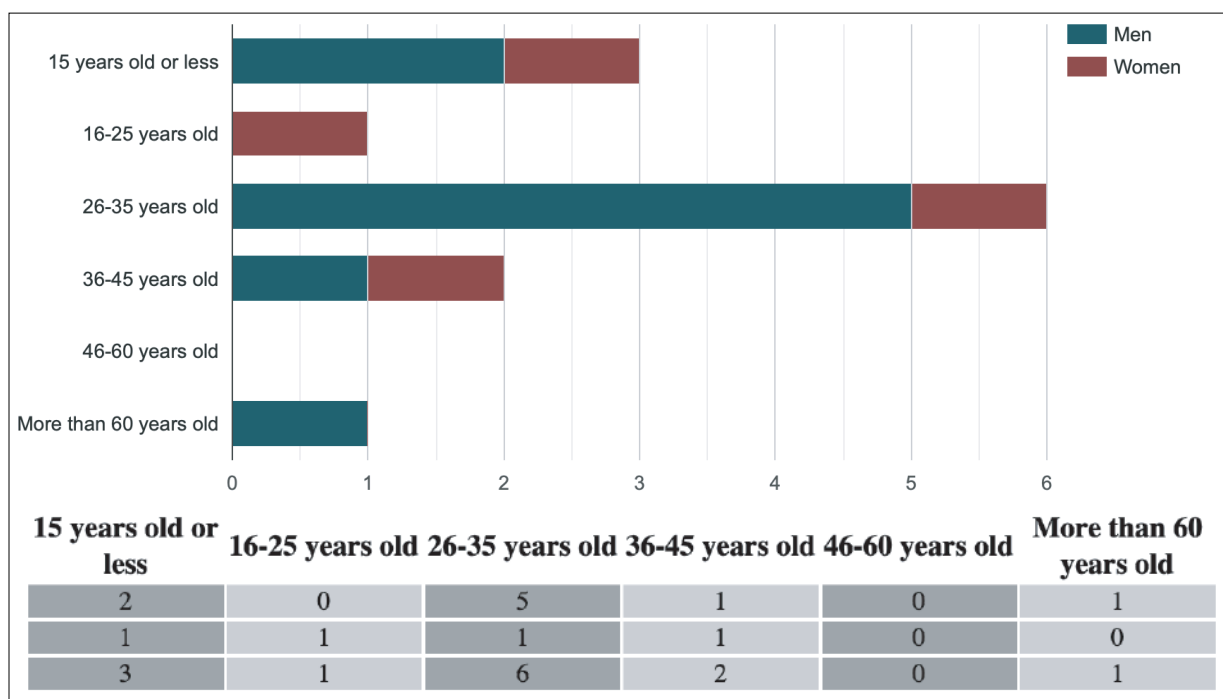
During the month of January 2021, 13 acts of suicide and attempted suicide were recorded, distributed as follows: two suicides and attempts in Gabès and Sidi Bouzid, and one case of suicide and attempt in each of the governorates of Bizerte, El-Kef, Kasserine, Medenine, Ben Arous, Beja, Seliana, Monastir and Kairouan.



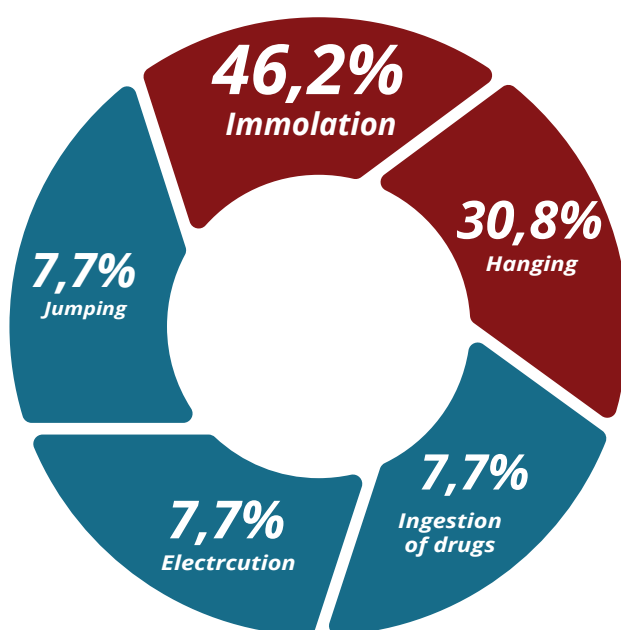
Cases of suicide and attempted suicide recorded a decrease of 23.5% compared to December 2020. In addition, we have recorded an increase in the percentage of the female gender of about 7%.



The percentage of males was estimated at 69.2% of the total number of victims and the 26-35 age group accounted for 46% (6 victims) of the victims of the cases recorded during the month of January 2021.



Moreover, suicide by immolation was the most important form of suicide observed with a rate of 46.2%, followed by suicide by hanging with a rate of 30.8%, jumping and rushing, intentional electrocution and ingestion of toxic substances with a rate of 7.7% for each of these means.



THE VIOLENCE REPORT

The month of January 2021 was marked by a clear exacerbation of the phenomenon of violence, including in various official and public spaces.

In parallel with the events of violence, incitement, hate speech, exclusion and shocking and shameful dwarfism that the members of the Assembly of People's Representatives exchanged throughout the month, the country experienced the impact of a general state of tension, anger and discontent, during which most of the governorates of the Republic experienced a wave of demonstrations, most of them at night, accompanied by acts of violence, riots, arson and clashes between demonstrators and the forces of law and order.

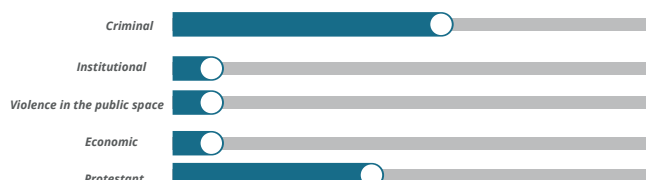
The month of January 2021 recorded an excessive use of violence by the state police machinery, followed by random arrests of demonstrators, bloggers and social network activists. These practices exacerbated the state of anger and led to a new series of protests for a generation that chose its movement in the form of direct confrontations with state institutions consisting mainly of the security forces.

And in the language of figures according to the watch sample, composed by a number of daily and weekly newspapers and several websites both Arab and French, and based on the results of the work of the Tunisian Social Observatory team, the percentage of protest violence has recorded, for the first time, less than 30% of the total volume of violence.

Similar to the previous months, violence in its criminal form remains at the forefront of the violence observed, mainly in the form of "hold-ups" and robbery with the use of violence, representing 64% of the volume of violence recorded during the month of January 2021.

On the other hand, the level of economic and institutional violence has decreased, as it did not exceed 2% of the total violence in January 2021.

Sector	Percentage
Criminal	46 %
Institutional	2 %
Violence in the public space	2 %
Economic	2 %
Protestant	30 %

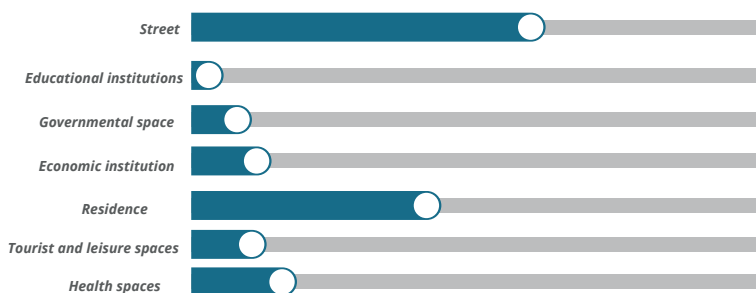


The streets were the scene of 56% of the total violence recorded during the month of January, so that domestic and residential space came in second place, with 24% of the total violence incidents.

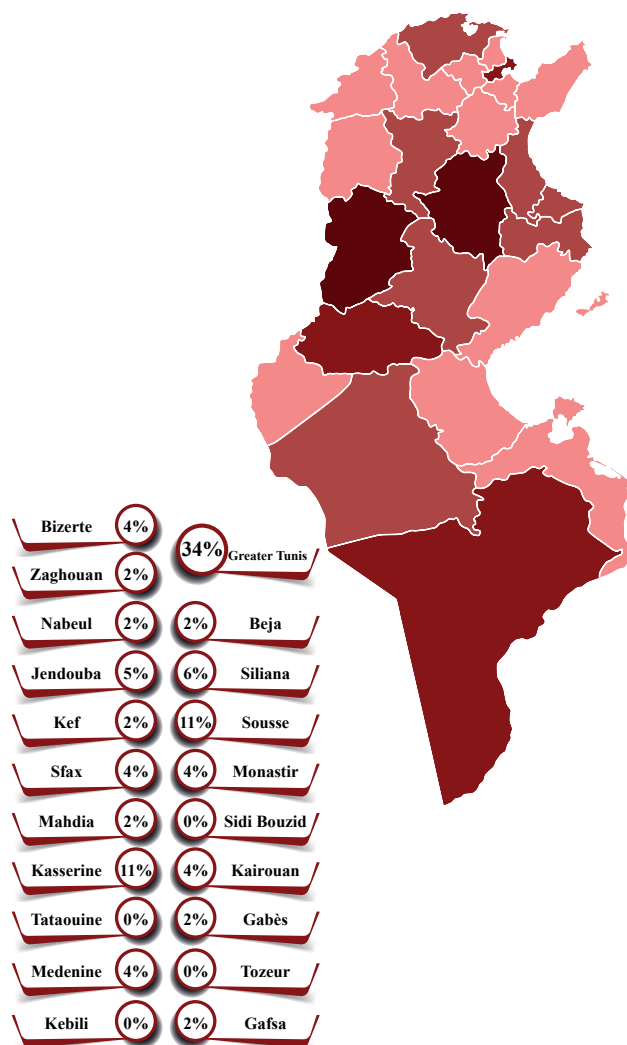
In addition, the administrative and sanitary areas accounted for 6% of the violence recorded in January.

With regard to the distribution of violence according to governorates, the results of the work of the Tunisian Social Observatory show that the mobilization, anger and tensions that most of the governorates of the Republic have experienced have had an impact on the mapping and distribution rates of violence.

Space	Percentage
Street	56 %
Educational institutions	2 %
Governmental space	6 %
Economic institution	4 %
Residence	24 %
Tourist and leisure spaces	2 %
Health spaces	6 %



According to the figures, the governorate of Tunis remained at the head of the violent incidents recorded with 17%, knowing that the capital witnessed most of the movements recorded during the month, followed also by the governorates of Ariana, Kasserine and Sousse, with 11% of the total incidents recorded during the month of January 2021. This percentage shows the high level of anger in these governorates. In the governorate of Ariana, the neighborhoods of Ettadhamen and El Intileka witnessed clashes between security forces and demonstrators for several nights. Some neighborhoods of Sousse lived under the impact of violence, riots, fires and clashes between security forces and demonstrators. The same was noted in a number of delegations in Kasserine, witnessing a series of clashes between security forces and demonstrators further on after the death of the young man, Heykel El-Rachdi, in the delegation of Sbeitla, following a tear gas canister injury to his head.



The governorates of Seliana and Jendouba succeeded them with 6% of the total violence observed, the governorates of Monastir, Kairouan, Bizerte, Medenine and Sfax, which are governorates that also experienced demonstrations and clashes between security and demonstrators recorded 4% of all these actions.

The male gender accounted for 54.7% of the victims of violence reported in January 2021, while the female gender accounted for 26.4% of the victims of violence. As in previous months, men were the main perpetrators of the recorded violence. They accounted for 88.7% of the perpetrators of violent incidents.



Overall, the violence recorded during January 2021 was collective with 71.7% of all acts of violence while individual violence was in the range of 28.3%.

It should be noted that the level of violence escalated, peaking at the time of the commemoration of the January 14 revolution. Given the government's management of the demonstrations, which was limited to purely security measures, devoid of any social or economic approach and without any political presence, angry citizens did not calm down and the streets registered a period of movement and a variety of expressions of grumbling throughout the month. This anger intensified with speeches and statements issued by the security forces' unions threatening and intimidating the demonstrators, given their monopoly of legal, state violence.

**Collective
violence
72 %**



**Individual
violence
28 %**



CONCLUSION

In the end, the protest harvest of January 2021 was an important indicator, since it recorded an increase of about 27.5% compared to December 2020, similar in terms of economic, social, health and political climate to that of January.

It also recorded an increase of 29% compared to January 2020, which marked the beginning of the first year of the reign of a new "system" chosen by voters in the general elections at the end of 2019 and its results have been described as a "shock", especially since the discontent and social tensions in the face of the economic and social crisis were the main factor of choice.

This indicator, namely, the increase in the rate of social protest, seems to inaugurate a warm year in which demonstrations will continue and in which the actors and their tools of protest will vary.

Indeed, the forms of protest have begun to move towards innovation and the new actors are moving towards extremes to make their voices heard. Perhaps the demonstrations of December 30 at the Human Rights Square in the capital, which seemed shocking to many, are the most prominent headlines of change and confrontation chosen by the new actors of the social protests. This change comes in a context of increased police repression during the demonstrations in mid-January, particularly in the popular belts of the capital.

The tense political climate gives impetus to more violence between demonstrators and the security forces and the anger of the security unions at the innovative forms of protest by the demonstrators and their perception of these forms of protest as an outrage to the prestige of security, not to mention the tendency of the discourse of these unions to threaten social movements and demonstrators.

Not only has this situation been accompanied by a dazzling absence of an official appeasing discourse imposing the prevalence of the law, but the political parties in conflict under the dome of Parliament have attempted in their statements to draw the angry security forces into the political crisis that the country is currently experiencing. In convergence with social tensions and the general state of discontent among all protesters, exposes the country to a social explosion, violence and a collision between protesters and security forces in the coming days, unless wisdom and good management of the social crisis is employed.

NEW SCIENTIFIC CALCULATION METHODOLOGY:

As of March, the Tunisian Social Observatory of the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights has adopted a new methodology of scientific calculation, the bases of which are as follows:

Definitions:

Instantaneous movements: characterized by the surprise and speed of movement resulting from the anger of the crowd and the rumble it generates but are limited in time and space. This type of movement seeks to mobilize attention and social mobilization and is characterized by its peaceful nature. However, these movements vary in the parameters of protest development, including the use of violence.

Planned movements: movements which were essentially immediate but which changed and developed mechanisms of action in time and space and were able to acquire the capacity to organize and prepare for and seek to develop counter-mobilization but remain essentially peaceful. They are distinguished by their organizational means and their capacity to ensure its continuous action and mobilization for the same reasons.

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Violent movements: these are movements that make use of counter-violence as one of their mechanisms of action and are often direct reactions employing all means for confrontation and the achievement of their objectives, but they often lack clear organizational elements, programs and means.

The methodology of Calculation:

The uniqueness of a movement is defined by a mode of action, a place and a day.

A protest taking place in several places will be counted as several movements.

A movement taking place over several days will be counted each day.

A protest using different action modes will be counted once for each action.

METHODOLOGY FOR MONITORING IRREGULAR MIGRATION

- **Interception Operations:** The watch is based on reports from the Ministry of the Interior and statements by the National Guard representative in the various Medias. In most cases, they do not include detailed information (gender, age groups, and the immigrants' countries of origin).
- **Arrivals on European coasts:** Several structures issue digital data on arrivals to Europe, such as the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration, the Ministries of Interior of European countries and the European Coastal Surveillance Agency.
- **The figures presented remain approximate and require continuous updating** according to data published by official and civil structures, which may be edited in future reports, but which provide a reading of the evolution and change in the dynamics of irregular migration.
- **Invisible figures:** are the numbers of migrants who reach European coasts without going through local authorities or international structures and are not included in a census. These are important figures and differ according to the tactics of migrant smuggling networks. They also include departure operations from the Tunisian coasts that manage to escape strict security checkpoints or those whose passage is intercepted without issuing reports or without announcing them.