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Social
Tunisien
المرصد الاجتماعي التونسي
Tunisian Social Observatory
TUNISIAN FORUM FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

FTDES

FRENCH ACRONYM FOR:
TUNISIAN FORUM FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS



Report Semi-annual 20 21

6798

Collective
protests

78

cases of suicide and
attempted suicide

2962

Migrants

The Agricultural Crisis in Gafsa

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TERRE
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Soyons les forces du changement

Introduction

Tunisia witnessed tough times throughout the first half-year of 2021 where the situation has sharply deteriorated by a series of crises; economic, social, political, health and security. The impact of this unprecedented crisis exacerbated the social tension, increased the level of violence and brutality and created an atmosphere fraught with stress and pressure threatening the citizen's security and social peace.

The first half-year was just the beginning of a year that would be more complicated unless the state interferes and put an end to the country's overall crisis that is marked by conflict and lack of confidence between the political actors and the social actors, adding to the increasing number of the human losses caused by the rapid spread of the Coronavirus and the very slow progress made in the vaccination campaigns. In addition to the beginning of the agricultural season, the political return and the start of the academic year that begins with the following September, alongside with what this summer will witness of protests movements, demands and protests. There is no doubt that the second half of the year will be more complicated for Tunisian people and for the decision-makers as well.

These circumstances added to the severe degradation of the purchasing power and the continued deterioration of the basic services, including the lack of life-saving materials such as water, food, and medical equipment, all of this represents a dangerous and real threat to social capital.

In such a situation fraught with tension society, a vulnerable economy that is constantly decreasing, and miserable living conditions with a complicated and unstable political landscape, the complexity of which is increasing day by day, with no trust between the political actor and the social actor that represents a crucial factor and a pillar that is relied upon to cope with emergencies and crises in societies and to find a way out of the impasse towards economic prosperity, growth and social well-being.

The first half of the year follows three years of the 2019 presidential and legislative elections, in which the economic and social crisis was the primary motivation of the voters' choices. Nowadays, many of them believe that it was merely a formal ceremony during which the "System" was replaced with a new similar "System," but the crisis remained the same. The first year after the 2019 elections was marked by all kinds of crises, with a record contraction rate of about 21%, unemployment and poverty rising and around 400,000 Tunisians losing their jobs due to the impact of the Corona Pandemic prevention measures on institutions and the economy.

While many Governments in the world succeeded in reducing the economic, social and health repercussions of the pandemic, the Tunisian Government, the Government of Hisham al-Meshishi, has shown a deficiency and improvisation in managing the crisis, which added salt on the injury. As a result, more than 15,000 Tunisians died of the Coronavirus. Thousands of them suffered from difficulty in accessing to public health since our hospital institutions, especially the public sector, suffers from lack of medical and paraplegic equipment, lack of access to medicines, sterilization, oxygen and recovery beds.

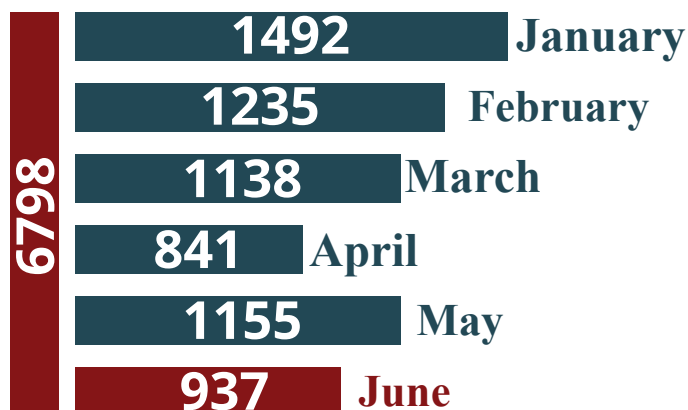
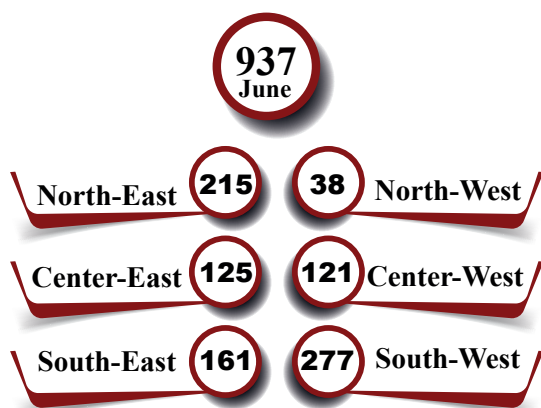
Thousands more lost their jobs which increased marginalization and violence. The weakest circle in our society pays the price:

women, children and the elderly. The violence level against them risen and differed between moral and physical; rape, violence, maiming, starvation, intimidation, and threatening. In addition to the difficulties encountered by this group in accessing public health, the children also suffered from the repercussions of quarantine and the successive school interruptions that they were forced to deal with during the current school year, and the impact they had on the quality of their educational achievement input.

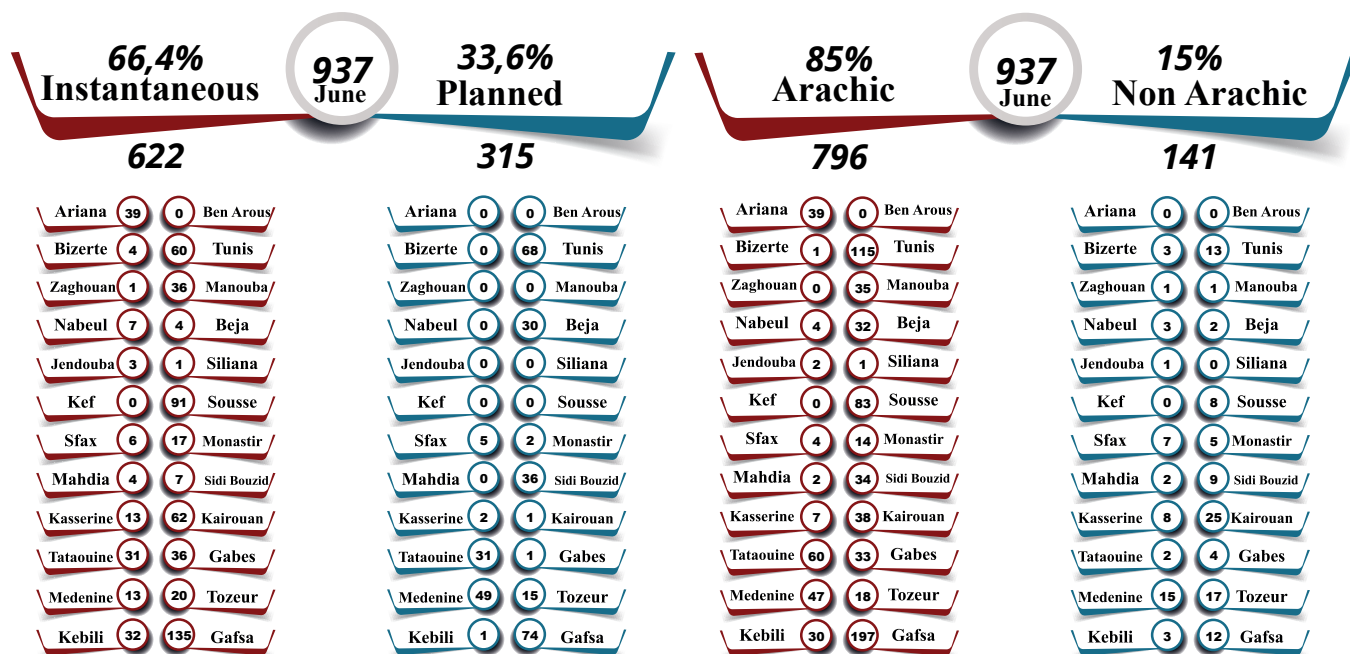
Indeed, during this first half of the year, the general climate was conducive to further nourishing social agitation and accumulating anger and rage, while at the same time providing a chance for Tunisians to renew their same long-awaited demands for the benefits of a betrayed revolution of dignity, employment, social justice and fight against corruption.

Semi-annual Report of 2021

Perhaps this disappointment that the Tunisians are living in explains the 6798 protests through the first half of the year; January (1492 protest), February (1235), March (1138), those three months witnessed the peak of the increasing protest movements, the pattern starts to decrease in April (841), then increased again in March (1155) and finally 937 protests in the month of June.



More than 80% of the Protests and movements were random, disorganized and related to the demands of the right to employment, improved working conditions, to stop the clear violation of labors' rights, and the failure to fulfill official decisions and commitments.



On the Political Level

During this first half of the year, the Government of Hisham al - Mashishi showed a major deficit in its management of the country's political, economic and social crisis, especially since it appeared weak, without a clear vision or program, dependent on supporting the ruling alliance in Parliament and dwelling in its internal problems as a result of the crisis of ministerial transformation. Police brutality, repression and constriction represented the Government's primary choice in interacting with social mobility and protests, which characterized the first half of this year.

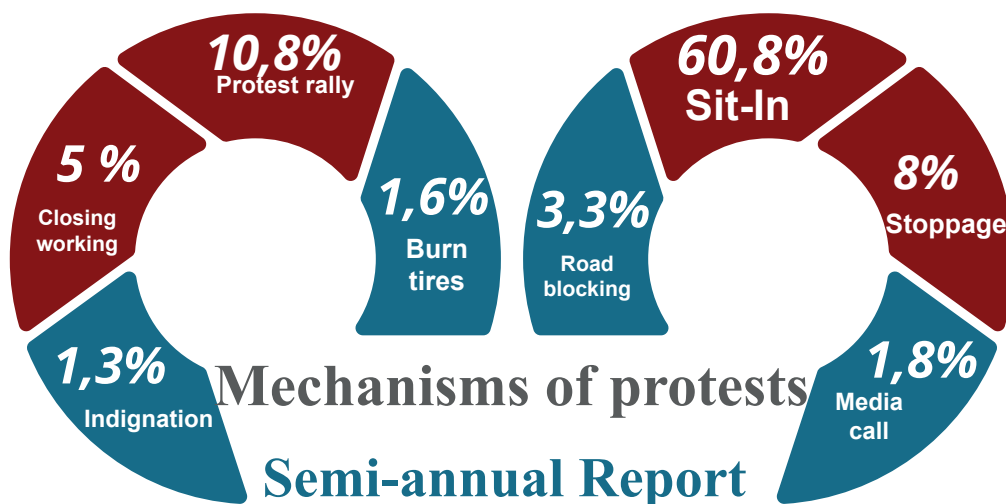
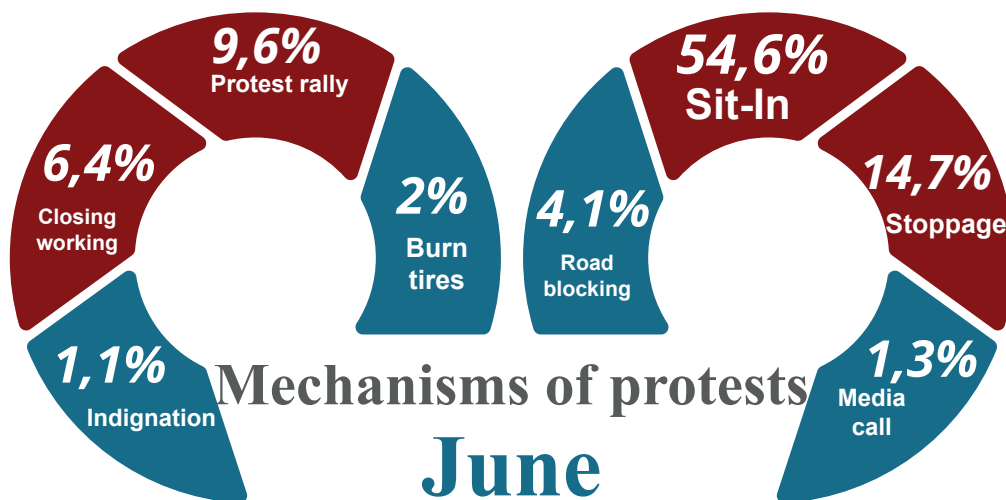
In January, the Government clashed with a wave of massive protests on the tenth anniversary of the revolution. Despite the total quarantine announced from 14 to 17 January 2021 as a prevention of the spread of the Corona pandemic, the Government failed to suppress the protest's social mobility that lunched from the impoverished working class neighbourhoods, mainly Hay Tadhamon. Social movements were confronted by unprecedented police brutality and violence, which ended in more than 2000 arbitrary arrests, including minors and adolescents, and serious humanitarian violations, torture and ill-treatment, which were denounced and condemned by various legal activists and civil society organizations. The media sought to expose and shed light on them. Still, they were not prosecuted like previous attacks involving social actors. There was a general case of impunity among the police officers who hold responsible for all the abuse cases.

| The initiating social actors movements Semi-annual | |
|---|------------------|
| 18 % | Employees |
| 15 % | other Citizens |
| 15 % | Youth |
| 13 % | Unemployed |
| 10 % | workers |
| 10 % | inhabitants |
| 7 % | teachers |
| 6 % | Unemployed gradu |
| 5 % | Drivers |
| 3 % | farmers |

| The initiating social actors movements June | |
|--|------------------|
| 24 % | Employees |
| 16 % | inhabitants |
| 15 % | Youth |
| 14 % | workers |
| 13 % | Unemployed |
| 12 % | other Citizens |
| 7 % | Unemployed gradu |
| 4 % | teachers |
| 4% | Journalists |
| 4 % | farmers |

The protests were also stigmatized and distorted by politicians, including leaders in the ruling coalition, who considered the protesters to be "saboteurs, anarchists, and criminal gangs." They considered the protests to be a conspiracy against the government. However, the Government repressive policies of protests and their demands and movements, along with the security unions, whose leaders have pledged to suppress social movements, continued in response to suppress innovative protests by social actors in the human rights arena, on Mohammed Al-khames Street and on Habib Bourguiba Street in the capital, during which they demanded the release of those arrested against the backdrop of last protests. According to the Security Union, these new forms were considered to be a form of abuse and disrespect. Later on, they deliberately assaulted social actors, young protestors and legal activists.

The social movements and protests organized during the tenth anniversary of the Revolution and over the months of January and February came a great deal of innovation and diversity in the forms and methods of protest, they also paved the way to the rise of new social actors, queers, the wrong generation, and many other groups who had their own forms of protest, demand, rejection, rage and anger, The movements continued over more than six weeks, involving a large part of the Republic's states, especially from the less fortunate and working-class neighborhoods and marginalized regions.



Over the past months, the instability and vulnerability experienced by the Government led it to make improvised decisions in its management of the crisis of the emerging Coronavirus pandemic and take preventive measures seemed more politically than scientifically. A reality reflected in the scale of the human and economic losses to exceed 15,000 deaths during the first half of this year. The economic contraction continued, it is still very low (3% during the first trimester of the year). While the Government has avoided establishing a two-week quarantine, extended twice (a quarantine of a month and half) in order to cut off the contamination circles but mainly for other economic and social reasons.

The country's lock-down experience in April 2019 seriously affected the micro-jobs and exposed thousands to poverty and hunger. The Government did not take radical decisions that would help people to overcome the Covid crisis, such as harnessing all the possibilities of nursing the infected, preventing the trafficking of oxygen and providing recovery beds in regions suffering from miserable health conditions as a result of the deterioration of the public health system.

Protests with a political background represented about 5% of the total number of protests observed throughout these six months, including movements with a rights defenders background that rejected the arrest of minors and teenagers who demonstrated against marginalization and poverty on the tenth anniversary of the revolution, and rose demands related to the decisions of unfulfilled regional ministerial councils and government pledges that remained in vain.

| Les espaces de protestation Semi-annual Report | |
|---|---------------------|
| 22 % | Roads |
| 13 % | Work spaces |
| 11 % | Governorate head |
| 9 % | Production headq |
| 8 % | Educational inst |
| 7 % | Administrative |
| 7 % | Headquarters of Del |
| 7 % | Medias |
| 7 % | Ministry headqua |
| 6 % | Public buildings |

| Les espaces de protestation June | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 22 % | Work spaces |
| 20 % | Roads |
| 10 % | Sièges des municipalités |
| 8 % | Governorate head |
| 7 % | Production headq |
| 7 % | Ministry headqua |
| 7 % | CPG |
| 5 % | Headquarters of Del |
| 5 % | Educational inst |
| 4 % | Administrative |

Sovereign headquarters, such as Parliament, Government Square in Quasba, State Headquarters, Governor's offices, represented a suitable place for protesters (about 24% of all protests throughout the first six months of 2021). There has been an increase in protests with a legal background, namely those calling for the enactment of the law and, in particular, an end to impunity. These protests accounted for 10% of the total of the first six months of protests.

| SEMI-ANNUAL | JUNE | SECTOR |
|-------------|------|--------|
| 11 % | 11 % | LEGAL |

On the level of Health:

The country lived three waves of Covid19 infection in six months. The first was during the month of January, the second started by the end of March, and the third began in the month of June. In six months, the number of deaths increased by 217%, from 4784 on 31 December 2020 to 15,171 on 30 June 2021.

The number of infected also increased by about 200% in the last six months, which can be read through two hypotheses:

The first hypothesis is that the Government does not adopt any strategy to prevent the spread of the virus and leave it to citizens to face their fate.

The second hypothesis is there exist a strategy, but it did not reach out to people due to the Government's poor communication.

The inability of this government did not stop at the inefficiency and the bad strategies used by the government to manage the pandemic crisis in terms of the lack of transparent and clear strategies in the acquisition of vaccines and their perfect distribution according to the database available at the national health insurance fund (for people with chronic diseases and the most vulnerable groups in terms of health), nor in terms of the inability to provide preventive materials and imposing preventive health measures in common areas. without forgetting the prevention of the traffic of oxygen and the mobilization of all the possibilities to save the human and the economy; but extended to the indifference in the consideration of the human losses that the epidemic began to register in the country and the emergence of a real inequality between the citizens at the level of the access to the healthcare, the right to the healthcare and the right of access to hospitals, in particular, the services of artificial breathing and resuscitation.

Horrible pictures of patients in local hospitals have been published on Facebook (in the local pages), In the areas that are suffering from poverty and marginalization for money years and face a continuous deterioration in the level of public health services. The reality of the epidemiological situation does not seem to correspond to the figures published daily by the Ministry of Public Health, because the increase in the daily number of tests performed increases the percentage of positive tests. The end of the first six months of the current year has seen an increase of about 250%, to almost the number of such analyses in one day. We are 19 250 thousand tests, and the case was that it was about 5,000 tests in early January. There are many questions based on the reasons that barred the ministry to adopt the mechanism of intensifying daily galaxy scans to expand the circle of investigation to stop the circle of infection. Note that the department has increased the number of galactic scans during January to a maximum of about 20,000 per day. The number of protests has increased approximately to 20 protest movements out of the total protests monitored over the six months.

SEMI-ANNUAL

JUNE

SECTOR

3 %

3 %

OF HEALTH

The incident of the murder of the young doctor in Jendouba due to a breakdown of the elevator, the protest of citizens against the health services available, the movements of medical, paramedical tires demanding the improvement of working conditions, the improvement of the infrastructure of hospitals, provide preventive supplies, support the human element, the improvement of their working conditions and the adjustment of their professional situations throughout this semester.

On the economic and social level

Tunisia has not yet recovered from the economic slowdown since April 2020, when it experienced a decline of 21% in economic performance. The overall decline rate for the year 2020 was about 8% at the end of the year. During the first quarter of 2021, a negative growth rate of 3% was recorded. These figures had a social impact because the unemployment rate has increased, and it reaches 17.81% in the first quarter of 2021. These are two important indicators to show the possible increase in the rate of poverty. However, the official figures stop at a poverty rate of 16, an old figure dating back to 2017.

| Semi-annual | June | Typologi |
|-------------|------|-----------------------|
| 44% | 51% | Social |
| 30% | 25% | Economic |
| 10% | 9% | Infrastructural |
| 12% | 13% | Administrative |
| 1% | 2% | Private Institutional |
| 5% | 3% | Politics |

The employment, development, improvement of citizen-oriented services, and the water supply were the major axes in the demands of the protestors. The average monthly number of protests for the economic and social demands over the last six months is estimated at approximately 70% (4,839 protests).

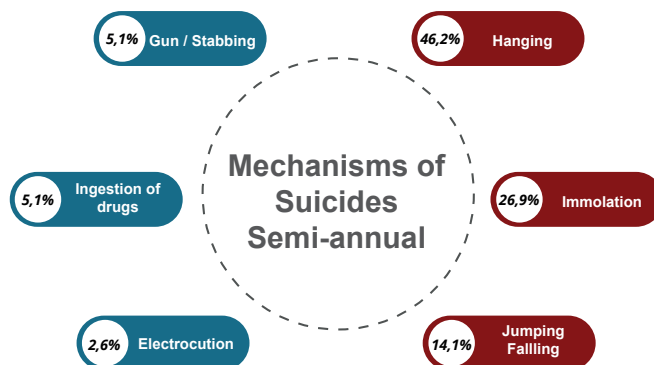
This dramatic situation, added to the lack of the prospect of development, has led to an increase in the number of illegal migrants from Tunisia arriving in Italy.

The social repercussions of the crisis did not stop at the phenomenon of migration, both non-regular and qualified migration, which intensified as indirect migration to Western host countries continued.

Instead, it was also reflected in the growing expression of violence and hate and the increase in the level of violence in common public or private spaces, and women were the main victims, whether physical or moral violence or incidents of sexual assaults up to violence against oneself, that is suicide or the attempt of suicide. The first six months have recorded 78 cases of suicides and attempted suicides and women have represented about 24 of the victims.



| | 15 years old or less | 16-25 years old | 26-35 years old | 36-45 years old | 46-60 years old | More than 60 years old |
|-------|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| Men | 6 | 7 | 17 | 12 | 8 | 4 |
| Women | 3 | 7 | 6 | 1 | 4 | 3 |
| TOTAL | 9 | 14 | 23 | 13 | 12 | 7 |

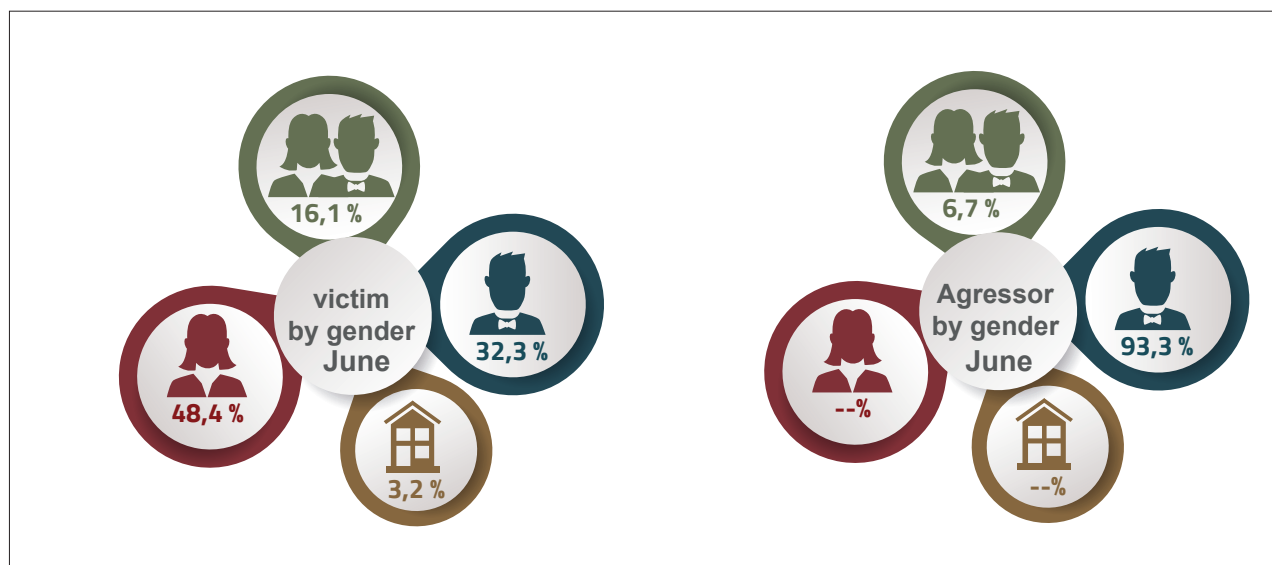


The first survey of the first half of 2021 indicated a change in the mapping of protest movements, since the governorate of Gafsa leads the regions in terms of protests with 1,393 movements, followed by the governorate of Tunis with 1,037 protest movements, while Kairouan comes in third place with 535 protest movements, followed by Kasserine with 534 movements. If we consider the regions of Gafsa, Kasserine, and Kairouan as traditional regions of protest, the governorate of Tunis occupies this rank as the center of decision and centralization of the various seats of sovereignty institutions to which the actors of protests are directed.



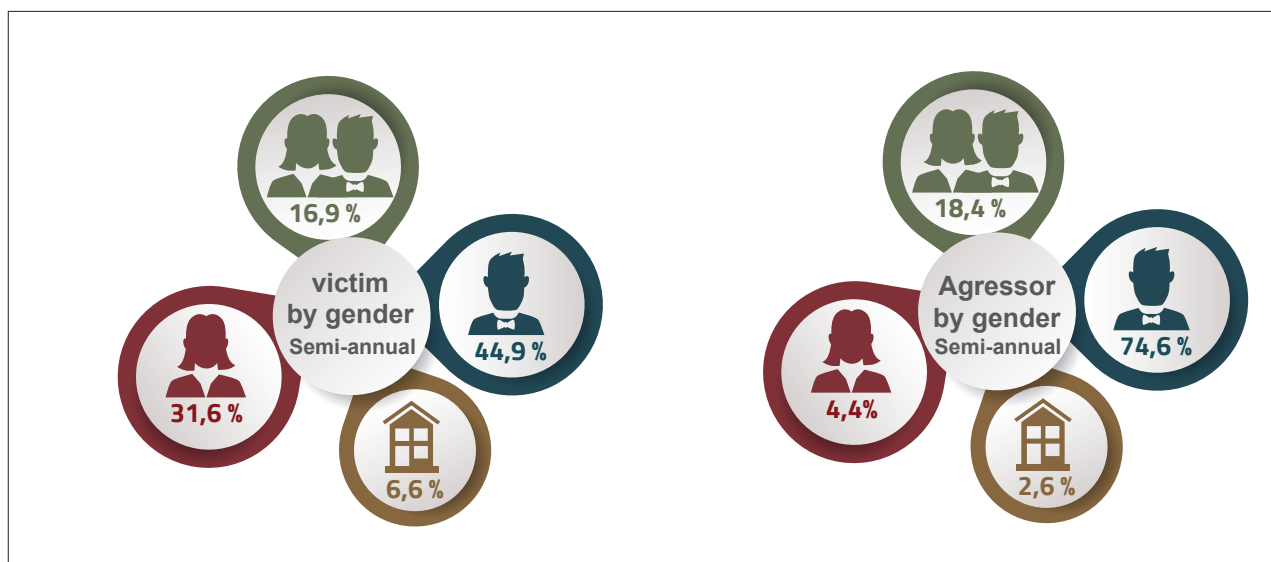
| Semi-annual | June | Space |
|-------------|-------|--------------------------------------|
| 48% | 29% | Street |
| 1,1% | -- | Public transport |
| 5,9% | 9,7% | Educational institutions |
| 7% | 12,9% | Governmental space |
| 7,7% | 9,7% | Economic institution |
| 22,3% | 32,3% | Residence |
| 1,1% | -- | Tourist and leisure spacesde loisirs |
| 1,1% | -- | Prisons |
| 0,4% | -- | Virtual space |
| 1,5% | -- | Media space |
| 0,4% | -- | mosque |
| 3,7% | 6,5% | Health spaces |

Regarding violence, which represents the most prominent shadow of the crisis that Tunisia is going through, the street has become a major place of perpetration of violence with a percentage of about 52% in the first six months of this year 2021, followed by the domestic area with a rate of about 21%, which is supposed to be the safest place for individuals, especially women, children, and the old people and which is the most vulnerable group exposed to abuse and violence.



Women are at the forefront of victims of all kinds of violence (criminal, institutional, marital, family, economic, and protest). on the other hand, women represented one of the parties involved in the violence with a percentage not exceeding 6% of the total cases of violence observed.

However, it should be noted that the percentage of female aggressors during the month of February was the highest one with 27%, this can be explained by the fact that women took to the streets and participated in protests to support their arrested sons.



The second quarter of 2021 saw the emergence of movements of thirst and problems of drinking water supply which concerned most of the governorates of the republic and continued in Bir El-Ahmer, EL Gtar, Om El-Arayes, El -Redayef, Jedelyenne, Takelsa, Ghar el-Damaou, and Tozeur city. These regions have experienced several days and weeks of water cuts.

Along with the water cuts that began early this year, the month of June, during which temperatures reached the highest record, has experienced power supply problems that caused interruptions and disruptions in several areas. The most remarkable one was the one that took place in the governorate of Tozeur because this cut had an impact on the vaccine storage coolers, which led to the probability of their damage.

| SEMI-ANNUAL | JUNE | SECTOR |
|-------------|------|-----------------|
| 6 % | 9 % | Environmental |
| 1 % | -- % | Of Sports |
| 7 % | 9 % | Access to water |
| 4 % | 5 % | Agricultural |
| 2 % | 1 % | Transport |
| 11 % | 12 % | Private Sector |
| 47 % | 48 % | Public Sector |

On the security level

The first six months of this year 2021 were the scene of numerous protests calling for the enforcement of the law and an end to all impunity for legal abuses and violations.

| SEMI-ANNUAL | JUNE | SECTOR |
|-------------|------|----------|
| 4 % | 6 % | SECURITY |

These are protests based on human rights and organized by activists from citizens. The protesters considered that the security forces have once again become a repressive tool to infringe on public and individual freedoms, including the deliberate closure of a cafe shop in Sfax during the month of Ramadhan, even though it had the required permits.

Because of the increase of restriction of security on activists and protests, the latter have used new ways of protesting against the police like the paint cons of different colors and others. These protests are increasing with the increase in the abuses of the police when dispersing protest rallies and arresting them.

And because the orientation of reform during the years of democratic transition was not towards security reform and an emphasis on republican security, the relationship between the security forces and the youth of deprived neighborhoods is still tense and based on "revenge." The excesses that have occurred recently in Sidi Hassine and Sijoumi have been major elements of the violence and abuses committed by the police.

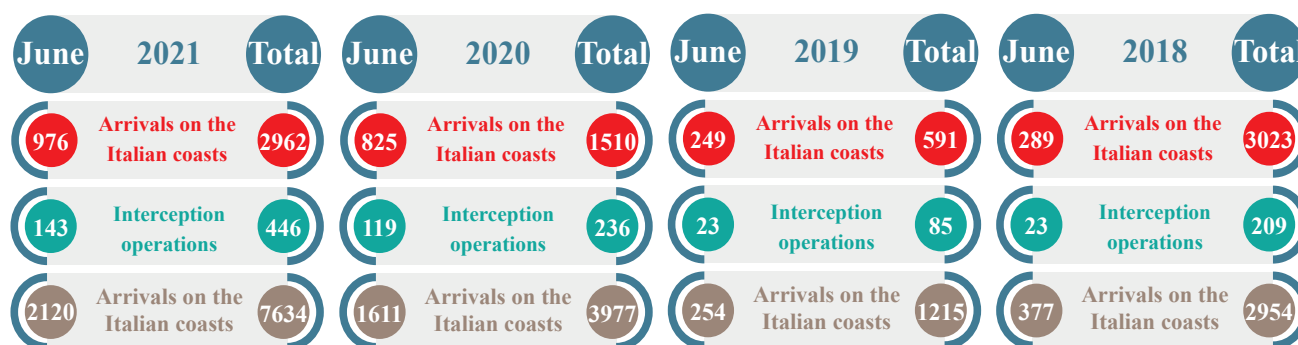
Although suspicious cases of death have been recurrent in recent years in the security centers of popular neighborhoods without any clarification or responsibility, the fact of stripping a minor from his clothes and dragging him on the public highway by police officers is a precedent in Tunisia and was a shocking scene for the national public opinion as well as for the international media.

On the education level

The school year of 2020/2021 was not normal, because of successive spread waves of Corona virus, students were forced to several interruptions, some of which lasted about a month. This interruption has affected the level of education for the pupils, as it has been a framework difficult to accept and beyond their capacity of perception and distinction, forcing our children to engage in the fight against the spread of Covid 19 and to suffer the impact of its economic, social, health and especially psychological crisis. They also found themselves undergoing an unusual school year, with a system of group study and reduced cognitive days, representing only half or less of what they are supposed to study. At the same time, the educational family and their parents demanded that they achieve the same academic results as under normal circumstances.

| SEMI-ANNUAL | JUNE | SECTOR |
|-------------|------|-----------|
| 9 % | -- % | EDUCATIVE |

COMPARATIVE DATA DURING THE SAME PERIOD 2018-2019-2020-2021



As a result of the improvement and the enhancing of climatic and driving factors, 976 Tunisian immigrants have arrived at the Italian coast, which record an increase of 60% compared to May.

The Tunisian National Guard Marine units have frustrated 143 crossings and stopped 2120 passers from reaching the Italian coast.

The illegal immigrants of Tunisia who arrived in Italy in the first half of this year have reached 14,4% of the total arrivals, which make them classified as the second place in terms of the most arrivals nationalities in Italy.

The first half of 2021 marked a turning point in Tunisia's transformation into a spearhead in the European security approach to the illegal immigration issues. We can see that by the number of intercepted crossings and the successful operations done by the Tunisian national marine guard outside the Tunisian territorial waters against the irregular immigration.

DISTRIBUTION OF ARRIVALS TO ITALY IN 2021

| | NON-ACCOMPANIED MINORS | ACCOMPANIED MINORS | FEMALES | MALES | THE ARRIVALS |
|--------------|------------------------|--------------------|---------|-------|--------------|
| June | 227 | 18 | 23 | 708 | 976 |
| Total | 653 | 49 | 77 | 2193 | 2962 |

By the beginning of the escalation of the immigration flows, the presence of minors is gradually increasing. The Minors from different nationalities who arrived in Italy have reached 16,2% of the total arrivals, while for the Tunisians minors, the proportion is 23,6 from the total arrivals. The reasons that push minors to leave their country and choose the irregular immigration are not only due to the economic and social factors but also because of school dropouts, which are increasing year after year. This complicated the situation of children in Tunisia and make them frustrated. In addition to that, the crisis of the reception institutions and life difficulties that families are struggling with, became worse and harder after the pandemic crisis.

Unfortunately, the dissemination of data on the international protection of minors and their legal status encourage the adventure and the immigration for many of them.

The change of the social behavior after the crisis especially following the pandemic, the spread of individualistic values and the emergence of other elements have contributed to the process of socialization which affected the role of the family that was the first protector and defender in the project of non-regulatory immigration. This social institution has become unable to perform some of its usual functions, especially after the development of the role of new social settings such as the coffee shop, the street, and the network of friends.

Thus, instead of being the source of needs satisfaction, the image of the family and the focus of weakness and failure and individual salvation becomes therefore, the solution.

The state seems unconcerned about the figures and data that describe the tragedy of non-regulatory migration and they only keep promising that they will work hard to monitor the coasts and this through the communication channels as proof of its attachments to the European partner.

Distribution of frustrating arrests by region

| | Jendouba | Bizerte | Tunis | Nabeul | Sousse | Monastir | Mahdia | Sfax | Gabes | Medenine |
|--------------|----------|---------|-------|--------|--------|----------|--------|-------|-------|----------|
| June | * | 2,4% | 4,7% | 21,42% | 4,7% | 7,1% | 11,9% | 35,7% | * | 11,9% |
| Total | * | 2,9% | 10,7% | 15,21% | 5,2% | 6,12% | 13,5% | 41,8% | 0,2% | 4,6% |

The highest percentage of interception operations comes from the region of Sfax with 35.71% during June and 41.8% during the first half of 2021, while in the region of Nabeul, the interception operations have increased during June to 21.42%.

Distribution of frustration by territory during June

| | Other nationalities | Tunisians |
|--------------|---------------------|-----------|
| June | 49,8% | 50,2% |
| Total | 59% | 41% |

The percentage of the irregular immigration of Tunisian peoples has changed during June 2021 and reached 50.2% as the percentage of Tunisians.

Distribution of frustrating arrests during June

| | Maritime | Terrestrial |
|--------------|----------|-------------|
| June | 69% | 31% |
| Total | 40,3% | 59,6% |

Most of the interceptions this month were at the sea, where they reached 69% of the total intercepted crossings due to the record level of departure operations compared to previous months. The technical equipment used for monitoring also plays an important role.

| Number of missing and Victims | |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| January | 4 |
| February | 50 |
| March | 39 |
| April | 41 |
| May | 81 |
| June | 39 |
| Total | 254 |

In addition to that, there is a huge number of illegal immigrants that have never been recorded, huge numbers of victims and missing persons which has exceeded 250 since the beginning of the year. All the indicators show that this year will be the most tragic in the absence of a global rescue system

Forced expulsion
from Italy during
the year 2020

FIDES

Forum Tunisien pour les Droits Economiques et Sociaux

of the 4,387 migrants who were accommodated in
detention centers in Italy, 2,623 are Tunisians

59,7%

Forced expulsion
from Italy during
the year 2020

FIDES

Forum Tunisien pour les Droits Economiques et Sociaux

The number of Tunisians who were effectively expelled
is 1997 out of 3351 migrants of all nationalities who
were expelled

which means that Tunisians represent 59.5%

Forced expulsion
from Italy during
the year 2020

FIDES

Forum Tunisien pour les Droits Economiques et Sociaux

618 Tunisian migrants were expelled from January 1, 2021 to April 30, 2021, out of a total of 1,097 expelled of all nationalities

or 56.3%.

Forced expulsion
from Italy during
the year 2020

FIDES

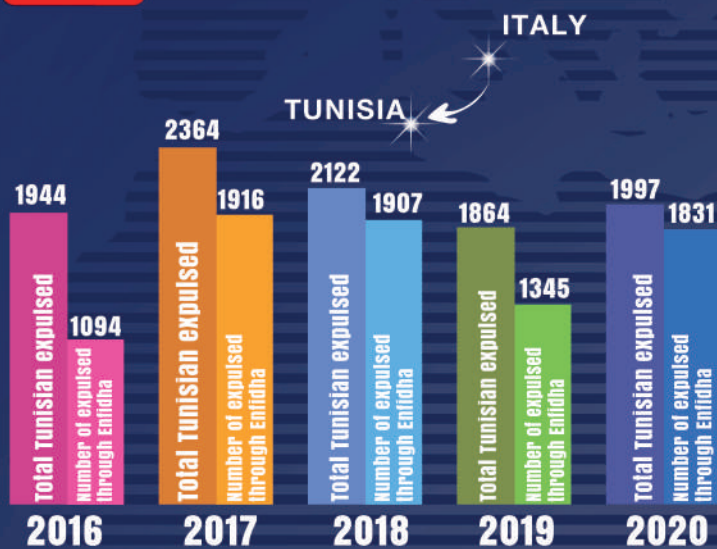
Forum Tunisien pour les Droits Economiques et Sociaux

592 Tunisians is the number of people expelled by Ennfidha airport from January 1, 2021 to April 30, 2021

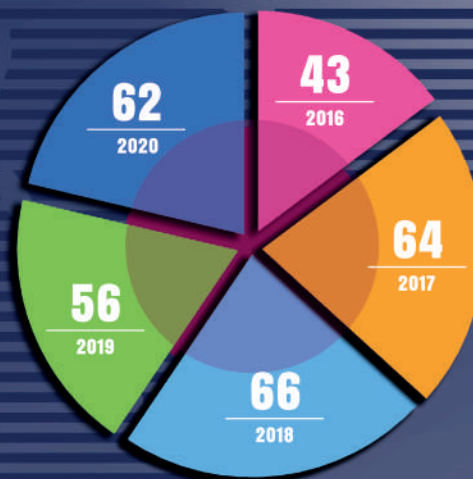
in 25 flights

Forced expulsion
from Italy during
the year 2020

FIDES
Forum Tunisien pour les Droits Economiques et Sociaux



Forced expulsion from Italy from 2016 to 2020



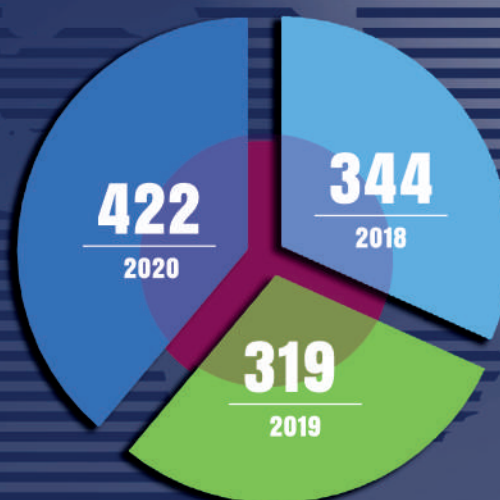
Number of trips through Enfidha

Forced expulsion
from Germany
during the 2020

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Forum Tunisien pour les Droits Economiques et Sociaux



Forced expulsion from Germany from 2018 to 2020



Total expelled from Germany

Conclusion

In brief, the first half of the current year has been difficult in a variety of fields. Early indications confirm that there is no immediate way out of the political crisis with the pursuit of violence and the pursuit of the discourse of violence and hatred under the roof of Parliament and the absence of any sign of communication and dialogue between the different parts of this political crisis. The health crisis does not appear to be abating anytime soon, either, with the continuation of the ascending curve of the infected and deaths, and there is no way out of the economic and social crisis, with the persistent absence of any rescue program for public institutions and with the persistent impact of the pandemic crisis in the private sector, mainly in the tourism sector. It is a global crisis that requires a realistic analysis, urgent solutions, and a practical strategy. The evolution of the cartography of the dispute does not necessarily mean the disappearance of protests in traditional regions such as Kairouan, Jendouba, and Kasserine, but rather that the spark of social tension has settled in new governorates.

Do we need an emergency government rescue plan to deal with it?

Rihab Mabrouki

The agricultural sector is one of the pillars of national sovereignty and the key sector for achieving complete and sustainable development because it affects crucial economic aspects. In Tunisia, this sector faces many difficulties preventing its thriving, progress, and high productivity, especially the wheat harvest. The State imports wheat in enormous quantities for consumption and to balance the shortage of its local production. The region of Gafsa, in southwestern Tunisia, is not immune to all these problems, which the State ignores and has not made it a priority for decades. Today the farmer finds himself surrounded by several challenges that do not consider his economic situation, which prioritizes the need to change the State's policies towards the agricultural sector, to help them avoid negative repercussions on the national and global level, especially with the spread of the Corona pandemic and its impacts on all the sectors in various countries.

Agriculture is the solution

In mid-2020, the Tunisian Union of Agriculture and Fisheries published a book entitled "Agriculture is the solution for strengthening our sovereignty and developing our economy." It addressed the main difficulties and challenges facing Tunisia's agricultural sector and farmers, according to the book, the sector represents a livelihood for over than 500,000 farmers and 60,000 sailors and indirectly provides employment for over than 2.5 million workers.

Based on the previous data, the importance of this sector manifests in its contribution to economic development through labour absorption, food security and improving people's living standards.

However, the problems faced by the agriculture sector in Gafsa remains a barrier to its progress, especially given the government's failure to protect some crops from being lost to the scarcity of rainfall in the south-west and the inability of farmers to cover the cost of watering to cope with drought, as well as the severe shortage of forage and barley. These are the difficulties the farmer is experiencing today to provide the survival items of his crops.

In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture is reluctant to protect livestock by ignoring seasonal vaccination.

We should also mention the entry of major investors and their monopoly on the market. That explains why today's farmers face challenges that have made them reluctant to produce and serve the land.



Gafsa's oases are thirsty

The oases area in Tunisia is 40,000 hectares, they are classified as coastal oases located in the regions of Gabes and Djerba, others are classified as mountain oases located in Tozeur, especially in the regions of Dimas and Tamaghza. Alongside the oases of the continental region located in the State of southern Gafsa, between al-Kasar and al-Kitar, measuring about 575 hectares, almost 500 of which are watered with treated water (sewage), as reported by Hatem Khalfallah, the President of the Qadus Society for the Protection of Oases and the Maintenance of the City.

Despite the diversity of the water resources of the oasis sector, such as Ein al-Fawara, Ein al-Robaa, Ein al-Tertesh, Ein al-Ayed, and Ein Zalani, which Al-Kasr Oasis supplies, the problem of water scarcity remains a barrier for the farmer to maintain a productive development in this area.

According to the farming delegation in Gafsa, about 70% of the water resources are exploited and used for irrigation. This water divides into State's wells and other wells managed by water development associations or as they are called water pools, including the Tertesh Well, the Bohabib Well and the Sidi Salem Well in Al-Kasr.

The irrigation of the oases areas usually requires approximately 300 litres per second, of which the farming delegation provides 180 litres per second, and the water pools handle 120 litres per second.

However, with the growing population and increasing consumption, farmers face water shortages, mainly due to the immense oases area in Al-Kasr, 600 hectares during the 1980s to 1200 today, adding to scarcity of rainfall and drought in the region for several years.

According to Hatem Khalfallah, this lack of productivity is getting worse due to the failure of the Agricultural Bank to respond to the demands of the small farmers and to finance them regarding that their lands are small and their inability to repay loan surpluses.

Other forms of monopoly through multiple distribution routes non-controlled by the State and the adoption of mediation rather than product-to-consumer sales policy. In addition to the problems created by the citizens, such as urban sprawl at the expense of the oases spaces and chaotic construction, the reasons why today's farmer is reluctant to produce and serve the land, leaving his product devastated due to his inability to defeat these challenges on his own.

The Major Farm Problems in Gafsa

According to the Regional Delegation for Agricultural Development, the cultivated areas in Gafsa are 33.639 hectares, involving wheat, barley and fodder. According to the same source, there are an estimated 92.938 hectares of fruit trees, including 31.23 irrigated areas and 59.289 hectares of olive trees. In addition, livestock including sheep, cows, goats, hoes, rabbits, quail and beekeepers represents the livelihood of hundreds of farmers.

However, given the importance of the agriculture sector, its diversity, and its ability to support the national economy, the material challenges stand in the way of sustainable production. The problem of promotion faced by farmers is evidence of the absence of a clear State strategy to restore the surplus production among farmers, which often forces them to destroy and throw milk on the side of the road, as confirmed to us by the general agriculture engineer Hakim Denari.

The farmer also faces the problem of rising costs through increased feed prices, which requires State's intervention through subsidies to reduce the expenses.

In its 2020 report, the Regional Delegation of Rural Development in Gafsa classifies indebtedness as the most striking problem that cripples the farming sector. Indebtedness is an obstacle to investments because of the low contribution of the banking sector in the financing of banking projects and failure to settle the common lands of the governing councils which is a barrier to farmers' access to concessions, also the inability of the state to respond to the demands for the construction of wells to launch private projects.

Cattle and cows are facing a deteriorating situation

Livestock, in turn, faces series of problems, which are part of the crisis that the agriculture sector generally has in Gafsa. In this context, Mr. Moncef Salem, a farmer and civil activist, talks about the problems of the sheep sector, the numbers of which are getting fewer because of the lack of pastures and the rising prices of fodder, such as barley, which has risen from 29 to 40 dinars in few years.

In addition, the Livestock sector did not meet the needs of the farmers, and the Grain Office tended to provide fodder through mediation, consequently creating a monopoly in the sector.

All these reasons made the farmer tend to raise cows, which, in turn, was no less expensive for him, he found himself confronted with the same problems he faced in raising sheep by doubling the price of fodder from 35 to nearly 60.

This volatility in prices is due to the State's policy, which is no longer able to deal with these irregular increases.

According to Mr. Moncef Salem, a policy of mediation between farmers and milk-gathering centres has led to the destruction of the cattle-raising sector due to poor earnings.

Even though the farmers engaged in various forms of protest and negotiation sessions with the relevant authorities, represented by the Ministry of Agriculture, which condemned the miserable situation of the agricultural sector and tried to find immediate solutions to end the sector's crisis, yet the policy of procrastination remained the same, as expressed by Mr. Moncef Salim. He stressed that the solutions put forward by the concerned authorities could only be considered temporary solutions to absorb the farmer's anger without providing any alternative that would solve this sector's problems and save crops from waste.

Failure to resolve the crisis.

In the context of the agriculture sector crisis in Gafsa, a question raises about the role of the Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Fisheries in the observation, guidance and support process, particularly in the monitoring of monopolists and private investors in this sector, who, according to farmers, do not miss the opportunity to achieve imaginary incomes at the expense of the small farmers' fragile economic situation.

Therefore, it is the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture to act to stop legal breaches in this sector.

Talking about the agriculture sector and its marginalization and the misbehaviour in its resources and wealth is not a marginal issue. It requires an emergency Government rescue plan that fulfills its commitments to small farmers to help them overcome the problems that prevent progress in their crops.

The support of the Agricultural sector and the defence of the farmers' rights are among the interests of the Association of the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights, therefore, the Forum's call to respond to the demands of farmers and take into account their economic needs would offer permanent solutions to various problems, and that requires radical political changes in agricultural policies and practices.

The farming sector in the region of Gafsa should have crucial importance if we are willing to maintain an agricultural balance on which generations will depend now and in the future.

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 organisational 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.