

Number 78



Report of the month March 2020

Social movements, Suicides and Violence

223 collective protests and 15 cases of suicide and attempted suicide




Introduction

March 2020 was an exceptional month, due to the spread of the Corona virus. The beginning of the month was marked by a warning, following the first confirmed infection on 2 March of a citizen from Milan, Italy. This was followed by an official call for social distancing and home containment, paralysis of the movement of people and vehicles and the closure of industrial areas, following the implementation of global sanitary containment to prevent the spread of the Corona epidemic. Yet, however exceptional it may have been, the month of March was not conducive to social silence. Indeed, the social rumble did not lose its intensity and continued even in times of social distancing. Although its intensity decreased in the streets and public spaces, it was greater in social networks and in particular Facebook.

The month of March was an extraordinary month, during which the movements of production and productivity were disrupted, service institutions such as coffeeshops and restaurants began to be affected after the decision to be closed from 4 p.m., exposing those who work there with a regularised professional status or those who work there outside the social security system to a state of temporary unemployment.

Subsequently, production and productivity were disrupted in various sectors and in the different pillars of economic life reaching even marginal sectors so that even street vendors found it very difficult to continue their work after the declaration of the complete health closure from 22 March.

As a result, thousands of workers were threatened by technical unemployment and the wheel of production in the liberal professions and crafts came to a standstill, mainly due to the unclear vision regarding the date of the lifting of the general health prohibition.



The health measures decided by the Government were as follows: the closing of coffeehouses and restaurants from 4 p.m., followed by the introduction of a night curfew from 6 p.m., and finally the adoption of global containment. They will undoubtedly have an economic and social cost, especially for the fragile and deprived social classes, which suffer unemployment, privatization and marginalization as they live at or below the poverty line.

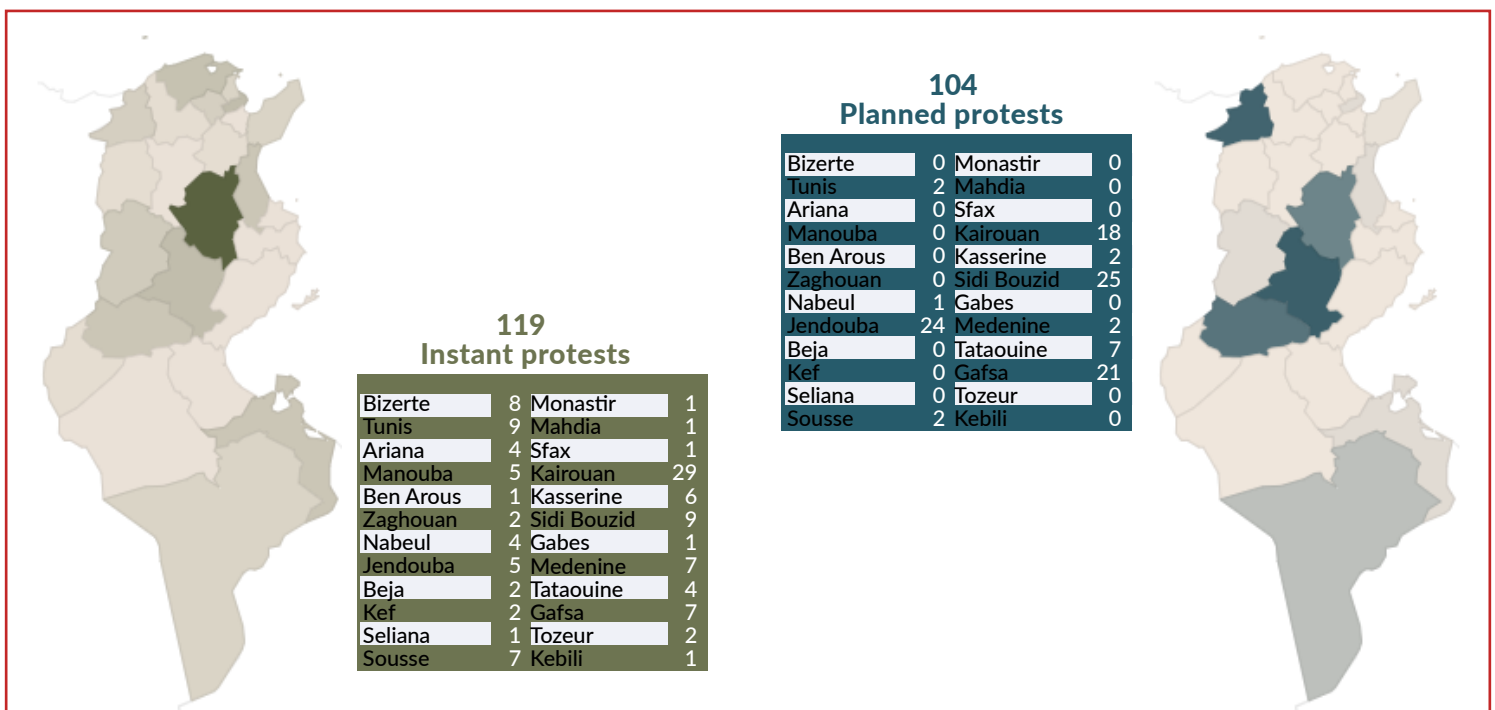
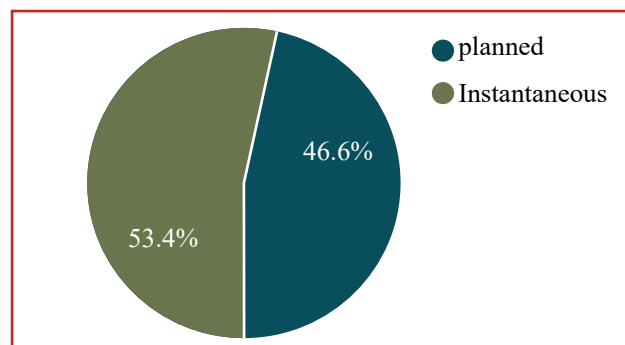
The exceptional situation imposed by the general epidemiological context has led to the forced unemployment of a large part of the active population consisting of craftsmen and small trades. Moreover, the probability of its extension beyond one month may be the cause of the technical unemployment of a large number of workers and employees in the private sector.

Despite this exceptional situation, the voices of social anger have not disappeared and social discontent and dissatisfaction have sought new spaces for protest. Facebook was at the forefront, but there were also demonstrations in the streets and public spaces related to the demand for social assistance and the provision of food (especially the semolina).

Protest movements in March 2020

According to the monitoring sample, recorded during the month of March, we note a certain modification since our team moved towards the websites of the daily and weekly paper newspapers, while keeping the same sample of public and private websites and audio-visual sites. In addition, the team started integrating the social networks on the watch after having verified the authenticity of the information.

During the month of March, the Tunisian Social Observatory team recorded 223 protest movements, 119 of which were recorded in an instantaneous form with approximately 53.4% of the total movements while the rest, i.e. 104 movements, were recorded in an organized form with 46.6% of the total movements recorded. During the month of March, the Tunisian Social Observatory team recorded 223 protest movements, 119 of which were recorded in an instantaneous form with approximately 53.4% of the total movements while the rest, i.e. 104 movements, were recorded in an organized form with 46.6% of the total movements recorded.

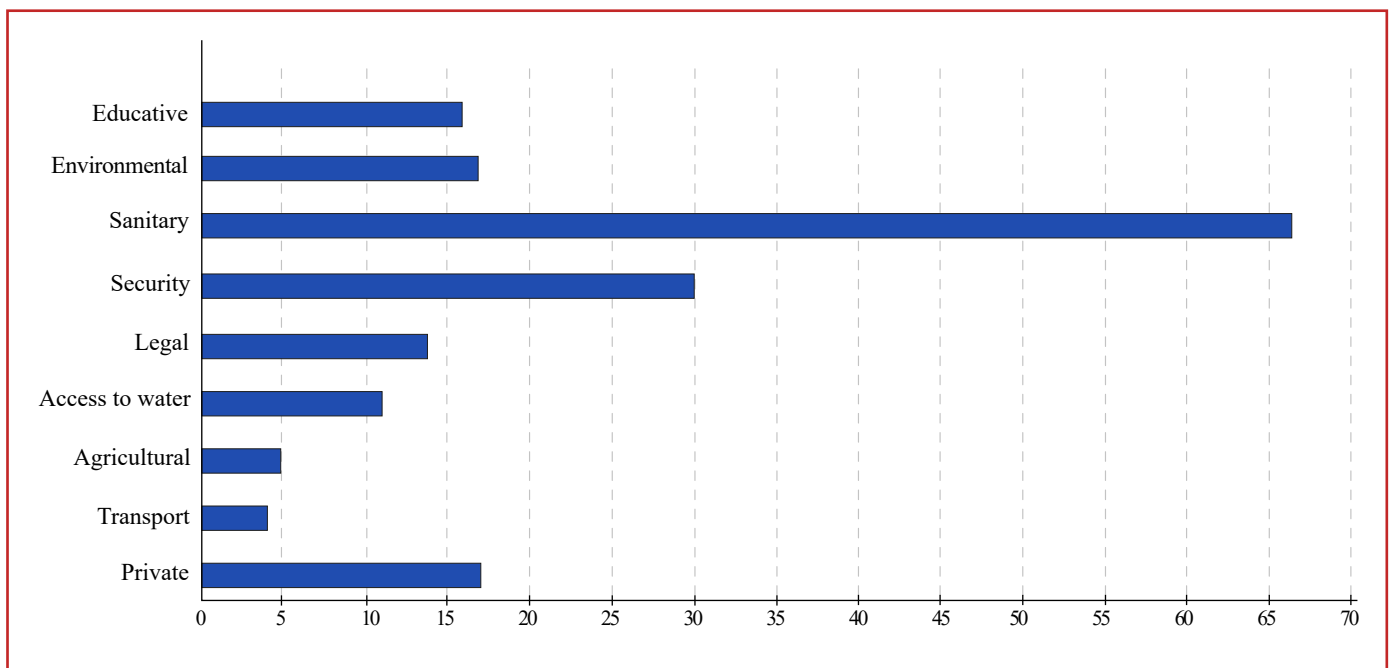


The protest movements recorded during the month of March partly took a violent turn. The beginning of the global confinement gave rise to protests from poor families and people with limited income in the delegations of El-Menihla and Oued Ellil. These protests included road blocks with burnt tyres and protest rallies in front of the delegations' headquarters to remind them of their critical social situation and to demand financial and other forms of assistance from the regional authorities.

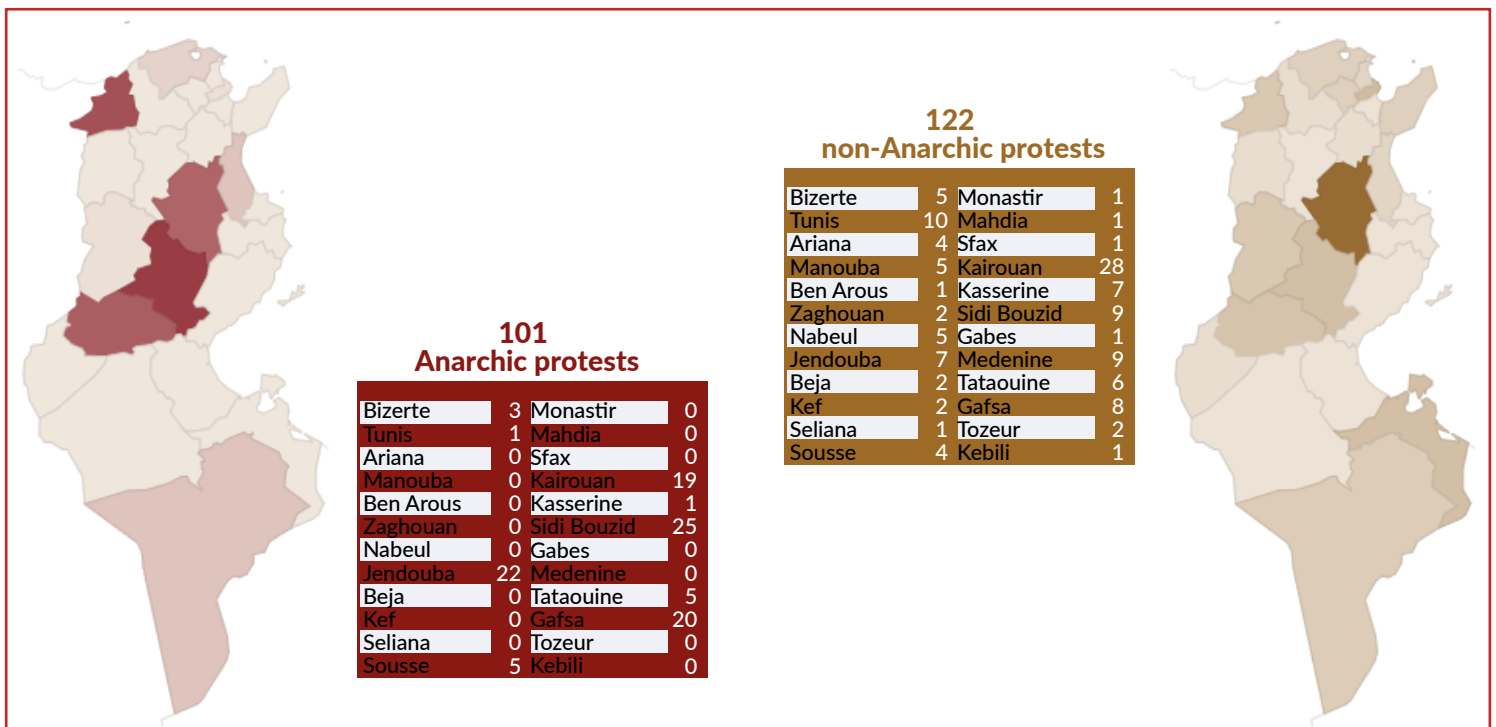
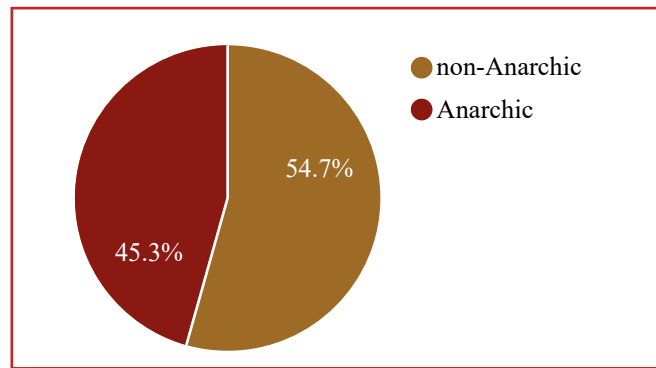
During the same month and following the approval of social assistance, a demonstration by the Unemployed Union, calling for this group to be assisted in the same way as other vulnerable population groups, was recorded and did not receive any interaction from the official authorities.

Several regions experienced protest movements led by the unemployed, the most violent of which was noted in the Makther delegation, where three young people demonstrated inside the delegation headquarters: one of them have mutilated himself and threatened to cut his veins, and the other two threatened to set themselves on fire if the delegate did not allow them to receive an allowance or social assistance.

Distribution of protest movements by sectors



The protest movements that had a violent aspect during the month of March represented about 45.3% of the total number of movements recorded, i.e. 101 protest movements, while the non-violent movements numbered 122 protest movements.



It can also be said that during the month of March the country experienced the impact of a particular type of movement, mainly related to the epidemiological situation and the developments that the country is undergoing. During the period between the date of the discovery of the first case of infection in Tunisia (2 March) and the end of the month, citizens' movements were noted in the context of the rejection of central or regional decisions to open collective quarantine centres in a number of hotels, youth hostels or public spaces. Such movements were seen in the municipality of Hammam Chott and through night demonstrations in the Chott Meriem region of the governorate of Sousse.

In the same epidemiological context, the governorate of Bizerte witnessed movements and clashes between citizens and law enforcement agencies to the point of using tear gas in the context of a refusal to bury a victim of the Corona virus in one of the cemeteries in the region.

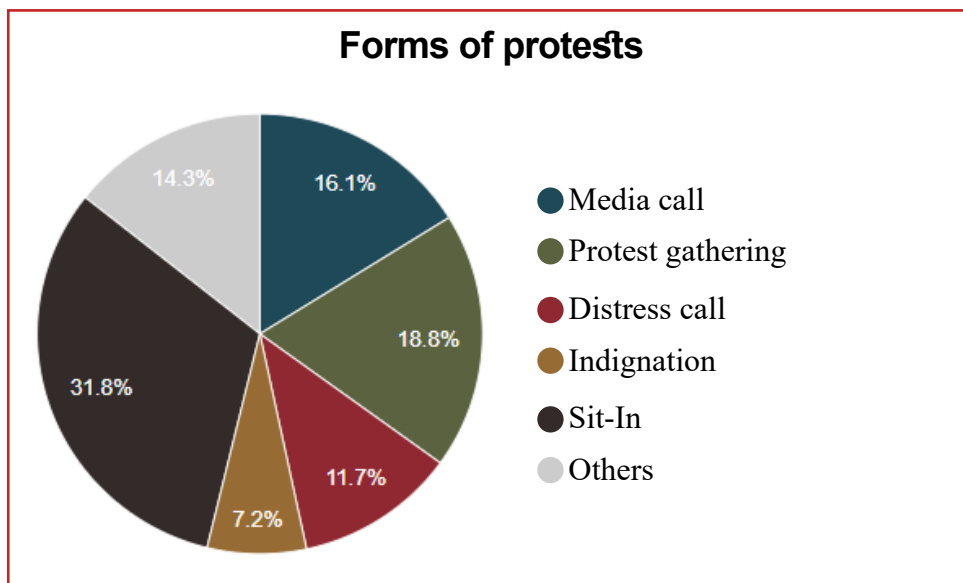
By way of illustration, it is worth pointing out that the exceptional epidemiological situation and the state of almost total paralysis have not prevented the continuation of traditional protest movements, whose slogans relate to the major issues and files that have been the focus of demands in recent years. We can cite, as an example, the demand for access to drinking water in several regions of the El Oueslatya delegation as well as in the southern region of the governorate of Kairouan, without forgetting the movements of a certain number of unemployed people to demand social justice.

In addition, most of the regional hospitals in our interior governorates such as the regional hospital of Gafsa, Beja, Jendouba, Kairouan, Siliana, Le Kef and Medenine ... experienced during the month of March the impact of the protests of medical and paramedical officials who demanded the provision of preventive materials, masks and gloves and condemned the catastrophic situation of hospitals and the health system in general.

The above-mentioned protests even included university hospitals, and the most important movements were recorded at the Farhat Hached University Hospital in the governorate of Sousse during the treatment of the first case of COVID 19 in Tunisia, transferred from the governorate of Gafsa.

Spaces of protests		actors initiating the social movements	
Media, Roads, Public spaces, Work spaces	★★★★	Inhabitants, Citizens	★★★★
Social networks, CPG, Educational institutions	★★★	Employees, Unemployed, Doctors and Medical Service Employees	★★★
Hospitals, Delegations, Governorates, Municipalities	★★	Farmers, Activists, Teachers, Students, Security Agents	★★
Judicial institutions, A.R.P	★	Taxi Drivers, Collective Taxi Drivers, Parents, Workers, Prisoners	★

It can be said that the exceptions and the epidemiological situation have not altered the social map of protest but, on the contrary, have established and confirmed it and revealed once again that the monthly reports published by the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights, through the Tunisian Social Observatory, are the true thermometer of the social, economic, health and environmental situation in the various governorates of the Republic.

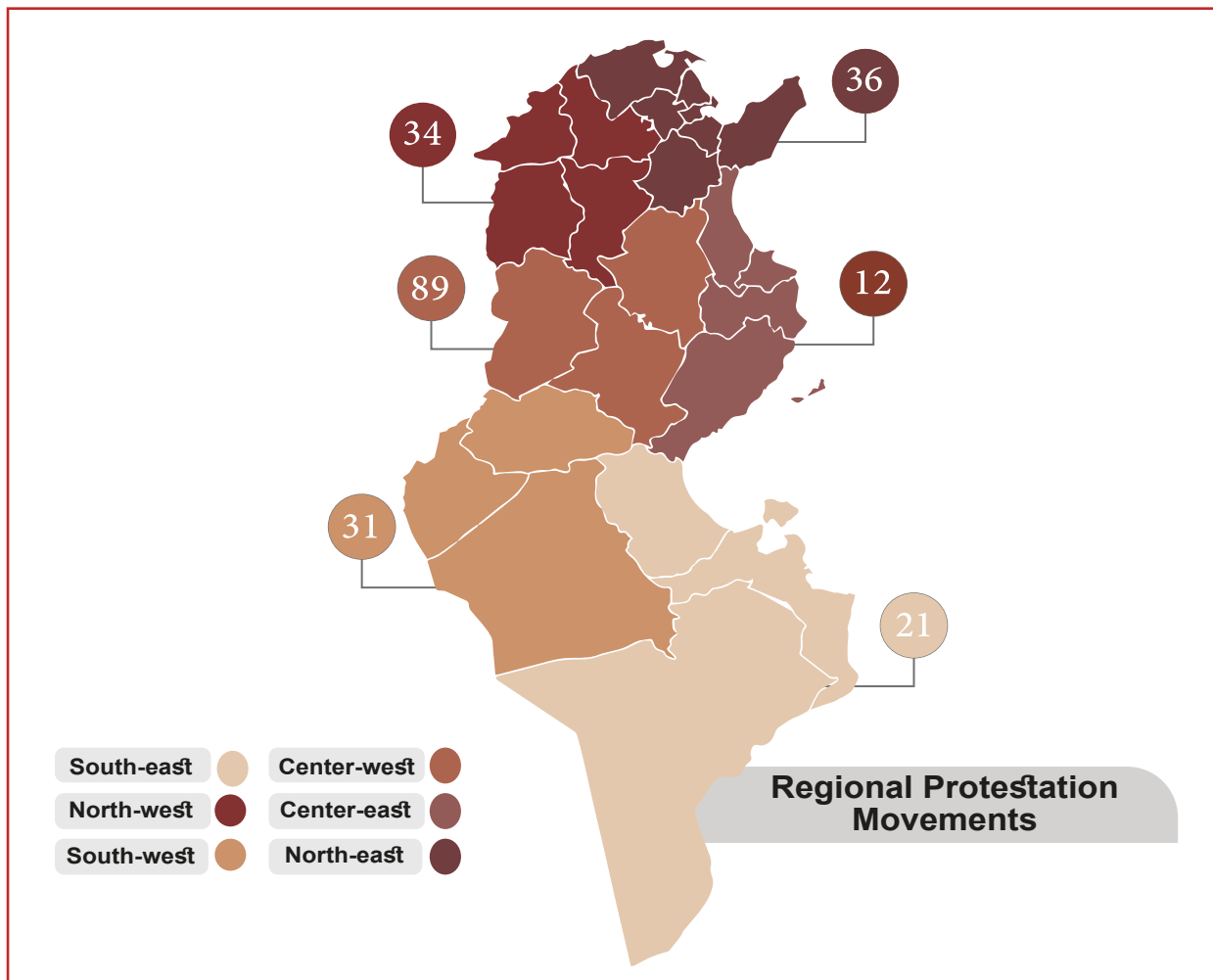


In addition, the 24 governorates of the Republic have lived in the wake of social protest movements with different mapping and forms. As in previous reports, the governorate of Kairouan maintained the first position among the regions known to have the most social demands by registering 47 social movements, more than half of which were instantaneous in form, followed by the governorate of Sidi Bouzid with 34 movements, 73.5% of which took a violent character, and the governorate of Jendouba with 29 movements, 22 of which were violent in character, representing nearly 76% of the total.

In third place is the governorate of Gafsa with 28 protests, then each of the governorates of Tunis and Tataouine with 11 movements, Medenine and Sousse with 9 protest movements, followed by Bizerte and Kasserine with 8 protest movements.

The mapping of protest movements (March 2020)

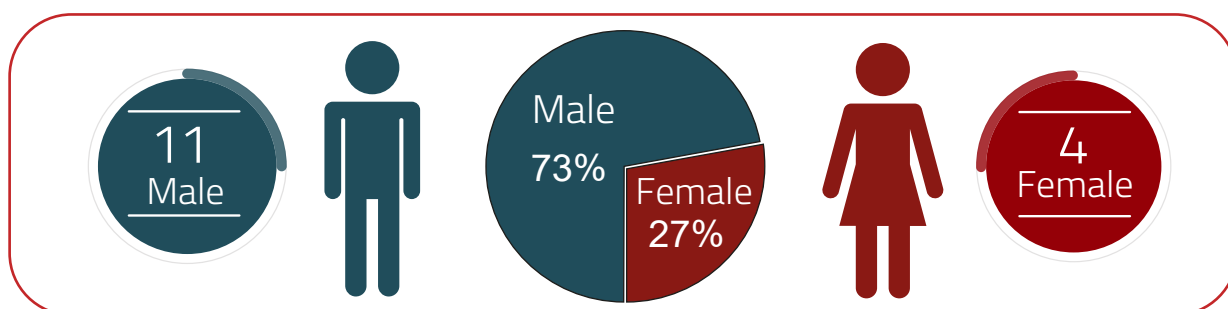
Governorate	Bizerte	Tunis	Ariana	Manouba	Ben Arous	Zaghouan	Nabeul	Jendouba
Volume	8	11	4	5	1	2	5	29
Governorate	Beja	Le Kef	Seliana	Sousse	Monastir	Mahdia	Sfax	Kairouan
Volume	2	2	1	9	1	1	1	47
Governorate	Kasserine	Sidi bouzid	Gabes	Medenine	Tataouine	Gafsa	Tozeur	Kebili
Volume	8	34	1	9	11	28	2	1



Acts and attempts of suicide

The month of March 2020 recorded 15 cases of suicide and attempted suicide and despite the numerical decrease in cases compared to March 2019, the gender distribution among the victims was in the same proportions, 73% of the victims were men and 27% women.

Suicides and attempts of suicide by gender



The number of victims of suicide and attempted suicide of children decreased by 3% compared to the figures of March 2019, while the age group 46-60 years recorded an increase in suicide acts and suicide attempts of almost 6%.

Suicides and suicide attempts by age group

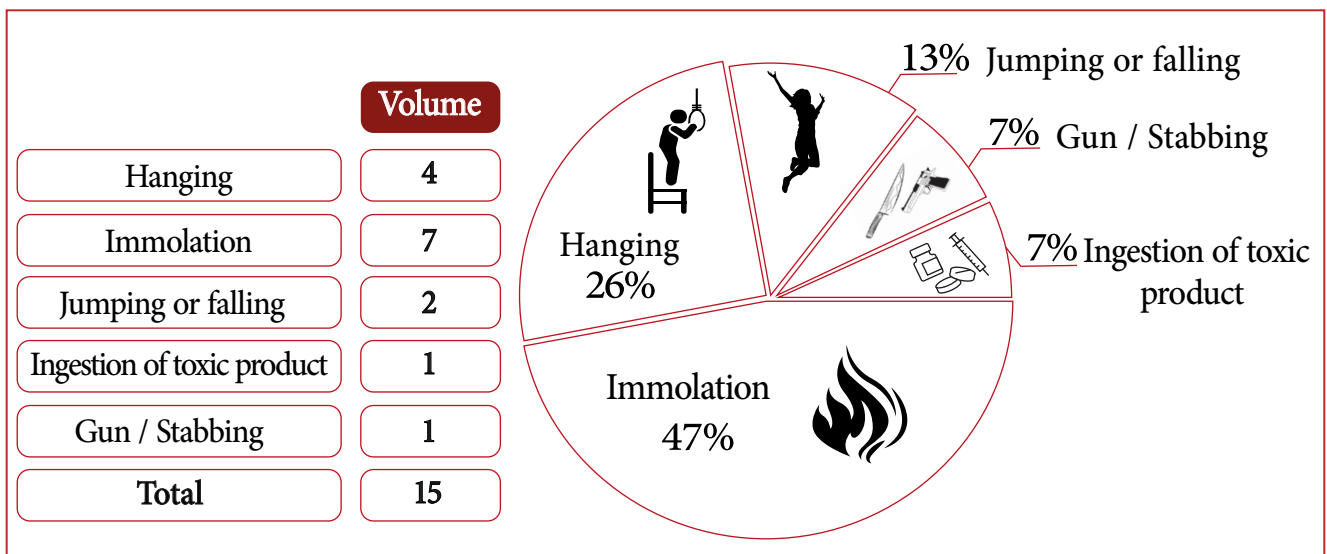
March 2019							
	Under 15 years	16 - 25 years	26 - 35 years	36 - 45 years	46 - 60 years	Over 60 years	TOTAL
Male	2	4	9	5	1	0	21
Female	1	3	2	1	1	0	8
Total	3	7	11	6	2	0	29
%	10%	24%	38%	21%	7%	0%	100%

March 2020							
	Under 15 years	16 - 25 years	26 - 35 years	36 - 45 years	46 - 60 years	Over 60 years	TOTAL
Male	1	4	4	0	2	0	11
Female	0	0	1	3	0	0	4
Total	1	4	5	3	2	0	15
%	7%	27%	33%	20%	13%	0%	100%



Immolation was the most widespread form of suicide observed with 47% of the acts recorded, followed by hanging (26%) and jumping and hurrying from high buildings or in wells (13%).

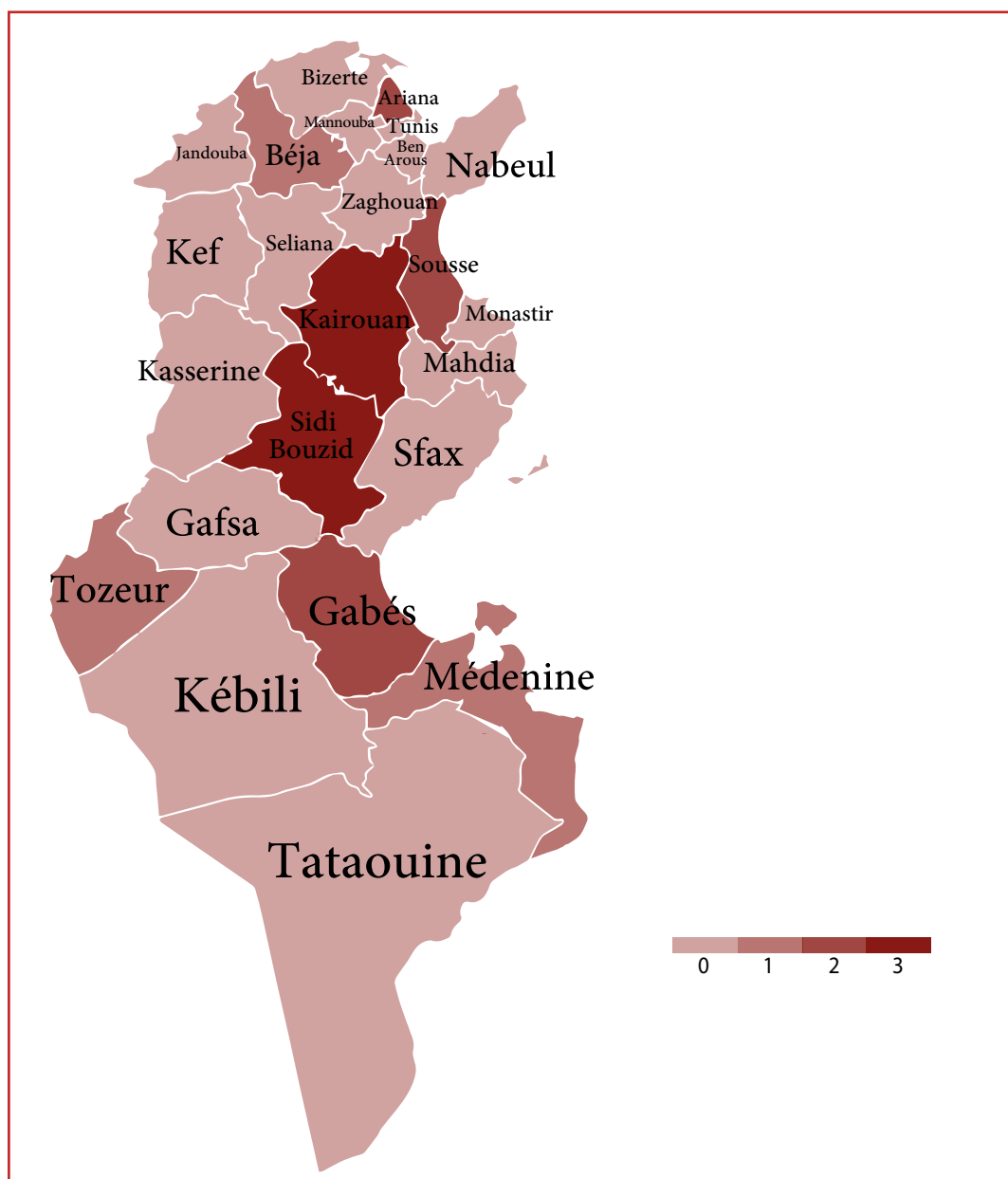
means of suicide (March 2020)



The majority of suicide cases and suicide attempts recorded throughout the month of March 2020 were recorded in Kairouan and Sidi Bouzid with a level of 3 cases in each region followed by the governorates of Sousse, Gabes and Ariana with a number of two cases respectively and finally only one case was recorded in the governorates of Beja, Medenine and Tozeur.

Suicides and attempts of suicide by governorate

Governorate	Bizerte	Tunis	Ariana	Manouba	Ben Arous	Zaghouan	Nabeul	Jendouba
Volume	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Governorate	Beja	Le Kef	Seliana	Sousse	Monastir	Mahdia	Sfax	Kairouan
Volume	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	3
Governorate	Kasserine	Sidi bouzid	Gabes	Medenine	Tataouine	Gafsa	Tozeur	Kebili
Volume	0	3	2	1	0	0	1	0

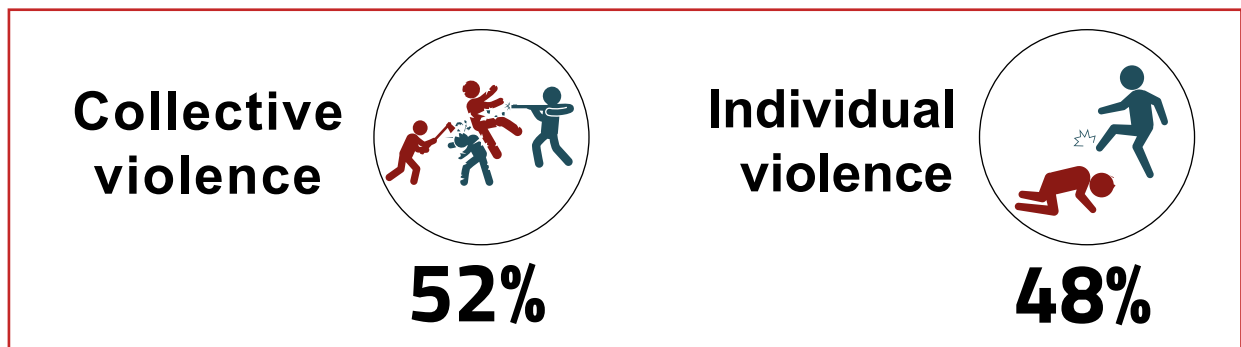


Violence

During this exceptional month of March in terms of the evolution of health, economic, social and security conditions in the country due to the spread of the Covid 19 (Corona) virus, the mapping of violence has changed in form and scope according to what was noted through the watch sample. This sample includes all daily and weekly newspapers in Arabic and French languages as well as various websites and audio-visual sites and social networks.

Although the global containment approved as of 22 March rendered the hard copies of the newspapers absent, the monitoring process continued on the websites of the newspapers.

cases of violence



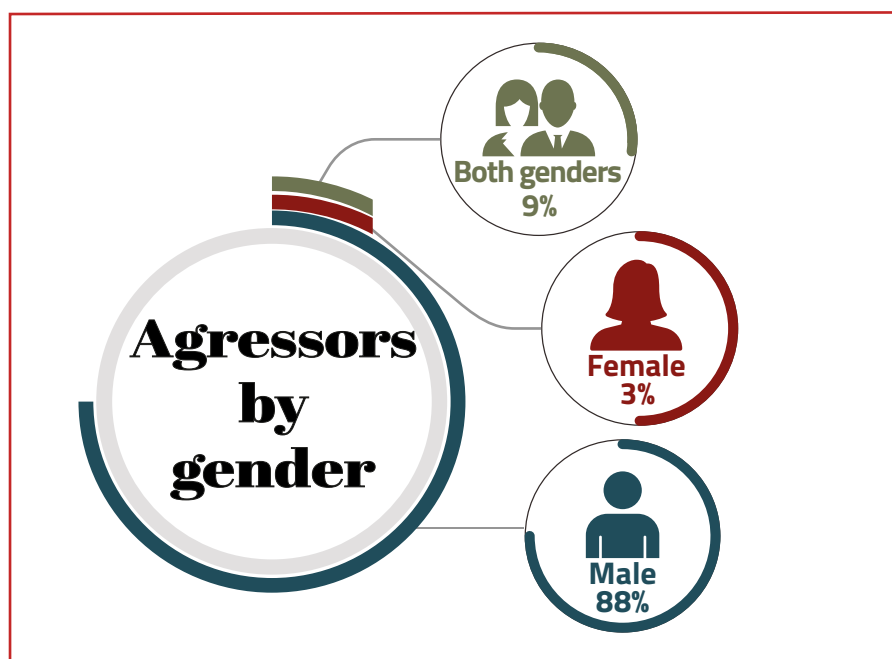
It was an exceptional month and also an exceptional violence that moved in the last ten days of the month to private spaces. Indeed, the Minister for Women announced that violence against women increased an average of five times during the period of confinement, according to calls from the Ministry. In addition, during the last ten days of March, Facebook became the major theatre of violence and violent reactions during this confinement.

Fear of the virus and lack of understanding of it have prompted many people in many areas to engage in violent protest reactions, refusing to bury victims of the Corona virus in nearby cemeteries. These reactions evolved into clashes with the security forces in Bizerte.

During the pre-confinement period, the Tunisian street experienced indirect violence, i.e. the non-respect of the self-confinement measures requested by the Ministry of Public Health from many expatriates, particularly from countries experiencing an epidemic of the virus. This nonchalance subsequently led to social tensions and violence against those affected by the self-containment.

Collective reactions against those who come from abroad because of the disregard for the auto-quarantine have evolved into unacceptable acts of violence against all those who show signs of coming from abroad. This was the case against a citizen coming from abroad who was on board the "Ferry" coming from the port of Sfax towards his house in Kerkennah, where one of the travellers suddenly shouted to inform the rest of the passengers of the presence of a coronary coming from France with them on board the "Ferry", followed by shouting, pushing towards the upper hall of the ship and violence against the allegedly contaminated traveller.

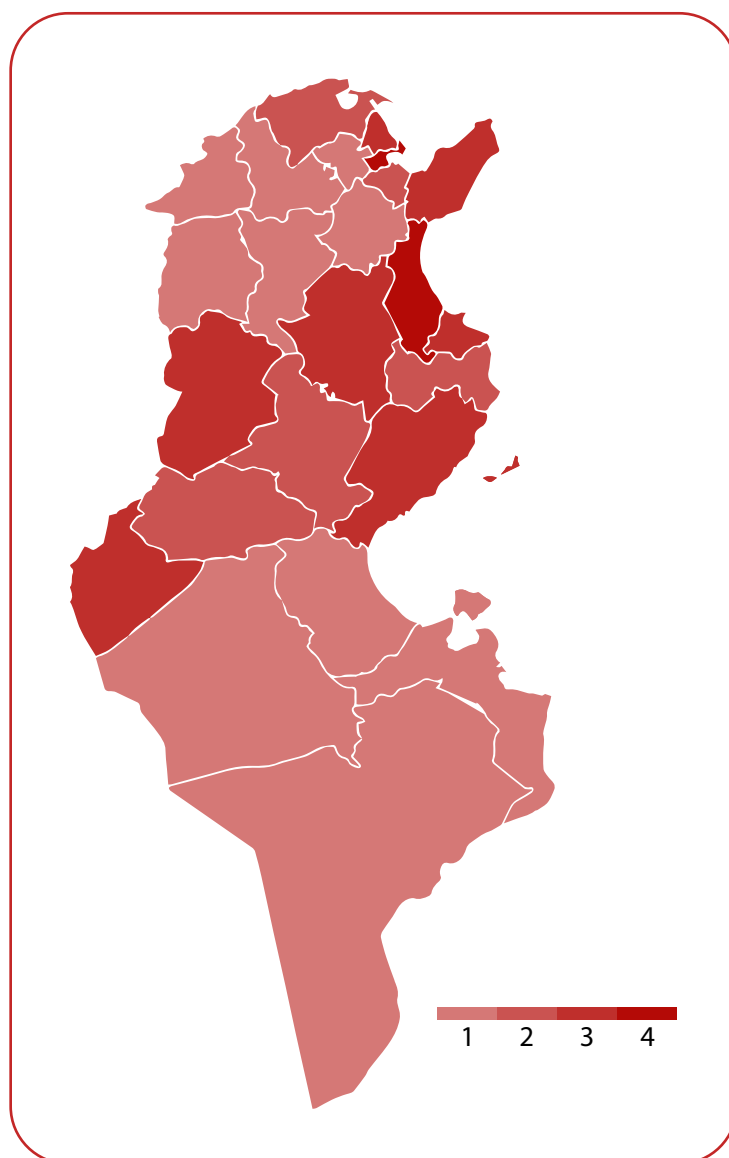
The result of the eve of March 2020 indicates that the violence is still masculine par excellence (88% of the perpetrators of violence are men and 9% mixed)



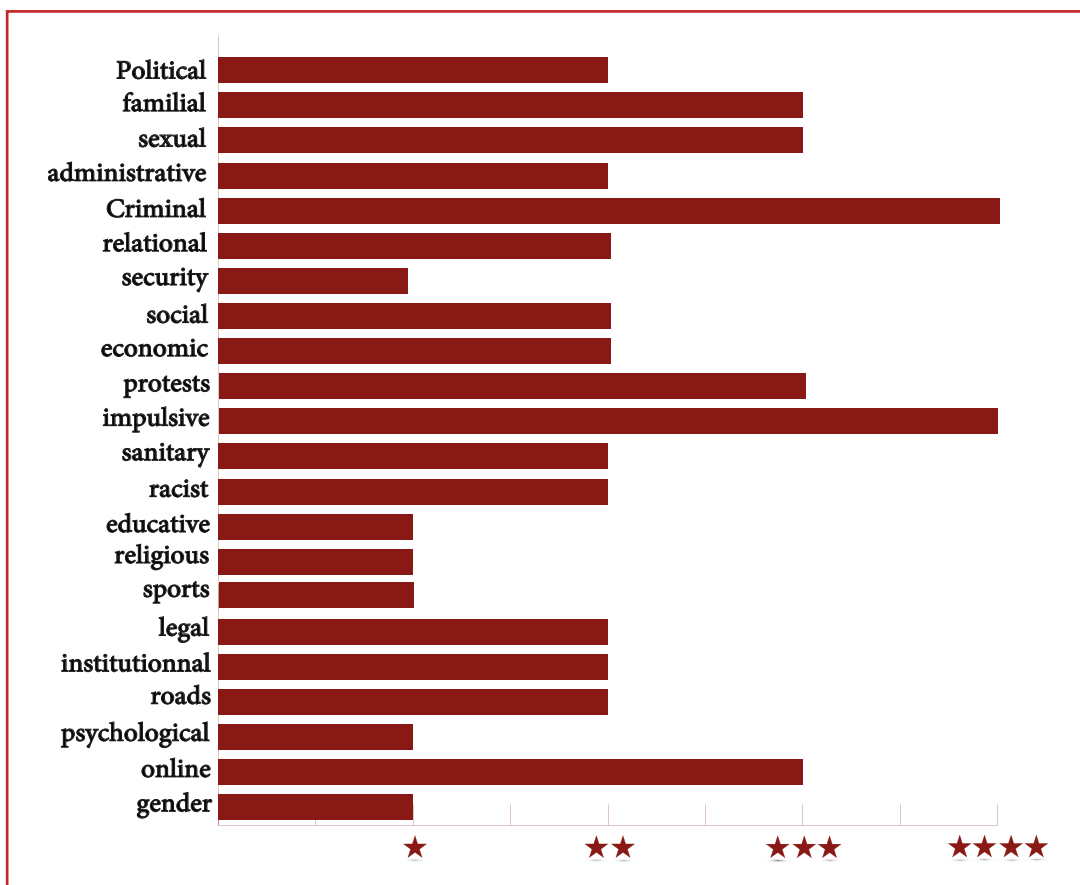
The capital is still the region with the highest number of violence with a rate of about 34.5% of the total cases of violence observed, followed by the governorate of Sousse with a percentage of 15%.

With regard to the types of violence observed, criminal violence is the most important type observed at 65.6%, followed by impulsive and reactive violence at 28%, domestic violence at 7.8% and sexual violence at 6.25%.

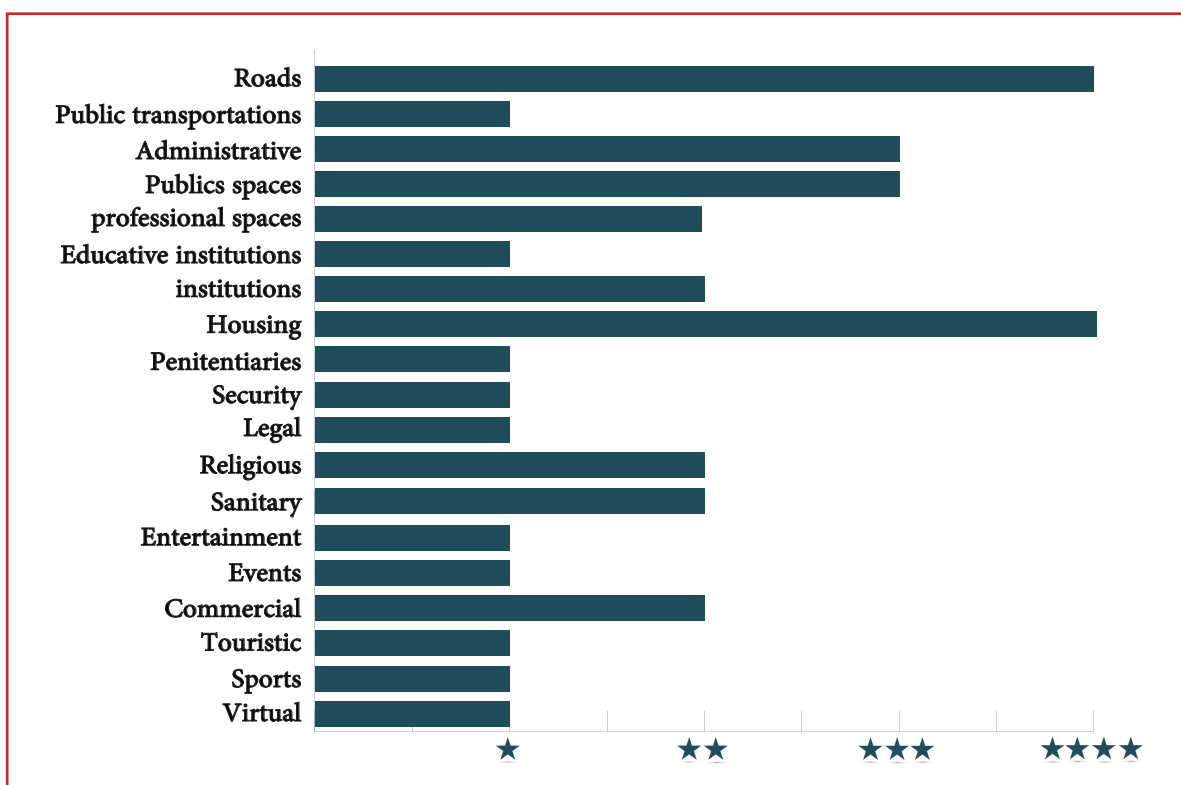
The most important areas witnessing violent incidents in March were housing and roads, with 25% respectively.



Forms of violence



Intensity of violence by space



Conclusion

It is important for the Tunisian Social Observatory to recall in its March 2020 report that the most vulnerable social fringes were the biggest headline of the social movements during this same month.

It revealed once again the failure of social policies and the regional and central mismanagement to cope with them (most of the governorates experienced gatherings in front of the headquarters of the delegations and governorates of poor groups at a time when the priority of global containment is to prevent gatherings, endanger the health of the collective and block the spread of the Corona virus). Undoubtedly, these groups will be more affected than others by the economic crisis predicted by all economic researchers.

According to the latest update published in the 2019 finance law, the number of needy families in Tunisia is 285 thousand families, while the number of families with limited income who, according to the Ministry of Social Affairs, enjoy the privilege of the special health tariff, would be within the limit of 622 thousand beneficiaries.

The Secretary General of the General Union of Pensioners confirmed that the number of pensioners in Tunisia exceeds 950 thousand. More than 40% of them have premiums below the guaranteed minimum wage. The retirement rate of the private sector in Tunisia is only 400 dinars.

These categories will develop further in the coming period by regrouping a significant part of those who had small professions and crafts and whose activity has been suspended. They are estimated, according to the National Union of Liberal Professions, at about 800,000 persons.

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:

Immediate 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.

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.