

Number 86

## Report of the month November 2020

Social movements, Suicides, Violence and Migration

1025 collective protests, 9 cases of suicide and attempted suicide and 1298 Migrants



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# Introduction

Gradually, the experience of democratic transition in Tunisia is heading towards a social tragedy. After having been built exclusively on the political level, this political democracy has had no economic or social shadow. The Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights has never ceased to warn, through all the reports and communiqués it has published in recent years, against the systemic sabotage to which the emerging democratic experience in Tunisia is exposed due to the failure of the economic and social choices of successive governments since 2011 and their inability to present a program that meets the aspirations of Tunisians and the rights of the revolution. These aspirations have been and remain: achieving social justice, eliminating poverty, discrimination, marginalization and unemployment, combating corruption and tax evasion, and creating a climate of public trust.

Nevertheless, a few weeks prior to the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the revolution, we are facing the impatience of the actors who have claims before a government that has no program and an economy that is stalled and unproductive with a social and political climate dominated by partisan interests and fraudulent consensus. This is what the forum had previously warned.

This dramatic scene has rolled like a snowball over the last decade towards a wounded democracy in which the political transition is dominated by a discourse of violence and hatred accompanied by a decline of public confidence in political actors and in whose economic and social recession has doubled the number of poor, marginalized people and those exposed to the dangers of violence, crime, drug addiction, irregular migration, terrorist and criminal networks, not to mention human trafficking. These facts are illustrated by data from the first ten months of this year: 6,500 protest movements were recorded, most of which were economic, social and environmental in nature; 12,500 Tunisians arrived on the Italian coast irregularly, and about 10,000 others who intended to "leave" were intercepted. As a result, the outcome of irregular migration for the first ten months of 2020 is equivalent to the number of arrivals and interceptions during the entire year 2011.

These indicators, on the other hand, are facing dramatic indicators in the institutions of sovereignty, since the government is unable, at the time of writing this report, to mobilize the financial resources needed for the budget of the new year.

State spending is expected to reach 41 million dinars, both external and internal, as the share of external debt has risen to an unprecedented level (16 million dinars of external borrowing out of a total of 19 million dinars constituting the total borrowing resources expected for the budget of the new year 2021). In addition, the Central Bank refused to finance the budget out of concern for repercussions on the inflation level.

A difficult situation in all respects that paves the way for a global and complex crisis. The Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights believes that the solution requires:

- A national dialogue that raises all urgent issues, problems encountered and practical plans for their resolution. A dialogue in which the circle of participants must be broadened to include the diverse representation of civil society and local actors and not be restricted to the usual traditional organizations;
- Negotiate with European and financial partners on issues of debt, migration, and the fight against war and extremism that are threatening the stability of the region;
- An urgent appeal to civil society, citizen movements and social forces that defend the values and objectives of the revolution to establish mechanisms for collective action, solidarity and vigilance with respect to the protection of the rule of law, institutions and the path of a global democratic transition that holds promising prospects for development.

### **General climate during the month of November 2020:**

The climate during November was not very different from what had been experienced in the previous months on the political, economic and health levels, but it was different on the social level, as widespread social protests broke out throughout the month of November demanding the implementation of agreements signed and not implemented earlier and claiming their rights to employment and development.

At the political level, the discourse permeated by violence, hatred and opportunistic alignment continued at the parliament exacerbated the credibility crisis facing this sovereign institution. Through these practices, the parliament doubled its isolation from society, as evidenced by the gap that emerged between the deputies and the demonstrators in their regions, resulting in the failure of the deputies to properly express the demands of the demonstrators and to convey their voices to Parliament, as well as the interpretation of these demands to the authorities and the parties in the parliamentary circle and to public opinion, without stigmatizing the actors of the social movement.

On the economic level, the deficit has reached its climax by the inability of the government to provide the monetary resources to finance the complementary finance law specific to the year 2020 and the budget for the year 2021, not forgetting the continued impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, with a growth rate in the second quarter of this year 2020 reaching -21.6% due to total containment and - 6% in the third quarter, despite the return of the economic activity model, according to official figures published by the National Institute of Statistics.

While the unemployment rate fell by about 2.8 percent compared to the second and third quarters (18 percent in the second and third quarters and 16.2 percent in the third quarter), according to the same source (National Institute of Statistics), the post-confinement economy did not produce new job opportunities or a strong return to production activities.

Also the tourism sector has lost 42.7% of its income in the third quarter of 2020 due to the impact of the Corona pandemic and the situation has worsened with the return of the epidemic since mid-August, so that the number of people infected with Covid 19 until November 30, reached 99375 and the number of deaths due to Covid 19 reached 3362. During the month of November, 1,534 cases were registered, of which approximately 59% occurred in the last ten days of the month. Despite the increase in the number of deaths, the official speech of the Ministry of Public Health towards the end of November showed that the Covid pandemic strategy is moving towards a relaxation of the restrictions imposed since the end of October with the aim of reducing the spread of communal infection by the virus and announcing Tunisia's intention to acquire 6 million doses of Corona virus vaccine. This quantity is insufficient to guarantee the collective immunity that society needs to return to a normal life and thus restore economic activity to its usual pattern.

Therefore, it seems clear that the economic and social impact of the Corona virus will extend over time to a range of two years, as the official intention is to vaccinate a quarter of the population against Covid in the new year, which will not guarantee its collective immunity and thus the return of the epidemic.

This crisis undoubtedly confirms the current government's inability to properly manage the Coronavirus situation in terms of improving the health services provided to all Tunisians regarding investigation and analysis, since the high mortality index confirms the inability of infected people to access the necessary assistance, to carry out blood tests and obtain care, as well as in terms of the strategy to come out of this crisis with the least damage by providing extreme solutions to ensure collective immunity for a return to normal economic activity and the creation of new horizons for employment and development.

This improvisation in the management of the Covid matter also affected the governmental management of the social matter throughout the month of November. Thus, if the government of Mechichi managed to conduct positive negotiations with the sit-in of El Camour, leading to the announcement of the agreement signed on November 8 and the return of activity of the oil companies following the opening of the "valve", the president of the government has made a communication error that exacerbated the state of social tension and reactivated the sit-ins of Gabes, Kasserine and other areas in the streets, sit-in tents, blocking of roads and production units.

The speech of the president of the government, delivered on the evening of November 9 from the military base in Aouina, did not include messages of comfort and positive interaction with the expectations of all Tunisians in all regions. Rather, he chose certain parts to mention and ignored others, leading, for example, to the emergence of a social movement specific to Kairouan and supported by the various components of the civil society demanding the implementation of what was declared at the ministerial council for the region that met in August 2019 and calling for the declaration of the general strike of December 3, 2020.

The government's lack of communication and its refusal to interact positively with social movements and protests in various regions have led to the emergence of social crises that have exacerbated the existing state of turmoil such as the emergence of the crisis of natural gas containers in most of the southern governorates due to the production stoppage of the liquid gas bottling unit in the industrial zone of Gabes as a result of the El-Soumoud 2 sit-in knowing that the aforementioned bottling unit produces about 40% of the country's needs in natural gas containers.

In addition, throughout the month of November, the inability of the government of Mechichi to produce a reassuring communication message for the population could be considered at the origin of the protesters' resort to more extreme forms of protest against the state.

The lack of continuity of the State and the government's inability to ensure this continuity by adhering to the implementation of agreements signed previously and the measures decided at previous ministerial councils were among the reasons that shook confidence between the public and the State.

Even the issues that the government sought to resolve were also dominated by improvisation, which created new crises.

In the case of urban construction workers, the government proposed a solution that created a new crisis for more than 16,000 workers in the 45-55 age group who were excluded from regularization by imposing a forced leave for 20 thousand dinars.

Concepts definition:

**Social Movements:** These are the protest movements that were organized, lasted over time and in which quasi-leaders emerged speaking on behalf of the various participants, like the social movement of Jendouba, Meknassi, Gabes, Tataouine and other regions.

**Protest movements :** these are the movements of the general population for equitable demands such as employment, health services, school transport services, transportation, an ending of the isolation of villages and regions, connection to water and electricity networks, sanitation, security, an elimination of anarchical displays, violence, drug addiction, crime and other economic, social, environmental, health, administrative and educational requirements.

This type of demonstration is not framed by unions or parties and can be spontaneous or organized, which means that it is a reaction to an incident or a response to a call to protest in the context of an event that often comes from citizens but also from activists.

## Coordinating Committee:

The November demonstrations may not have been expected by those who do not closely follow the evolution of social mobilization, but they were foreseeable for the Tunisian Social Observatory.

Indeed, the cartography and forms of protest accompanying the total confinement have changed and developed since April 2020 giving most of the observed demonstrations a tendency to violence and this is what the Tunisian Social Observatory has warned in the majority of its monthly reports for the following months.

However, political actors still tend towards the conspiracy theory as the simplest way to escape responsibility.

Indeed, given the state of panic that struck political actors as a result of the expansion of the circle of social protests in various regions in November, it was easier to question the identity of the sit-ins' coordinating committees, to make political accusations against them and to consider them as a political project hiding in a social appearance. Yet what these people did not see was that the social movement was changing and developing over the last few years, during which the political spirit didn't develop and stopped at partisan interest, self-interest and the sharing of power privileges.

In recent years and in the face of the total lack of interaction of authorities at the local, regional and central levels, the demonstrators have gathered around a set of demands and organized into coordinating committees. Some social movements have appointed a general coordinator and official spokesperson.

These coordinating committees work in an environment that includes personalities who are unknown in the media as in the experience of El-Camour. These shadowy figures are not political, but rather legal and economic experts, as well as personalities capable of providing logistical support to protest movements in their discussions to highlight their case. Perhaps politicians have not understood this development achieved by some social movements that have framed and well-managed their protests in order to achieve their demands exactly as happened with the El-Camour Accord.

On this side there is a powerless authority, without vision, without program and without political actors having limited mechanisms of analysis and interpretation and a traditional mentality in the management of party work that is limited to the opportunistic side, and on the other side there are unbridled ambitions of social actors in the organization, development and design of forms of protest in defense of their just causes. Between the two sides, there was a failed government communication discourse and serious communication deficiencies on the part of the president of the government, a situation that could in no way bring the country out of its deep and global crisis on the tenth anniversary of the revolution.

However, the attacks on the nomenclature of the coordinating committees show that the situation is not moving towards a real treatment and diagnosis that could spare the country an imminent explosion of the social situation and which would open the door to chaos.

On the contrary, the stigmatization of social mobilization and the increasing pressure seems to be a device for those in power to confront social mobilization, which could increase tension in the coming weeks, especially in light of the emergence of convergence and solidarity among social movements.

The El-Camour movement can be considered as a major turning point from which lessons must be learned. It is a qualitative movement that established a new scene of leadership, a new scene of synergy and regional solidarity and a new scene of interaction in which the government played the role of an interested and interactive listening platform during five weeks of negotiation until the signing of an agreement that began to implement desired traditions of governance and transparency.

While this is not the exemplary movement in terms of disrupting production and opening the door to an economic hemorrhage that amounted to \$800 billion in losses after the gate was closed for four months, it is the turning point from which everyone in government, the elite and politicians must learn the lessons.

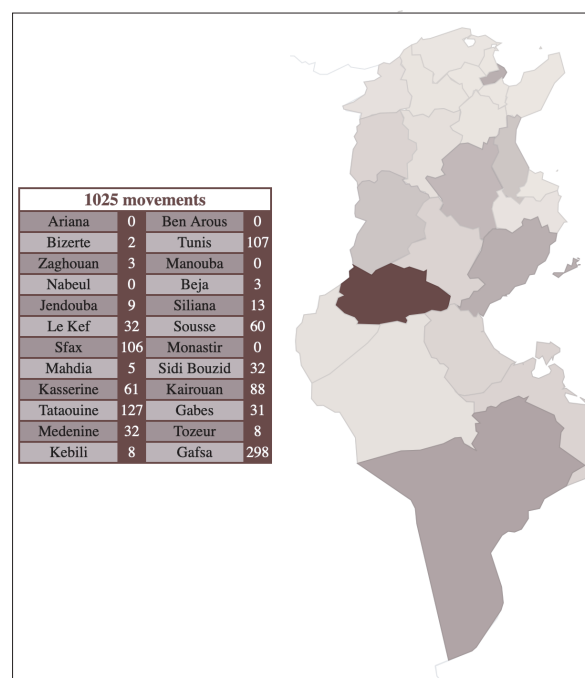
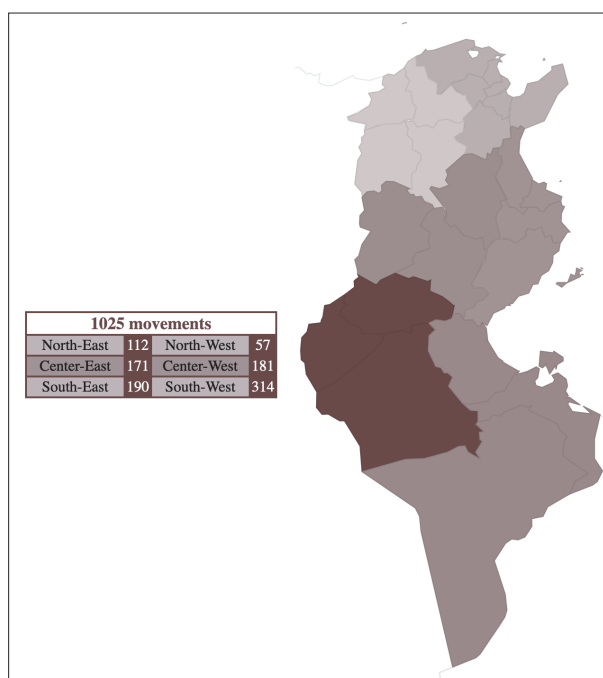
Either the El-Camour movement is the beginning of a road towards the birth of a strong, conscious and active social movement, or it is a dangerous slide towards regionalism and rebellion.

## The mapping of Social Movements

The number of demonstrations recorded throughout November 2020 reached 1025, recording an increase of about 17.6% compared to October of the same year.

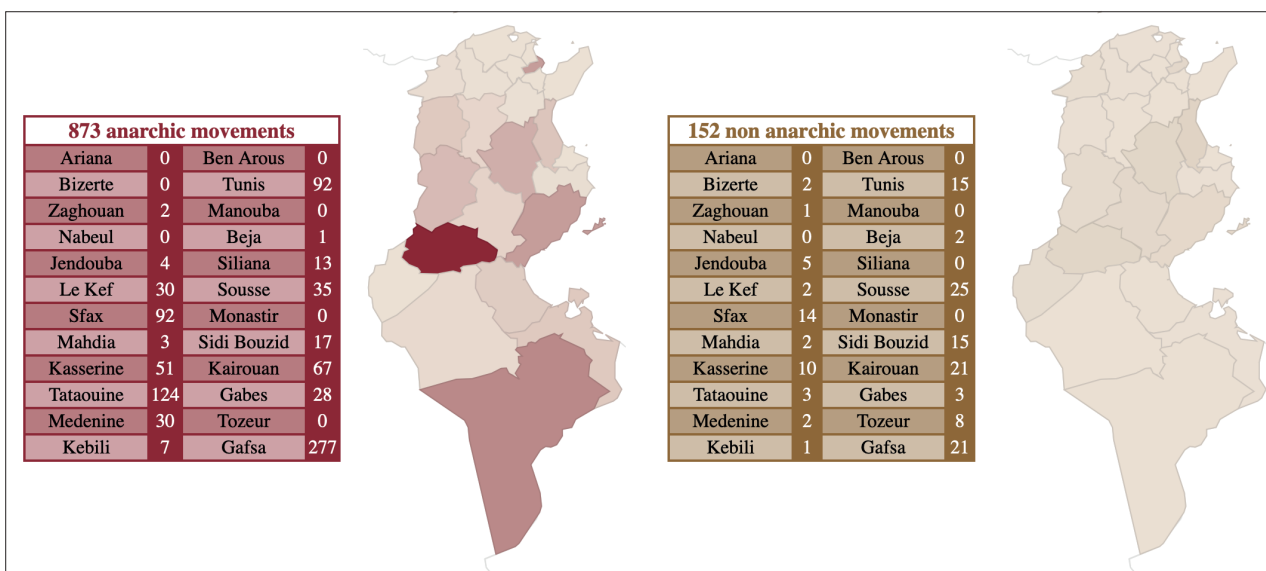
2020	Social Movements
September	751
October	871
November	1025

The mapping of the November protests changed, so that the Southern region (East and West) became the most present in terms of protests, with 504 protest movements, nearly 49% of the total protests in November.

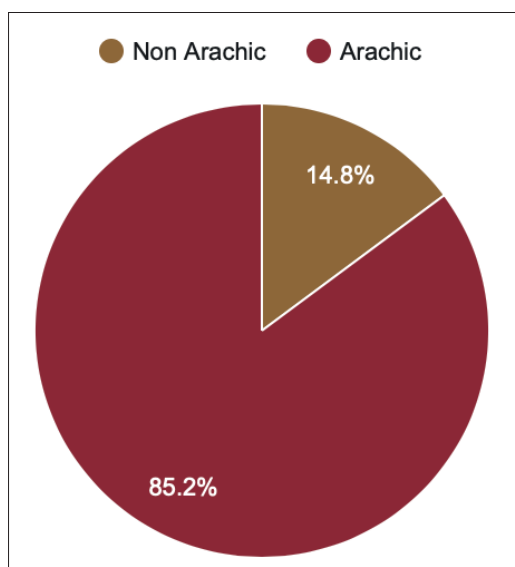


Anarchic demonstrations with violent tendencies in the two regions (the governorates of Gabes, Medenine, Tataouine, Kebili, Tozeur, and Gafsa) accounted for 92% of the total number of protests recorded in these areas.

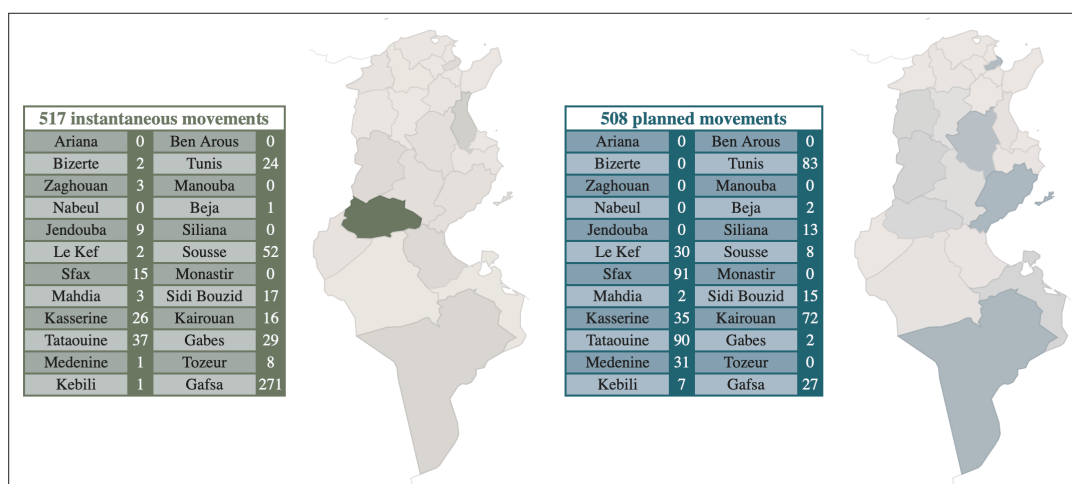
The Central region (East and West) ranks second in terms of the number of demonstrations recorded throughout November with approximately 352 protest movements, of which about 75.2% were of an anarchic nature, particularly in the governorates of Sfax, Mahdia, Sousse, Kairouan, Sidi Bouzid and Kasserine. In third place comes the Northern region (East and West) with 169 protest movements in the governorates of Bizerte, Zaghuan, Tunis, Siliana, Jendouba, Béja and El Kef. About 84% of all these movements were anarchic, which means that they tend to be violent, especially in the governorates of Tunis, Siliana and El Kef.



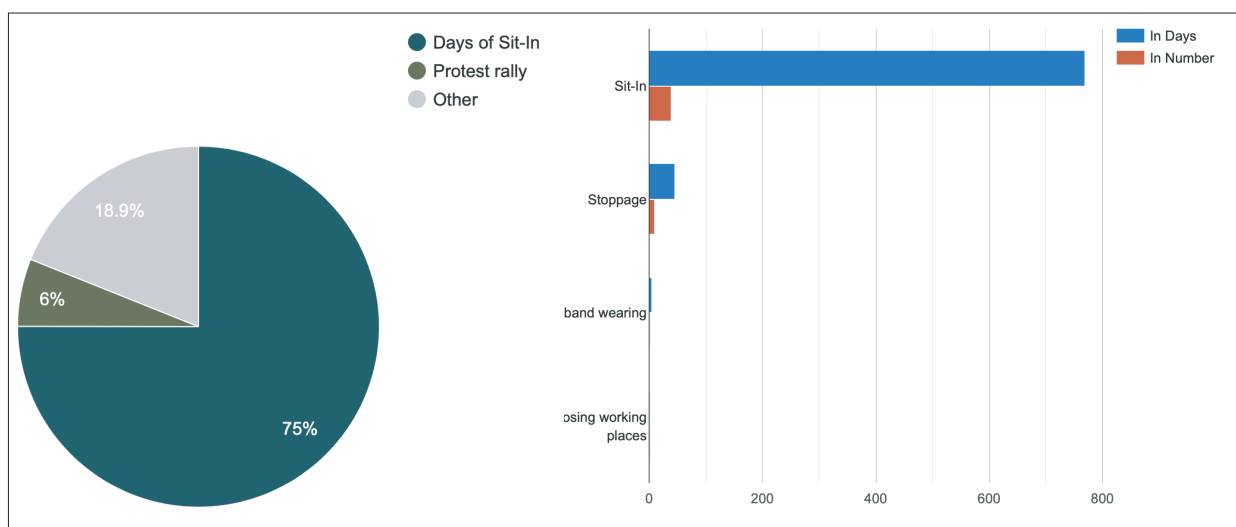
The total number of anarchic demonstrations amounted to 85.2% of the total number of demonstrations recorded throughout the month of November 2020.



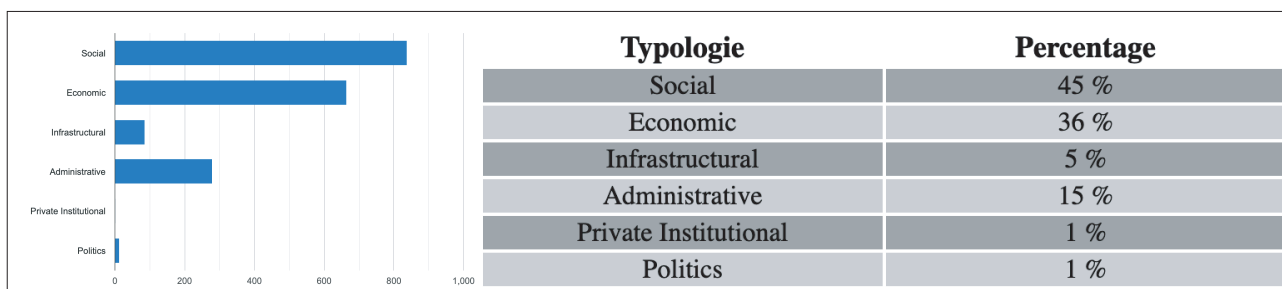
It should be noted that anarchic social demonstrations have started to emerge since last April, reaching the majority of the demonstrations observed by the monitoring team of the Tunisian Social Observatory.



Sit-ins accounted for 75% of the total forms of protest observed, followed by protest rallies at 6% and the remaining forms of protest (strikes, wearing the red armband and blocking of professional sites) at 18.9%. The number of days of sit-ins recorded reached 769, including the continuation of sit-ins by unemployed PhD students for 5 months (since June 29, 2020).

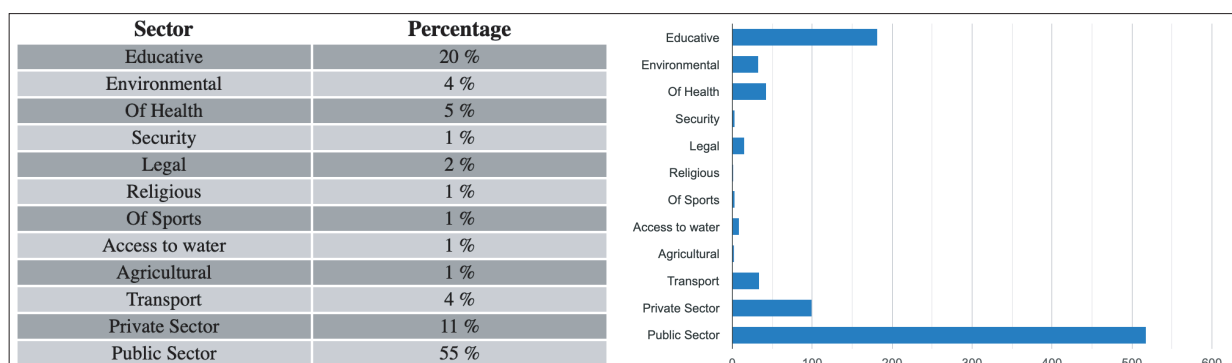


All these social protests were motivated by economic and social demands with a rate of 81%, protests calling for the improvement of administrative services with a rate of 15%, the improvement of road infrastructure and the covering of sewer openings, following some accidents with a rate of 5% of all the demands.



The claim of the right to work represented 31% of the total number of protests, followed by the demand for the improvement of working conditions by 26%, the right to development by 8%, the demand for reform of the educational system by 7%, and the denunciation of the deterioration of conditions in educational institutions by 7%.

The non-implementation of the agreements was behind 6% of the total number of registered demonstrations in November 2020.



As for the protagonists of the protests, they were mostly young and unemployed, including graduates with 53%, followed by employees with 17%, workers with 10%, students with 9%, citizens, drivers, teachers and professors with 4%, residents, activists, merchants, students, doctors and farmers, parents, rural transport drivers and others.

<b>The initiating social actors movements</b>	
Unemployed	28 %
Employees	17 %
Youth	17 %
Citizens	16 %
workers	10 %
students	9 %
Unemployed graduated people	8 %
urban workers	4 %
Drivers	4 %
teachers	4 %

<b>Protest spaces</b>	
Roads	20 %
Public buildings	17 %
CPG	16 %
Administrative headquarters	12 %
Educational institutions	7 %
Governorate headquarters	6 %
Production headq	5 %
Ministry headquarters	5 %
Medias	4 %
Headquarters of the municipalities	4 %

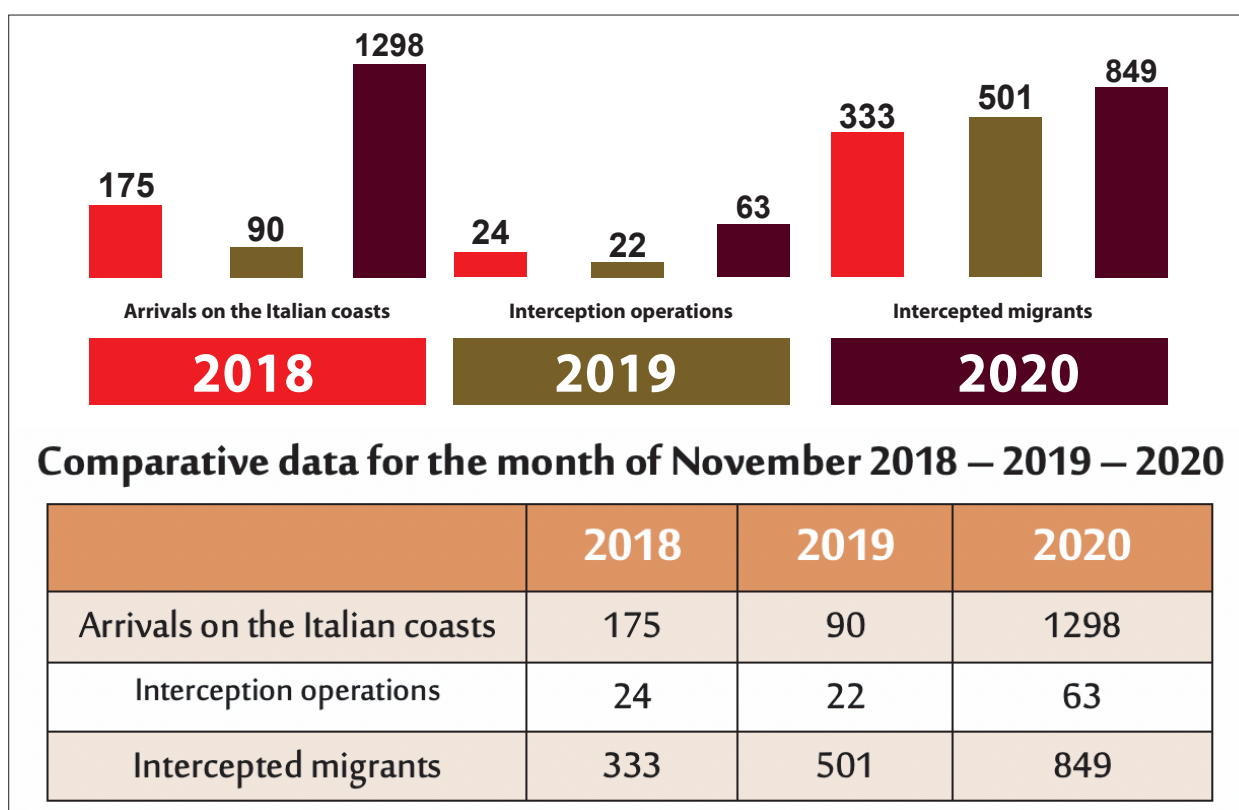
Roads were the most prominent areas of protest with 20%, followed by the sovereignty headquarters with 17%, the Gafsa Phosphate Company with 16%, administrative headquarters with 12% and educational institutions with 7%.

Production sites accounted for 5% of the protest spaces, public spaces, the Assembly of People's Representatives and hospitals accounted for 1%.

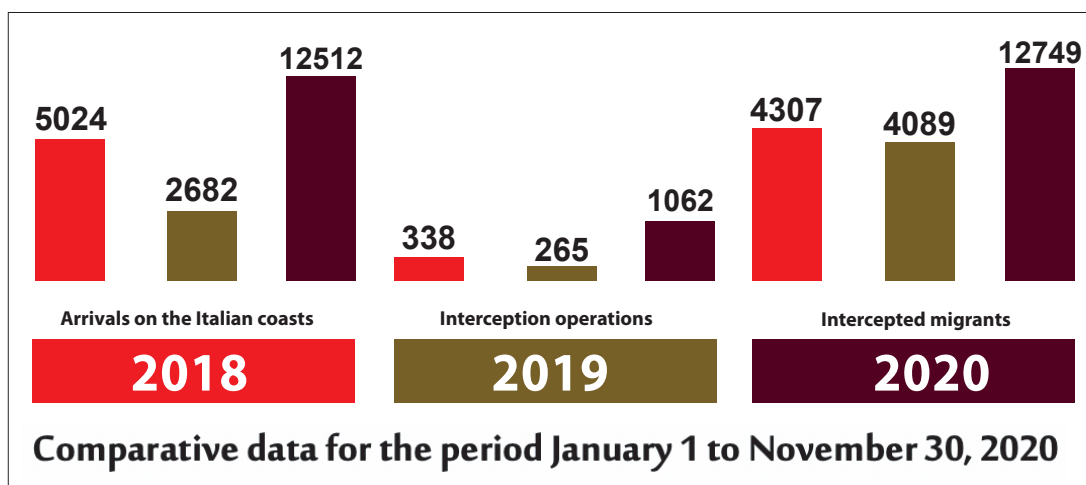
Demonstrators addressed 79% of their demands to the central authority, 20% to the regional authority, 4% to ministries and 1% to governors.

## Irregular emigration during the month of November 2020

Contrary to what was expected at this stage, the terrorist operation that took place in the city of Nice at the end of October 2020 and in which a Tunisian non-regulatory migrant was involved, had no impact on the migration decision. Despite the campaigns of stigmatization of migrants in France and Italy that accompanied this event 1298 migrants arrived on the Italian coasts during the month of November of which 93% arrived during the first half of the month while less than 100 immigrants arrived during the second half. This is due to climatic factors since Tunisia and the central Mediterranean basin have experienced climatic disturbances accompanied by rains and agitation of the sea which indirectly affected the flows reaching the Italian coasts.



The month of November 2020 recorded exceptional figures like the other months of this year, increasing more than 13 times compared to November 2019 in terms of the number of arrivals while the number of intercepted operations increased from 22 in November 2019 to 63 intercepted operations in November 2020.



### Comparative data for the period January 1 to November 30, 2020

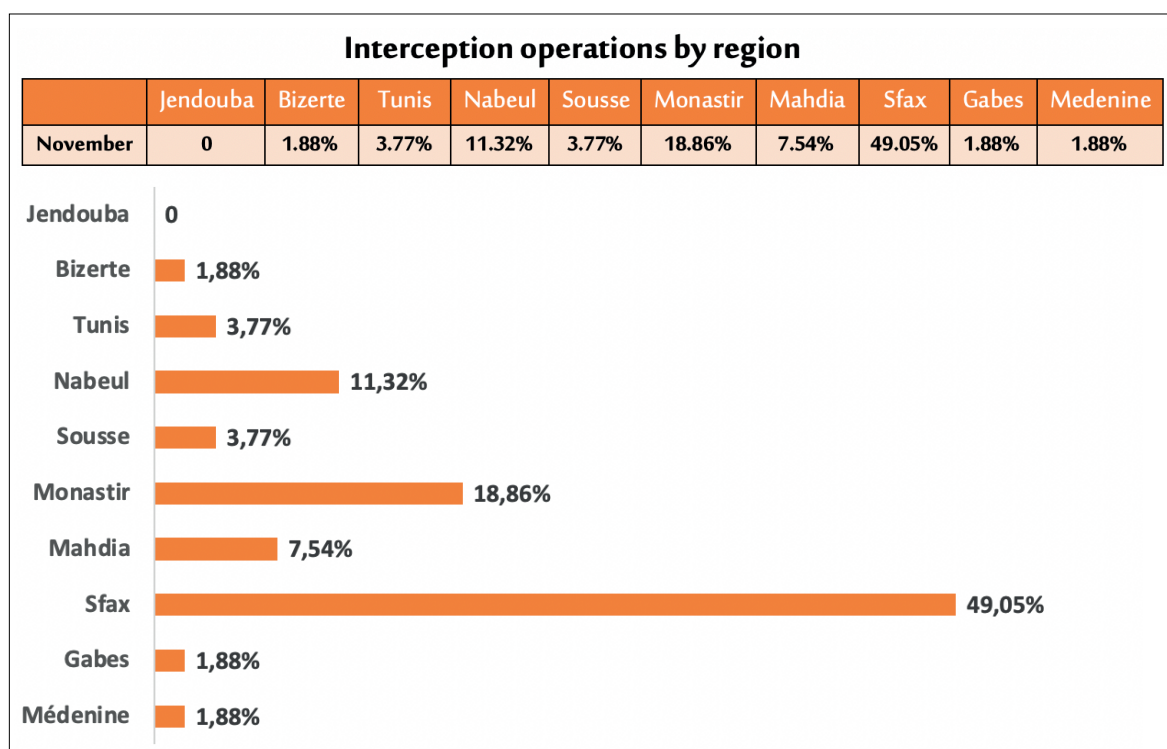
	2018	2019	2020
Arrivals on the Italian coasts	5024	2682	12512
Interception operations	338	265	1062
Intercepted migrants	4307	4089	12749

The number of arrivals on the Italian coasts in an irregular manner from January 1, 2020 to the end of November reached 12512 migrants, meaning an increase of 365% with respect to the year 2019 and an increase of 149% with respect to the year 2018. The number of crossing operations intercepted recorded an increase of 300% and an increase in the number of migrants intercepted by 211% compared to 2019, these are indicators that reflect the growing willingness to emigrate as well as the intensity of activity of the Tunisian Maritime Guard.

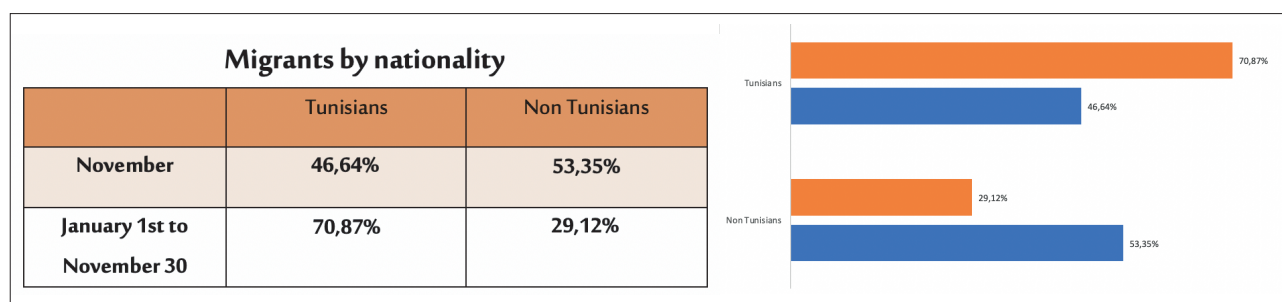
### Monthly arrivals on the Italian coasts in 2020

Month	Non accompanied minors	Accompanied Minors	Females	Males	Total
January	12	10	4	42	68
February	5	0	0	21	26
March	17	0	1	42	60
April	6	2	1	28	37
May	42	3	6	443	494
June	28	19	23	755	825
July	371	100	99	3575	4145
August	333	98	72	1803	2306
September	172	63	69	1619	1923
October	1328	1081	41	43	163
November	1298	1085	35	34	144
Total	12512	10383	342	385	1400

Women accounted for only 2.73% of the total arrivals of Tunisian nationality on the Italian coast and 18.89% of all nationalities. Minors accounted for 14.26%, while minors of Tunisian nationality accounted for 37.17% of the total number of minors arriving in Italy of all nationalities.



The Sfax regions represented the most important starting point from which crossing operations are thwarted, with the percentage of intercepted operations in Sfax reaching 49.05%, followed by the Monastir region with 18.86%.

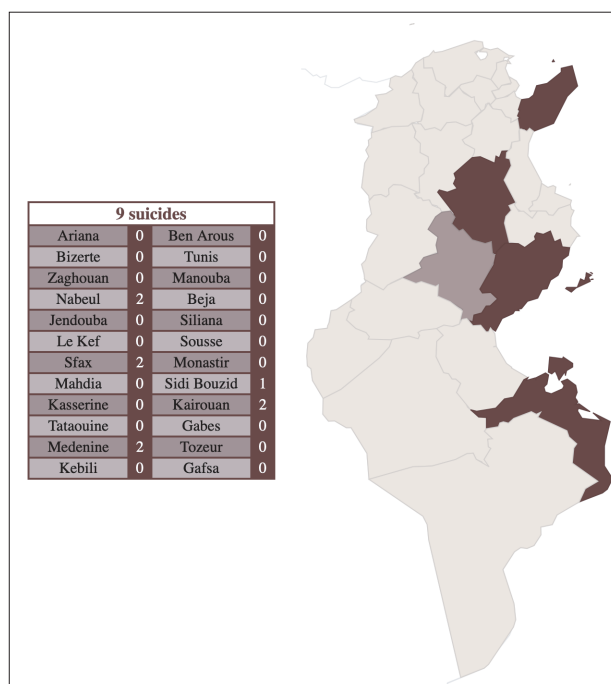


For the first time since February, the percentage of sub-Saharan migrants intercepted exceeded the percentage of Tunisians. We thus note the relative impact of the terrorist operation in Nice which led candidates for migration of Tunisian nationality to review or postpone the decision to migrate until the vision of the measures taken against non-regulatory migrants on the northern shore becomes clear.

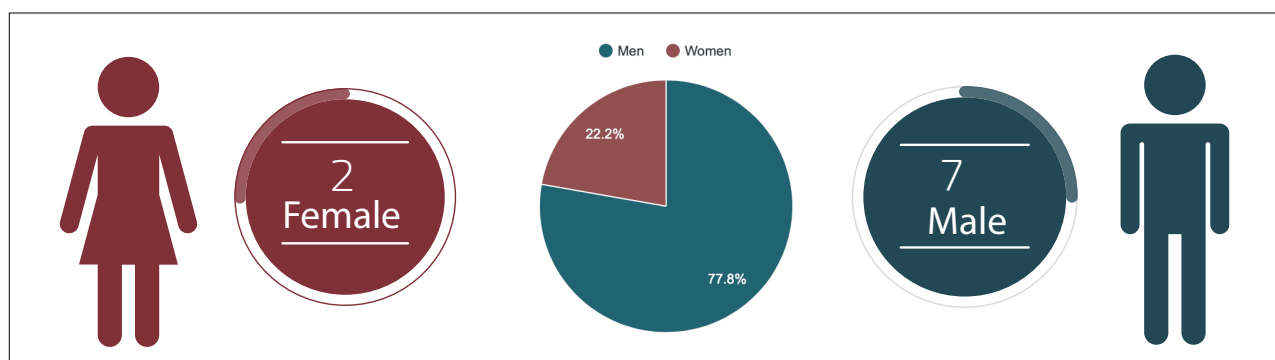
This situation forced migration networks to replace Tunisians by non-Tunisians.

## Suicide and attempted suicide during the month of November

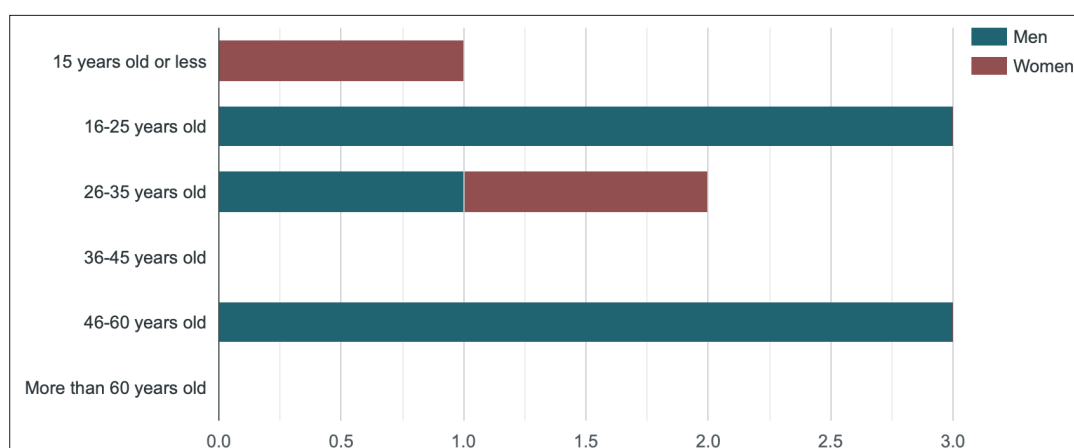
The number of reported acts of suicide and attempted suicide during the month of November 2020 was 9 cases. Two were recorded in Sfax, Nabeul, Kairouan and Medenine and one case in the governorate of Sidi Bouzid.



The male gender accounted for 77.8% of all reported cases of suicide and attempted suicide.

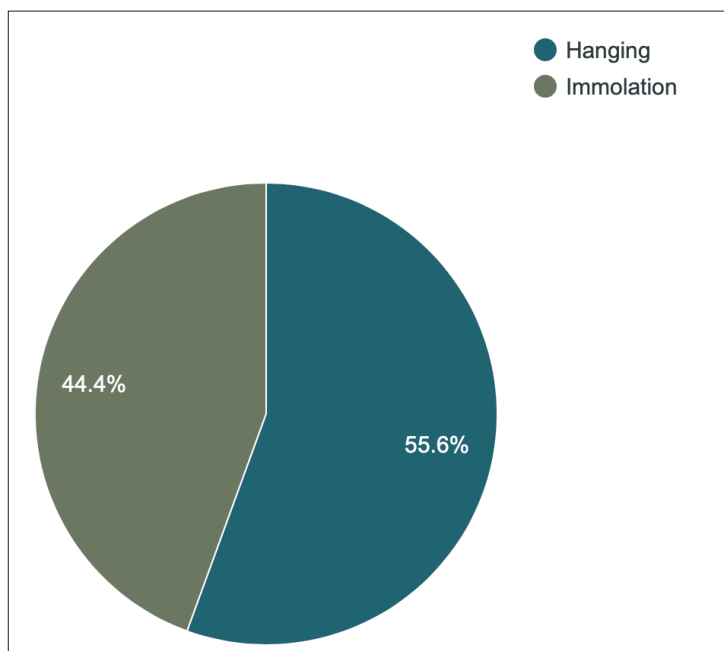


The 16-35 age group accounted for 55.5% of the total observed cases.



	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
Hommes	0	3	1	0	3	0
Femmes	1	0	1	0	0	0
TOTAL	1	3	2	0	3	0

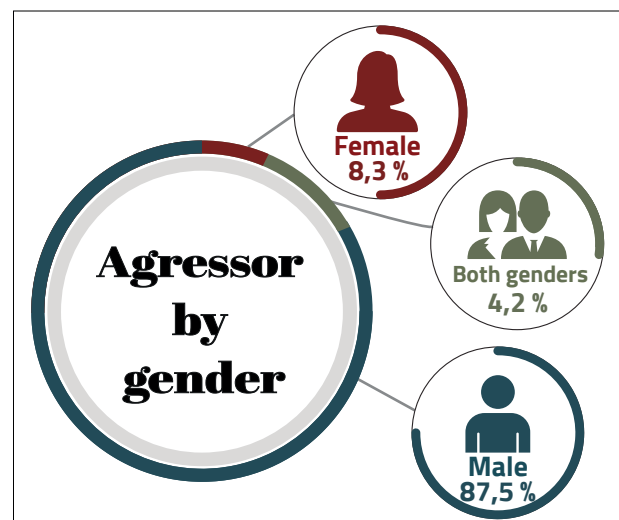
The suicides and suicide attempts observed involved immolation (55.6%) and hanging (44.4%). Suicide and attempted suicide remain a form of expression of individual protest that has been fairly present on the scene of protest in Tunisia in recent years without any concern on the part of the authorities to study it, understand it or put in place prevention mechanisms.



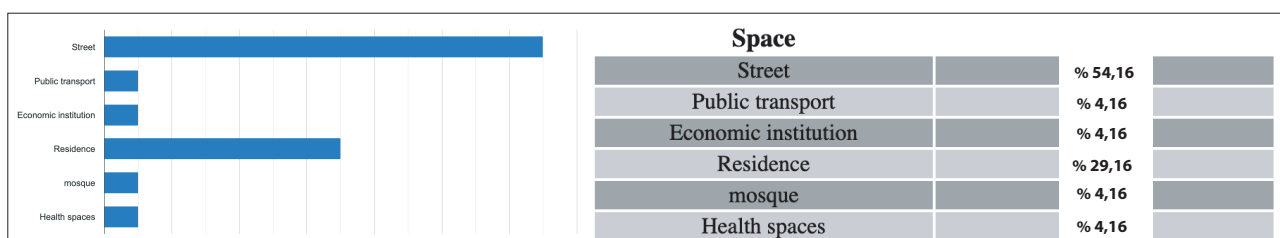
## Violence Report of November

The report of the Tunisian Social Observatory of November 2020 confirmed the conclusions of various reports published on violence against women and showed that its rates have recorded a clear evolution in the months of total confinement since they have been multiplied by 5 or even 7 times. It is important to note that most of the women exposed to violence during this same period were educated women. The report of the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women indicates that 75% of them are women suffering from economic and social vulnerability and about 57% of them are unemployed. Husbands were responsible for 67% of the recorded level of violence during the period of total confinement, and domestic violence was the most present and most threatening to women's safety, according to the same report.

The Observatory's statistics revealed that a third of the people exposed to violence during the month of November were women. At the same time, they indicate that 87.5% of those responsible for the reported violence were male.

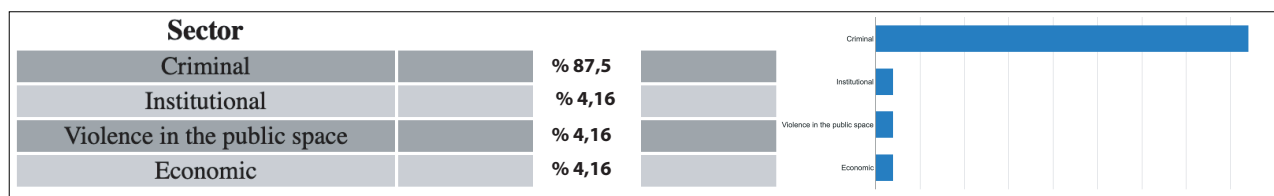


Workspaces, public spaces, roads and means of transportation ... represented the setting that absorbed more than 60% of the violent incidents recorded during the month of November. Domestic space came second with about 30% of the violent incidents reported during the same month. Economic production institutions witnessed 4% of the violent incidents and the same percentage was for violence in places of worship (mosques).

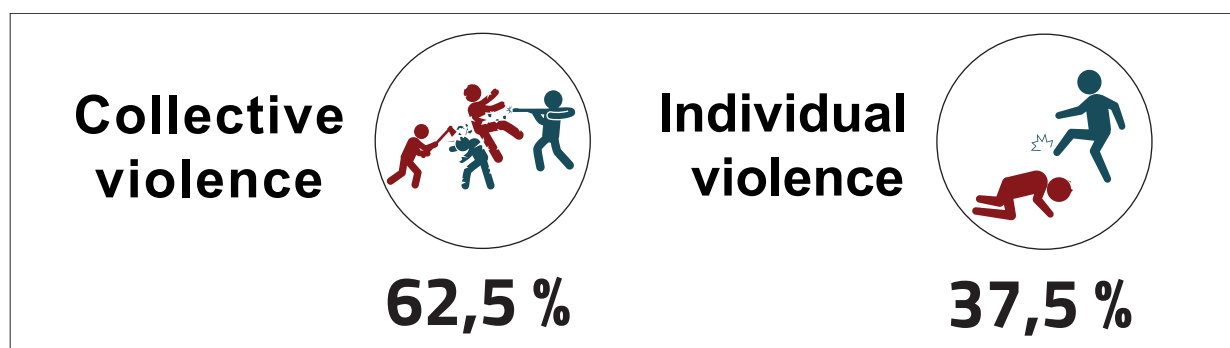
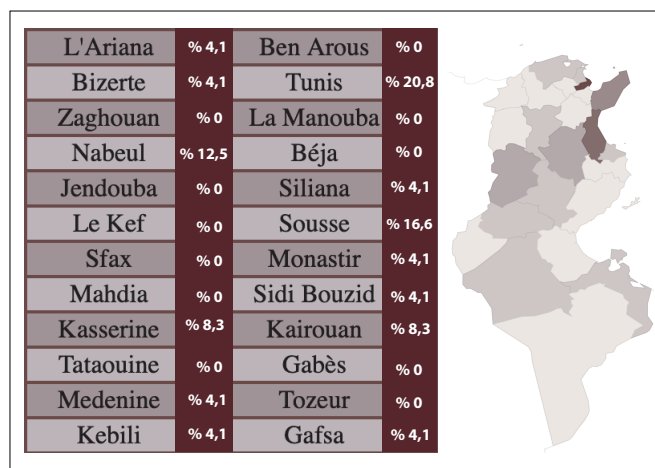


As in previous months, violence of a criminal nature occupied the top spot regarding violent incidents reported in the watch sample.

On the other hand, the rate of economic violence did not change from the previous month, remaining within 4% of the recorded level of violence, the same as in October 2020.



The governorate of Tunis is at the forefront of the regions that experienced violent incidents during the month of November with 20.8% of the recorded violence, followed by the governorate of Sousse with 16.6% of the total, followed by the governorate of Nabeul with 12.5%, then the governorate of Kairouan with 8.3% of the violent acts. The level of violence was about the same in the governorates of Gafsa, Siliana, Monastir, Sidi Bouzid, Kebili, Médenine, Ariana and Bizerte, each of which had a violence rate of 4.1% in November 2020.



62.5% of the acts of violence recorded during the month of November were of an individual nature, on the other hand, collective violence accounted for 37.5% of all violence.

# Conclusion

In the end, the month of November was another difficult stage on the path of social mobilization, and if the government does not act according to a reasonable strategy with which it must diagnose the social situation and respond to its legitimate demands, then there will be no rationale for the act of protest that will disrupt the production of goods or disrupt the basic services affecting the daily life of the citizen.

The coming weeks will open up to more complications in the social and health situation, requiring a discourse of honest communication based on a true diagnosis and also a collective and participatory dialogue, the most important of which is respect for the rule of law and institutions.

## 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 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.