

REPORT **February**2022



308
Migrants



962
Collective protests

11
Cases of suicide and attempted suicide

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February 2022 report on protest movements and social mobilization



February 2022 witnessed a decreased level of social protests of about 22% compared to the same month last year (1,235 protest movements), despite great similarities in terms of economic and social crisis and political instability.

On the other hand, there has been an increase in the tendency to anarchy and violence in the demonstrations, such as the anarchic hunger strikes, which accounted for 8.5% of the total number of protests recorded throughout February 2022.

These two indicators undoubtedly confirm that citizens have begun to evolve their protest mechanisms, reflecting a state of collective despair about the ability of state institutions to meet their demands. In other words, the lack of confidence in the responsiveness of state institutions to the demands of protesters and in their ability to respond to these legitimate demands is fueling a shift towards more anarchy.

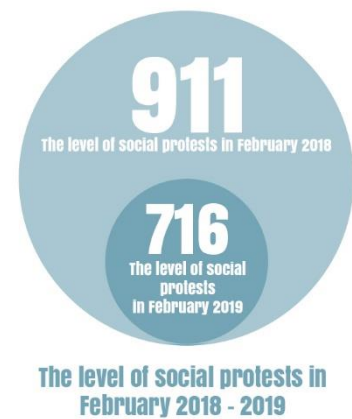
This interpretation can be confirmed by an additional indicator represented by the significant increase in the proportion of organized events and a decrease of instantaneous events, the monthly levels of which have remained very close to each other over the last few months.

These indicators are emerging as the traits of a new social actor: an organized citizenry who has lost confidence in state institutions and is shifting its mechanisms of contestation toward more anarchy.

This is taking place amid a general climate of crisis with no sign of an upcoming resolution. Political uncertainty exacerbates this crisis, as the government, since its nomination last October, has not presented clear programs or solutions to revive the economic situation and to follow a strategy of wealth and jobs

creation and expanding horizons to achieve social justice objectives, in line with its concept of creating opportunities for all and developing disadvantaged regions.

It is common practice in post-revolutionary Tunisia that expectation and optimism prevail during the year in which elections are scheduled. For example, protests in February 2019 (an election year) saw a relative drop of 21% compared to February 2018, which is almost equal to the decrease in February 2022 compared to the same month last year.



This optimism is manifested through a slight loosening of social protests, with a powerful resurgence at the time of election campaigns, in the hope that social movements and the bearers of just causes will be able to impose their demands so that they will be among the priorities of those who will govern in the future. If this rule is applied to the current year, which is an election year according to the agenda announced by the President of the Republic to hold legislative elections on December 17, 2022, we can understand the relative calm of social protests recorded during the months of January and February despite the state of generalized crisis in the country. This crisis is characterized in particular by the shortage of many basic food products such as subsidized oil, semolina and flour, as well as sugar. Despite the disruption of bread supply in many delegations, rural areas and neighborhoods of major cities, and despite the multiple crises related to agricultural production, such as the lack of subsidized fodder and the lack of agricultural production items such as ammonium nitrate and the lack of irrigation water due to low water levels in dams (in Siliana), and in spite of the continued shortage of medicines, some of which are vital for patients with cancer and chronic diseases; the level of protests related to the provision of these products remains low.

In figures, the number of protests denouncing the food shortage was only 9 during the month of February, representing 1%, compared to 9 protests related to the deterioration of health services, two protests related to the shortage of medical equipment and two protests related to the shortage of medical staff.

Thus, this relative calm can be explained by two reasons: First, there is a truce that directly relates to the date of the elections, which means that we are facing

an exceptional year and the level of protests that is showing a kind of relative calm at the beginning of the year will increase as the date of the elections approaches. Secondly, there is the indicator of mistrust of those in authority by the social actor: the citizen with fair claims, showing the new features we mentioned above.

Politically, the situation has not changed during the month of February compared to January of this same year 2022, as uncertainty, lack of access to information, discriminatory discourse inciting violence, and the absence of a clear communication plan by the Bouden government to inform the public about its work program and short-term plans to finance the budget, end corruption, reform public institutions, and undertake priority reforms are the watchwords characterizing the climate.

On the economic and social levels, the situation has not changed compared to January either, it seems that it is rather moving towards more uncertainty, as the National Institute of Statistics has stopped publishing the statistics needed for economic and social indicators since the third quarter of last year. In a statement sent to users of its website, the institute explained that the tense social climate inside the institute following protest movements within it has disrupted the data collection activity of the field. The director of the institute then resigned and the word linking his resignation to a desire to conceal the reality of the economic and social situation has spread.

All these facts increase the level of non-confidence between the state institutions and the citizen, pushing the latter to resort to individual alternative solutions that are not expected from the state. This situation is a threat to social peace because it fuels alternative approaches such as the parallel sector, suicide, irregular migration, and other alternative solutions that substitute state institutions.

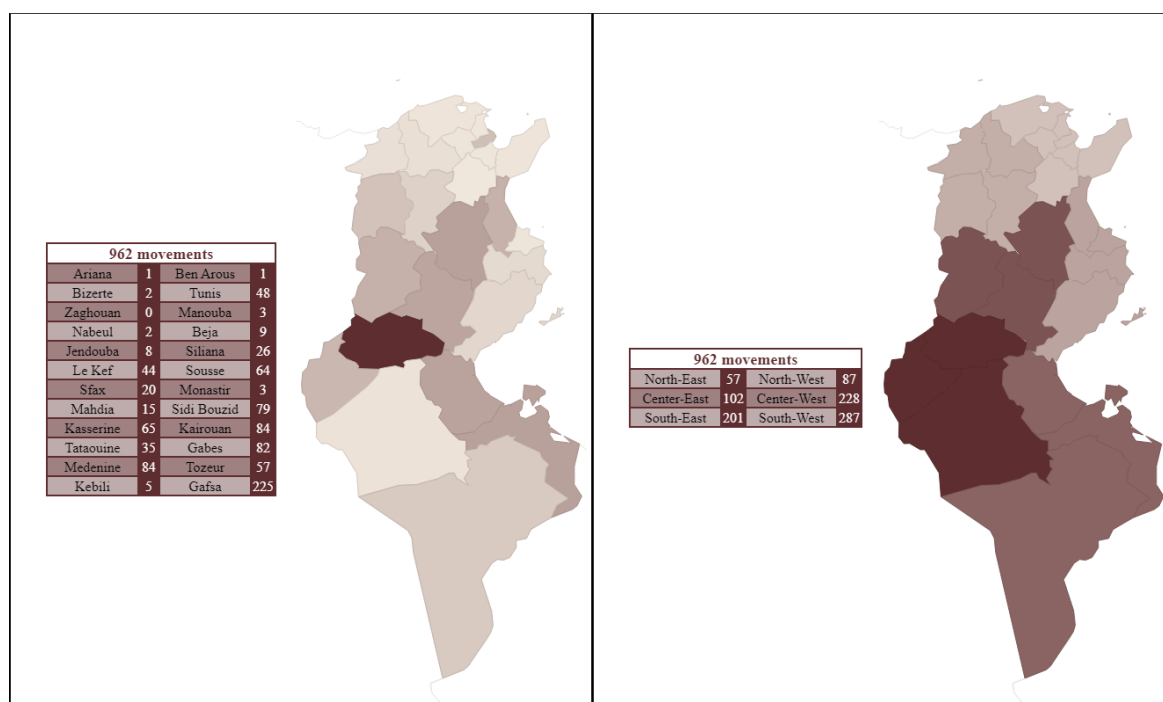
And since Tunisia is not isolated from the regional and international situation, the Russian-Ukrainian war that broke out in late February is likely to have economic repercussions on Tunisia in terms of a further increase in raw material prices, as this field is largely linked to the provision of soft wheat mainly from Ukraine.

February Protests :



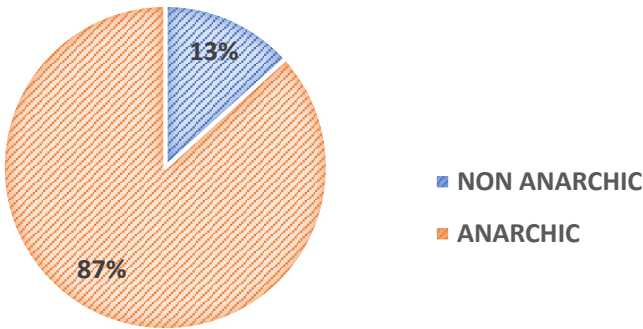
For the second month in a row, the South-West (governorates of Gafsa, Tozeur and Kebili) remains at the top of the most contesting areas, with 287 protest movements out of a total of 962 protest movements recorded during the month of February 2022, representing 29.8%. The governorate of Gafsa has experienced alone 78% of the total protests recorded in the region.

The Central West region (governorates of Sidi Bouzid, Kairouan and Kasserine) comes second with 228 protest movements, which is nearly a quarter of the total demonstrations recorded, then the Southeast region (Gabes, Medenine and Tataouine) with 201 protest movements, or about 20.8% of the total recorded demonstrations.

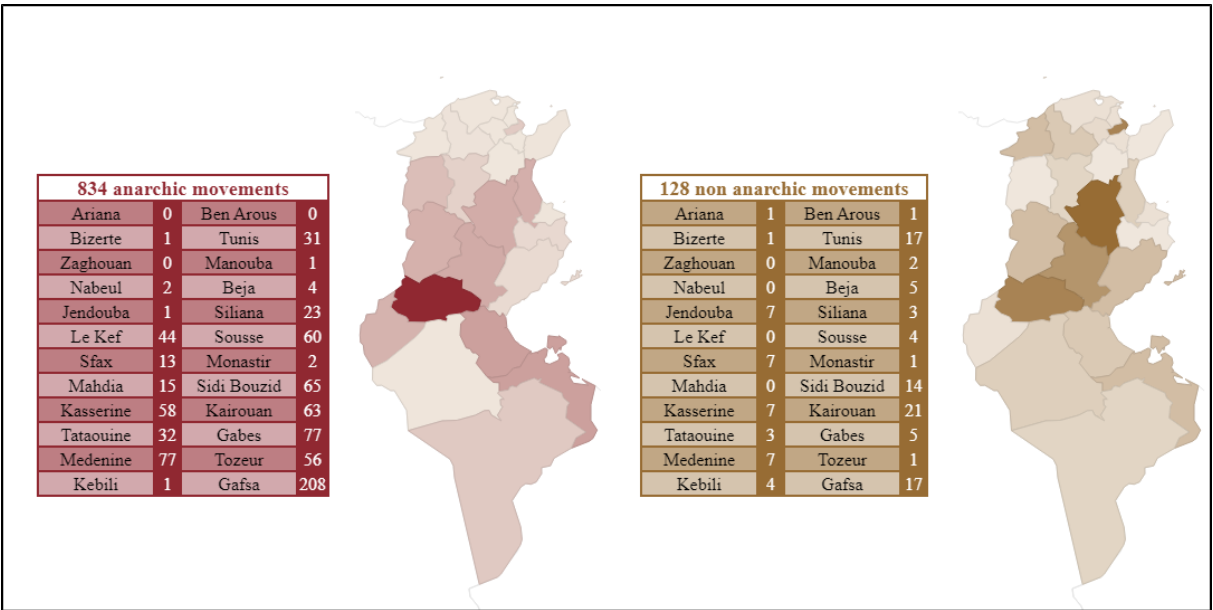


The number of anarchic protests amounted to 834 protest movements, or about 86.7% of the total number of protests. As a reminder, anarchic protests are those that tend towards violence and/or disrupt the activities of the citizen and/or the institution.

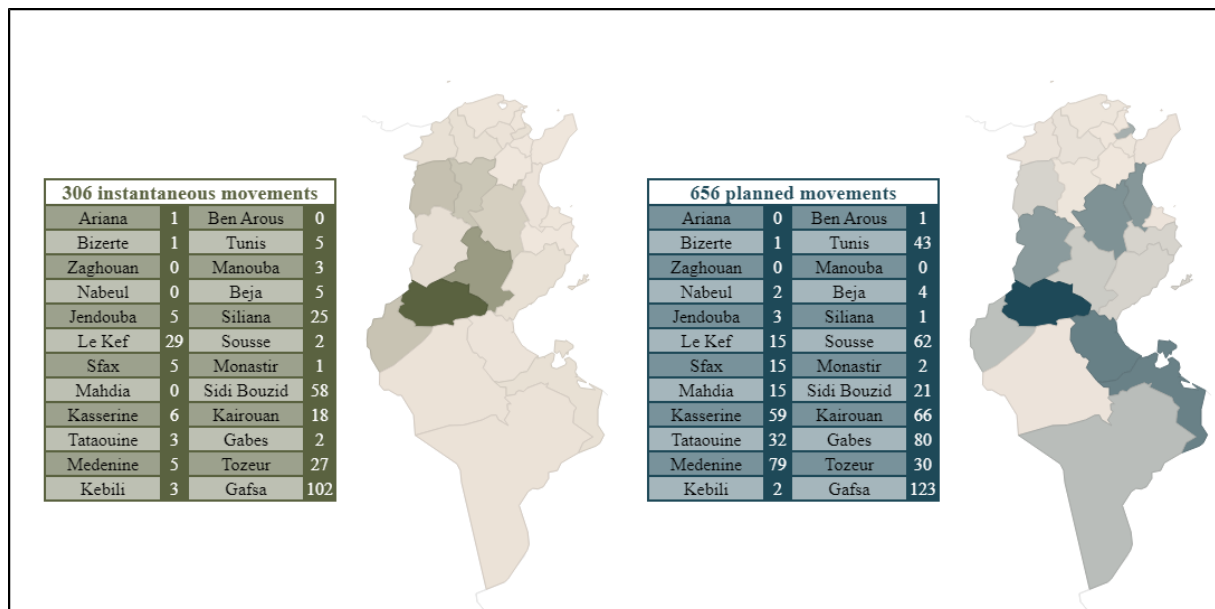
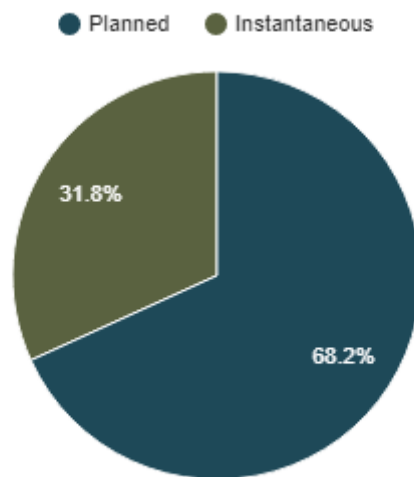
The tendency to violence in the protests since April 2020 is explained by the way the authority interacts with demonstrations, as the central and regional authorities adopt indifference and exhaustion as their sole strategy for managing social mobilization, thus pushing the protester to change its protest strategy and adopt mechanisms with which the authority interacts, such as blocking roads and closing institutions.



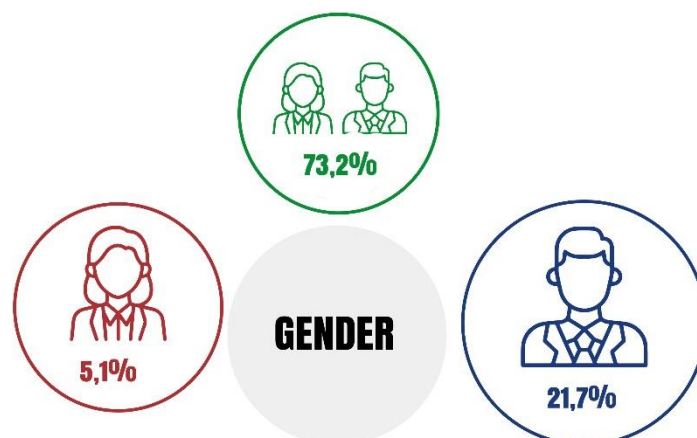
At the regional level, the rate of anarchic protests reached 100% in Kef, 98% in Tozeur, 92% in Gafsa, 89% in Kasserine and 82% in Sidi Bouzid.



The change in the behavior of the social actor is characterized by an increase in the percentage of organized demonstrations (68.2%) and a decrease in the percentage of instantaneous demonstrations, knowing that the percentage of the latter has reached, in Kef, 65.9% of the total demonstrations recorded in the region throughout the month of February 2022 (or 29 protest movements out of 44).

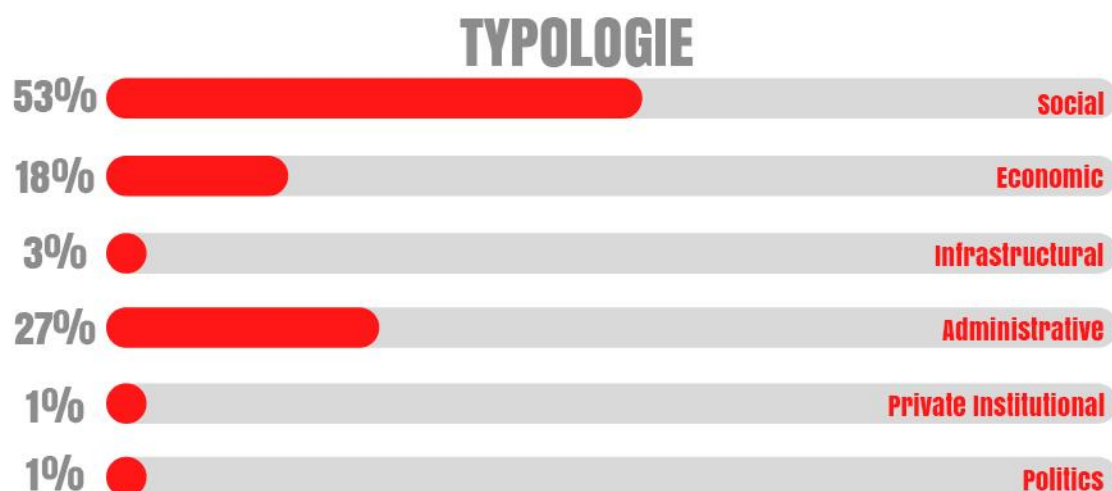


Demonstrations initiated by mixed gender actors accounted for about 73.2% of the total demonstrations recorded, which means that women have become an active partner in the protest movements and a major advocate for equitable demands such as the right to work, health, improved employment status, and other vital requirements.



Claims and forms of protest

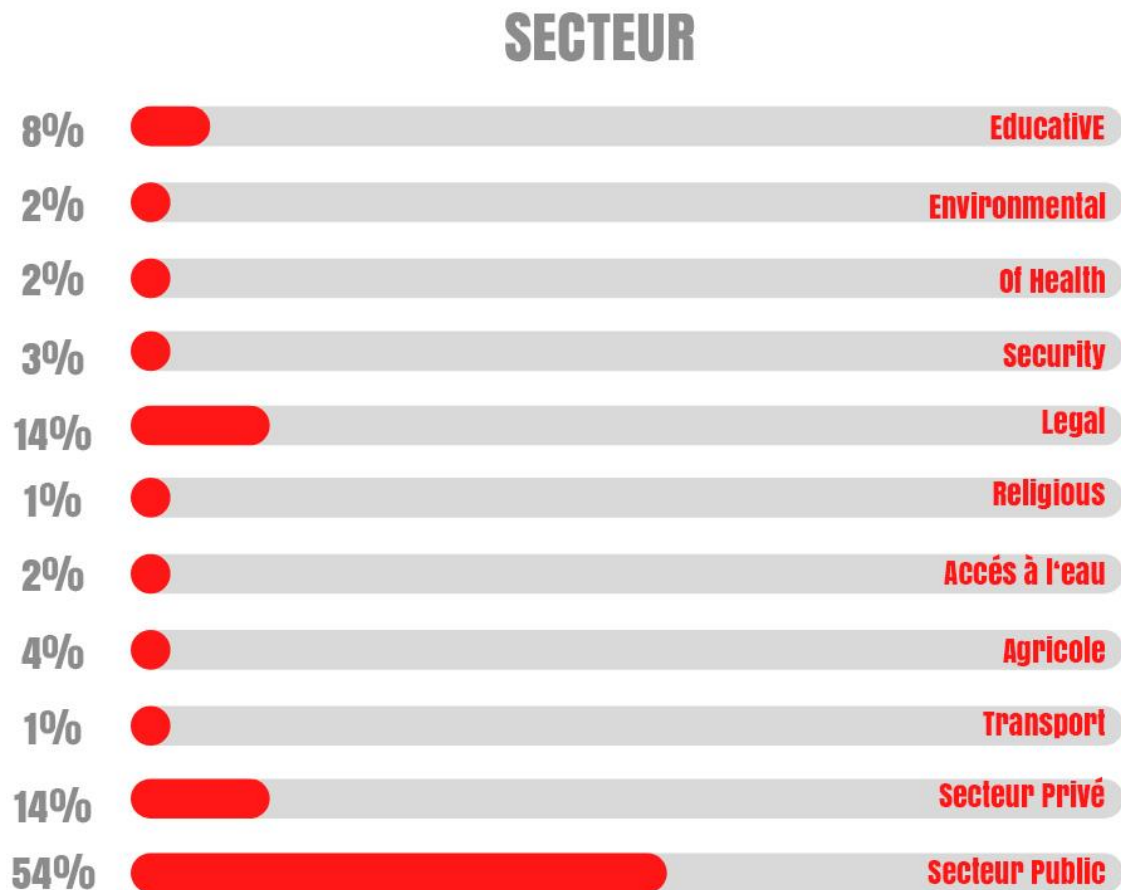
Demands related to economic and social issues accounted for 71% of the total number of protests monitored in February, compared to 58% in January 2022, while demands related to administrative problems accounted for 27% and demands for infrastructure improvements for 3% of the total number of protests.



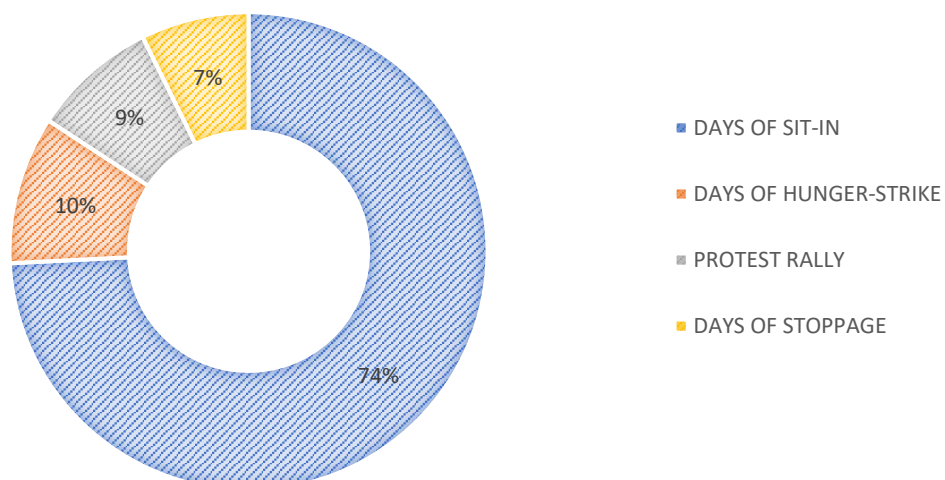
50% of the monitored protests were about the right to employment, 38% about the regularization of employment situations and workers' rights, 23% about the non-activation of agreements and 16% about the improvement of working conditions, including the payment of monthly salary.

The right to development accounted for 6% of the total protests in February (57 protest movements) while 7% of the protests focused on the failure of negotiations.

Protests demanding the right to drinking water, the right to access and improve the quality of health services, the right to connect to the sanitary network and other basic rights of citizens were also recorded.

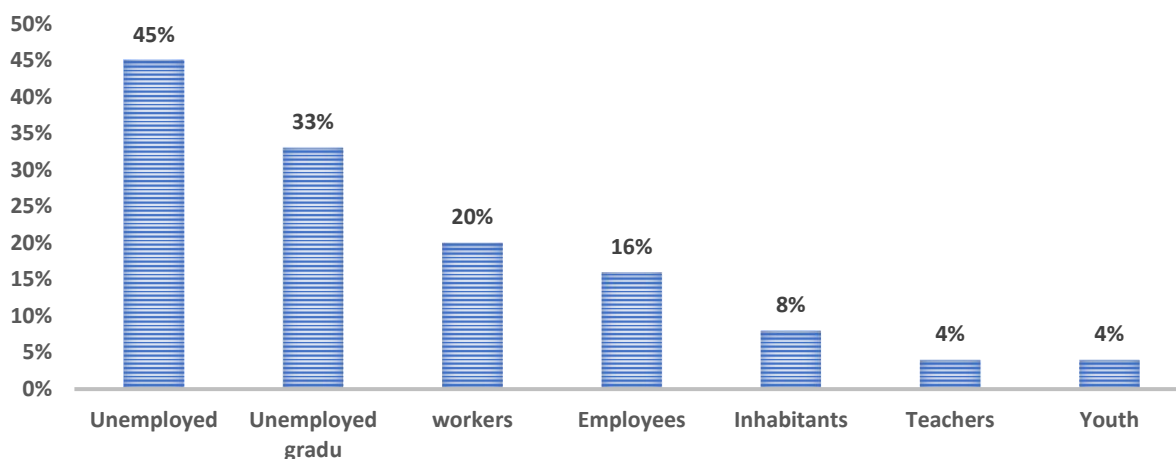


The sit-in remains the most important form of protest conducted by citizens, with a percentage of 63%, followed by hunger strikes with 8.5%, anarchic hunger strikes followed by protest rallies (7.2%) and strikes with 6.2%.



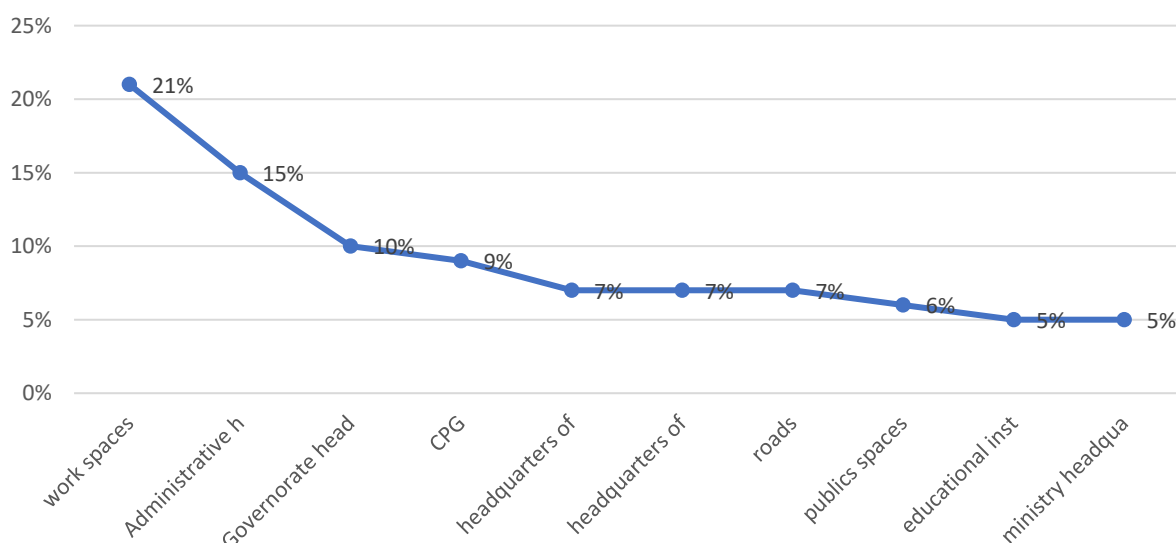
The actors :

The unemployed were the most important actors in these demonstrations (78%), including the unemployed graduates (33%), followed by workers (20%), employees (16%), residents (8%), teachers and professors (4%), then farmers (3%) and migrants (3%).



Protesters used all platforms to express their demands, whether through the media (4%) or social networks, mainly Facebook and Tik Tok (2%) or by engaging in anarchic hunger strikes (which was the most intense form of protest throughout February 2022), disrupting activities and, conducting protest rallies or by launching distress calls and blocking roads.

The workplaces represented the most important spaces of protest (21%), followed by administrative headquarters (15%), governorate headquarters (10%), delegation headquarters (7%), roads (7%) and public spaces (6%).



Irregular migration during February 2022



Comparison of the same periods during 2019-2020-2021-2022

2022 Février	2021 Février	2020 Février	2019 Février
Number of arrivals to Italy 308	Number of arrivals to Italy 660	Number of arrivals to Italy 26	Number of arrivals to Italy 21
Number of intercepted crossings 95	Number of intercepted crossings 77	Number of intercepted crossings 25	Number of intercepted crossings 4
Number of intercepted migrants 1036	Number of intercepted migrants 1273	Number of intercepted migrants 571	Number of intercepted migrants 46

During the month of February 2022, 308 Tunisian migrants arrived on the Italian coast, which is a decrease of 53% compared to February 2021, and which brings the number of arrivals since the beginning of 2022 to 690 Tunisians.

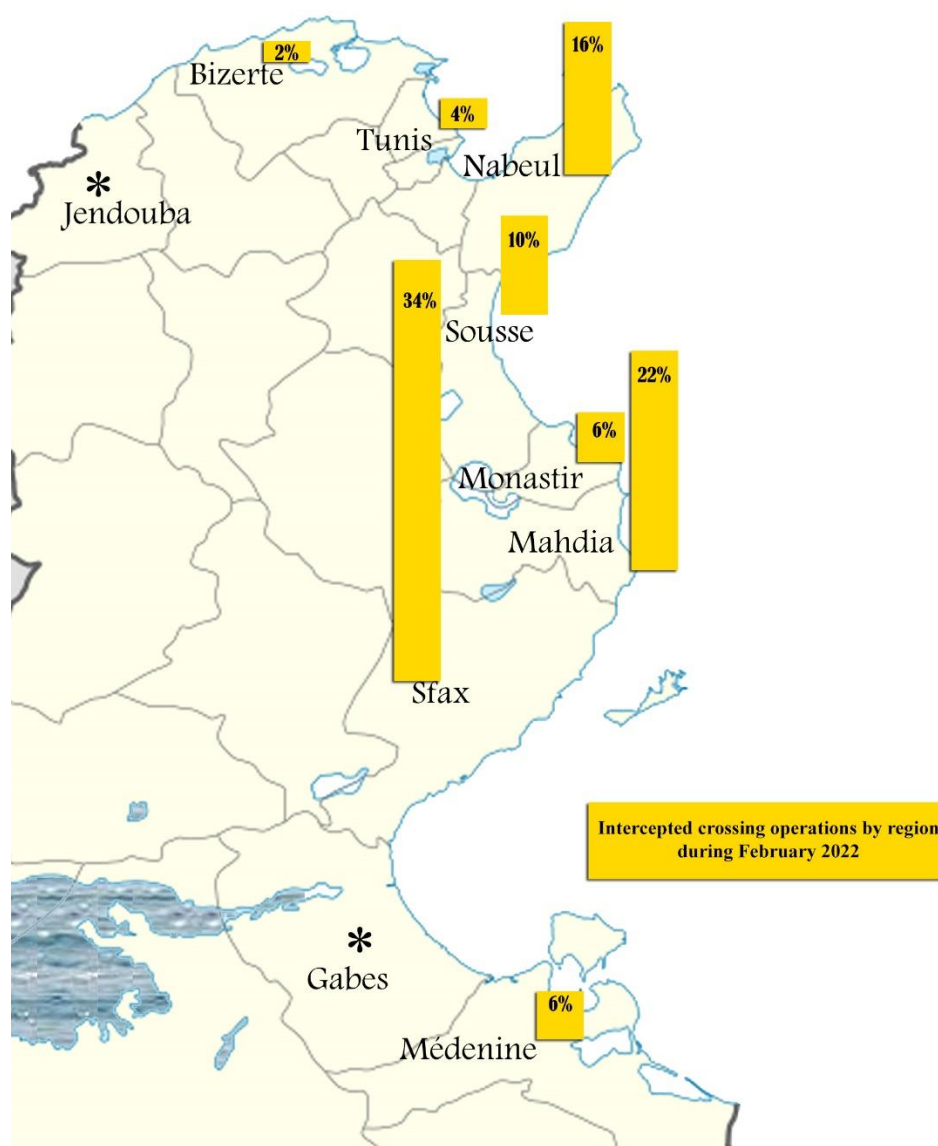
In addition, Tunisian authorities thwarted 95 transit operations during the month of February, bringing the number of intercepted crossing operations since the beginning of the year to 219, which represents an increase of 133% compared to the same period in 2021. Tunisian authorities also intercepted 1,036 migrants, which brought the number of migrants intercepted since the beginning of the year to 2,191 people, representing an increase of 26.2% compared to the same period in 2021. Tunisians represent the third nationality in terms of arrivals after Egyptians and Bengalis, with 12% of the total arrivals in Italy of various nationalities

Arrivals on the Italian coasts by month: February 2022



The process of deciding to migrate is influenced by many factors in its final moments, including weather conditions or tragedies at sea. It seems that the two drownings that took place during the month of January and the instability of the weather factors have contributed to the decrease in the number of arrivals. The number of minors arriving since the beginning of the year has reached 88, while the number of families arriving since the beginning of the year is estimated at 18.

Intercepted crossing operations by region during February 2022

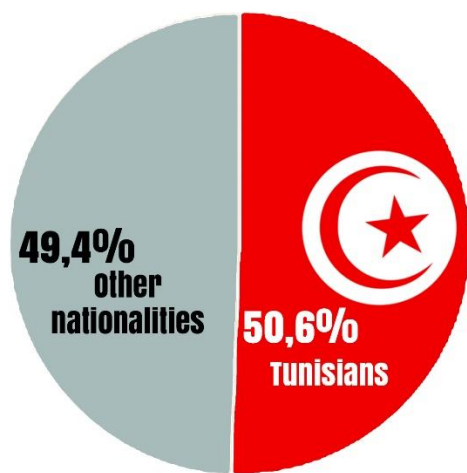


Month	Medenine	Gabes	Sfax	Mahdia	Monastir	Sousse	Nabeul	Tunis	Bizerte	Jendoub
January	%5.88	*	%31.76	%10.58	%11.76	%5.88	%22.35	%8.23	%3.52	*
February	%6	*	%34	22%	6%	10%	16%	4%	2%	*

* The occurrence of this sign does not mean that these areas do not witness crossings, rather the official data published in notices did not include intercepted crossings in these areas.

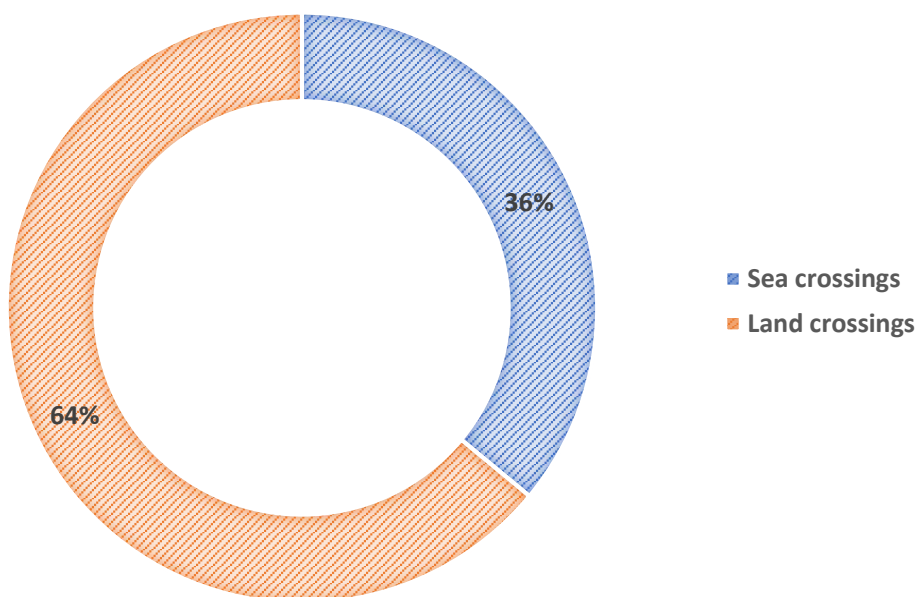
The governorate of Sfax comes first in terms of intercepted crossings during the month of February with 34%, followed by the governorate of Mahdia with 22% and Nabeul with 16%. Note that this order only takes into account the operations observed and announced by the security agencies.

Arrivals by nationality during February 2022



The percentage of Tunisian migrants reached 50.6% of the total number of those intercepted during the month of February. Sub-Saharan Africans represent most of the participants in intercepted crossings, mainly in Sfax and, to a lesser extent, in Mahdia.

Intercepted crossings during February 2022



Intercepted land-based crossings represent 64% of the total intercepted crossings for the month of February 2022. The human and intelligence components play a central role in thwarting land-based operations and reflect the volume of effort devoted to this task and the complex relationships between migrant smugglers, intermediaries, prospective migrants, and security agencies.

The tragedies of irregular migration on the Tunisian coast in February 2022



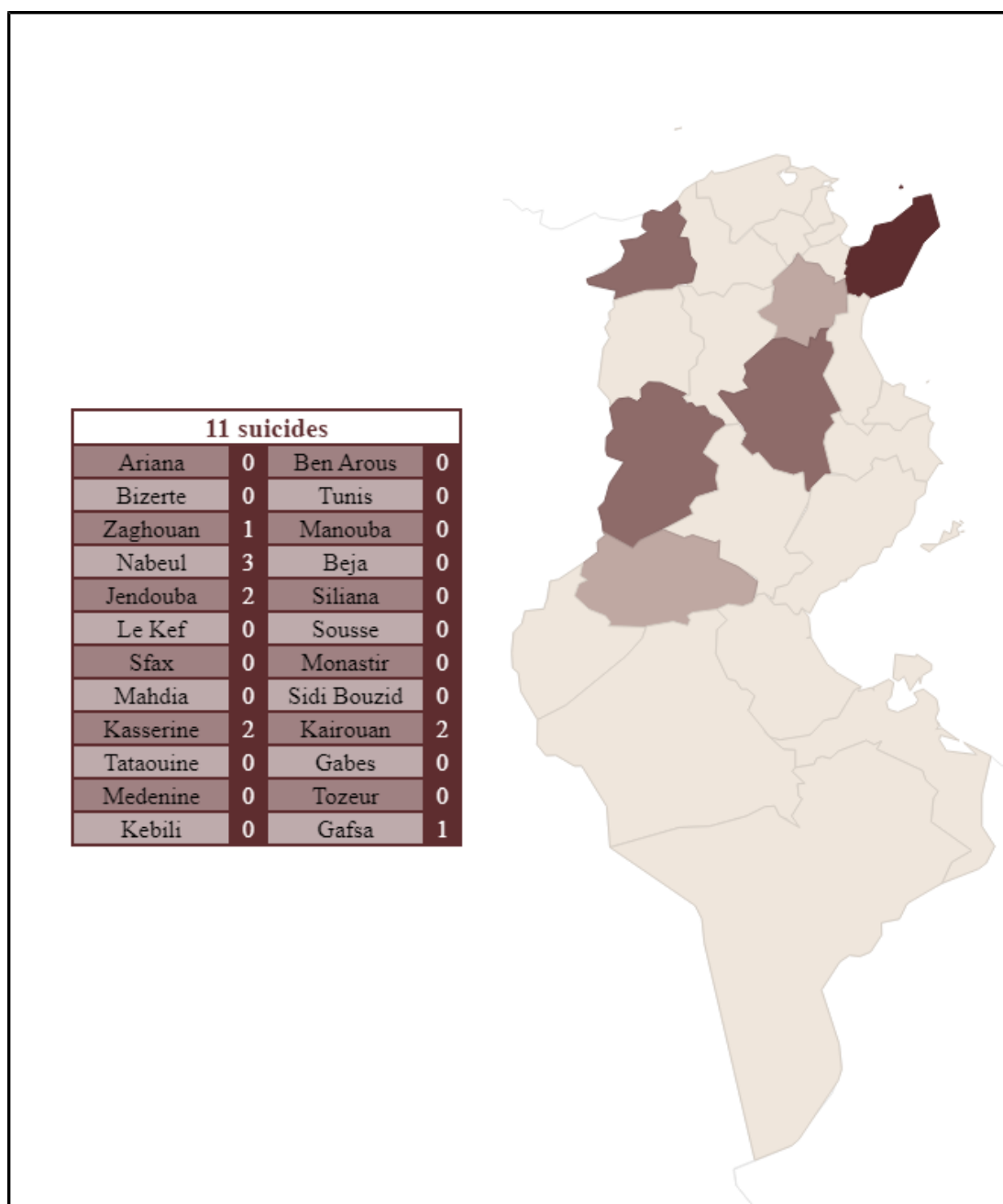
Number of victims and missing persons 20

February 28, 2022 brought a new tragedy off the coast of Sfax, following the sinking of a boat carrying 29 passengers (of sub-Saharan African nationalities). Only 9 people were rescued while 9 bodies (05 men, 03 women and an infant) were found, and 11 migrants were reported missing.

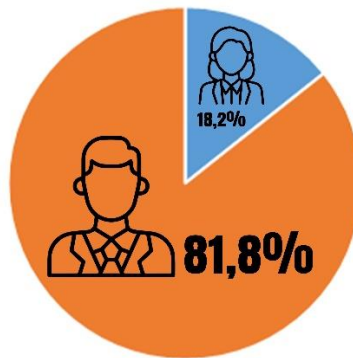
suicide and attempted suicide



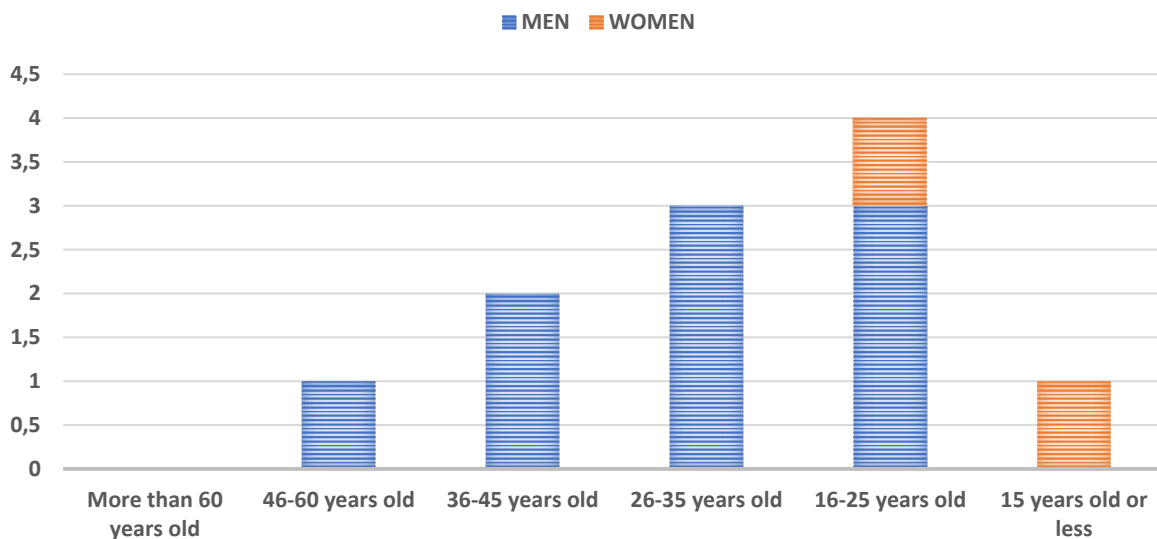
During the month of February, 11 cases of suicide and attempted suicide were recorded, as follows: 3 suicides and suicide attempts in Nabeul and 2 suicides or suicide attempts in Jendouba, Kasserine and Kairouan. A 14-year-old girl committed suicide in Gafsa and another in Zaghouan.



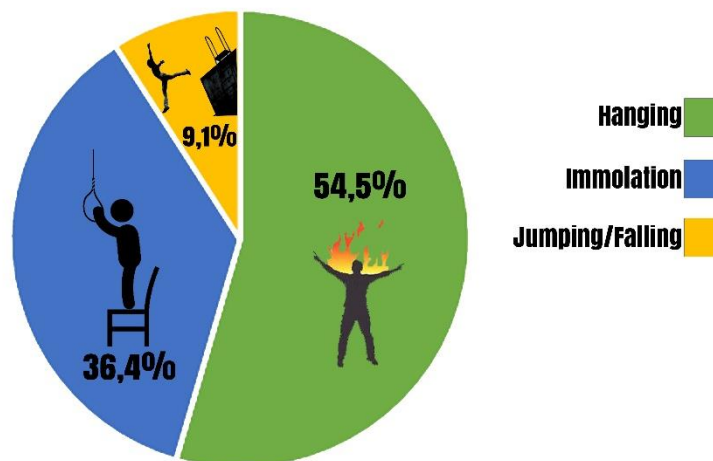
Women represented 18.2 % of the total number of victims.



The 16-35 age group represented 63% of the victims of the cases observed (7 victims). This age group of youth reflects the state of crisis experienced by these young people due to the fragility of their economic and social conditions.



Suicide by hanging was the most common form of suicide observed with a rate of 54.5%, followed by suicide by immolation with 36.4% and jumping and rushing with 9.1%.



February 2022 Violence Report



The month of February 2022 was marked, also, by the spread of the phenomenon of violence. It has taken many forms and has spread to different groups of society. We can say, through the pattern of events followed by the Tunisian Social Observatory's working team, that violence has become one of the most common problems that our society is facing at the moment, in a way that makes it difficult to enumerate the factors and reasons for its spread.

The recorded acts of violence were linked to many social, economic, and political factors in the first place. The month of February has not seen any change or transformation in the economic or social context. Tunisians are still living in a state of anxiety and expectation of change opening prospects for development, investment and employment, including an adjustment of prices of food and consumer products such as semolina, bread, flour, oil, sugar, rice and eggs. The latter have experienced an unprecedented doubling of prices and a serious shortage in markets, retail stores and large commercial surfaces.

For its part, the political situation has not changed significantly. The state of ambiguity in decision-making and the weak presence of the state remain the dominant feature in this exceptional period that we are living since July 25, 2021. So far, about six months after the formation of the government, the president of the government and her ministers, regardless of their positions and tasks, have not issued any message, indicator or achievement that reassures Tunisians.

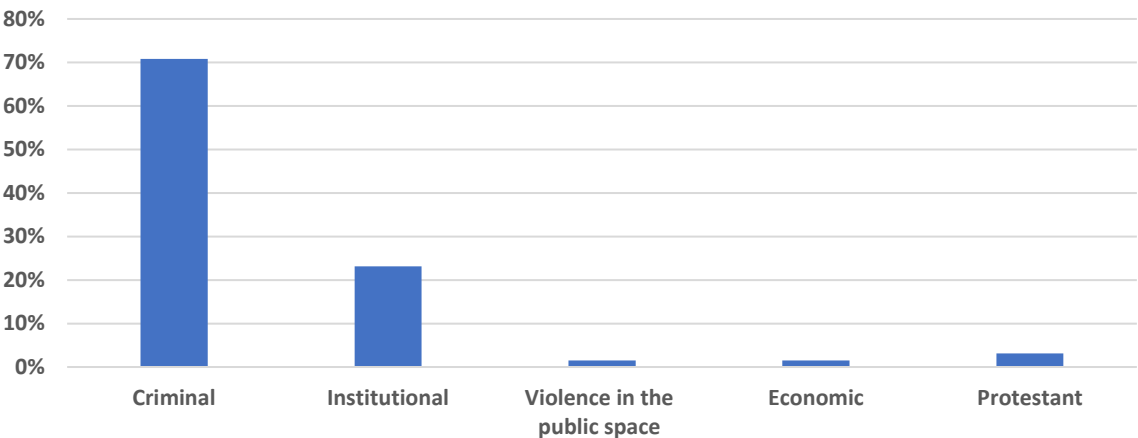
Gradually, the depth of the gap between groups in society appears and the size of the precarious, vulnerable and poorest class of Tunisian society is growing. This group has become the bearer of all the reasons and causes of the spread of crime, extremism and marginalization, absent from all state programs and in direct confrontation with all the painful economic and social decisions that successive governments strive to take from time to time.

Unemployment and social precariousness, for example, are among the most important factors that make people adopt violence as a means of expression. This phenomenon can be considered as one of the problems that are strongly propagated in our society today and that has further worsened and its rates have increased in the last two years against the backdrop of the health crisis by the

spread of the new variant of the Coronavirus and the wave of layoffs and precariousness that has affected entire sectors.

Poverty is also a fertile environment for the spread of violence. Where there is poverty, unemployment spreads, ignorance spreads, all the elements of a decent life are absent and the general situation constitutes an ideal framework for the resurgence of manifestations of domestic violence, violence against women and children, robberies and thefts.

As in previous months, the Tunisian Social Observatory work team recorded an increase in violence in its criminal form, which was about 70% of the total violence recorded, followed by violence in its institutional form, with a percentage of 23%, so that protest violence comes in third place with a rate of 3.1%. The month saw a decrease in economic violence compared to the previous month.



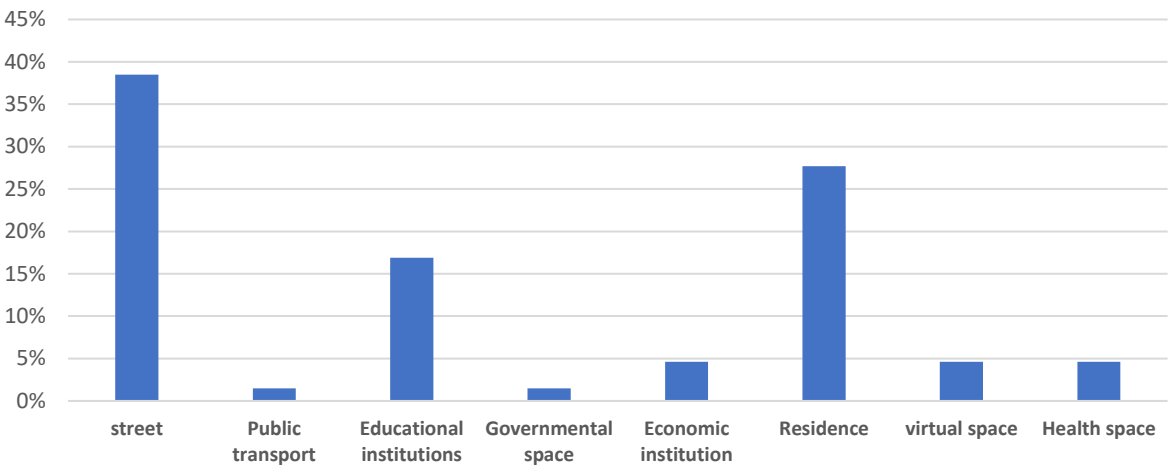
Preserving the same peculiarities of previous months, the street and public space were, in February 2022, the most present in the spaces that experienced violent events and observed in our watch sample. It is followed, as in previous months, by the family space (homes) with 27.7% at a time when this setting was supposed to be the safest for the individual, man or woman.



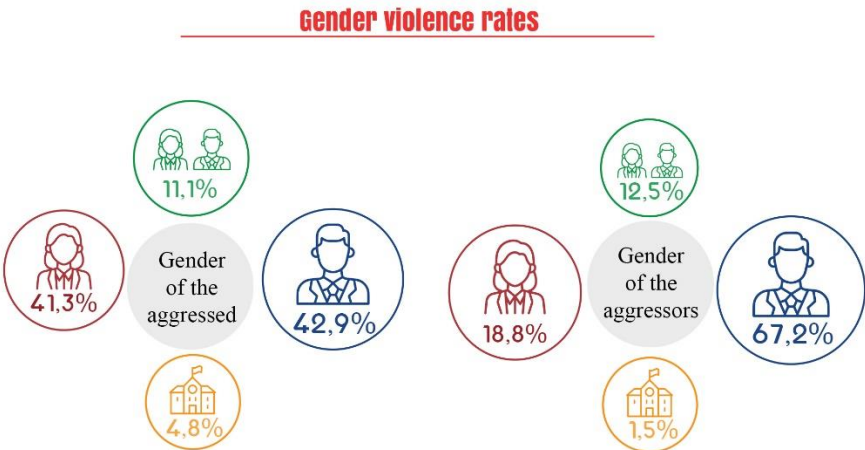
Individual and collective Violence Rates In February

At the same time, the rates of violence recorded in schools or in their external environment, in the order of 16.9%, remain a relatively worrying indicator which must be examined by the structures concerned and of State supervision.

It should be noted in relation to the spaces of violence that there is the emergence of the virtual space, which gradually began to appear at the top of the order compared to other spaces of violence, to occupy in February, as in previous months, the fourth place in the same rank as health institutions, economic institutions and production spaces.

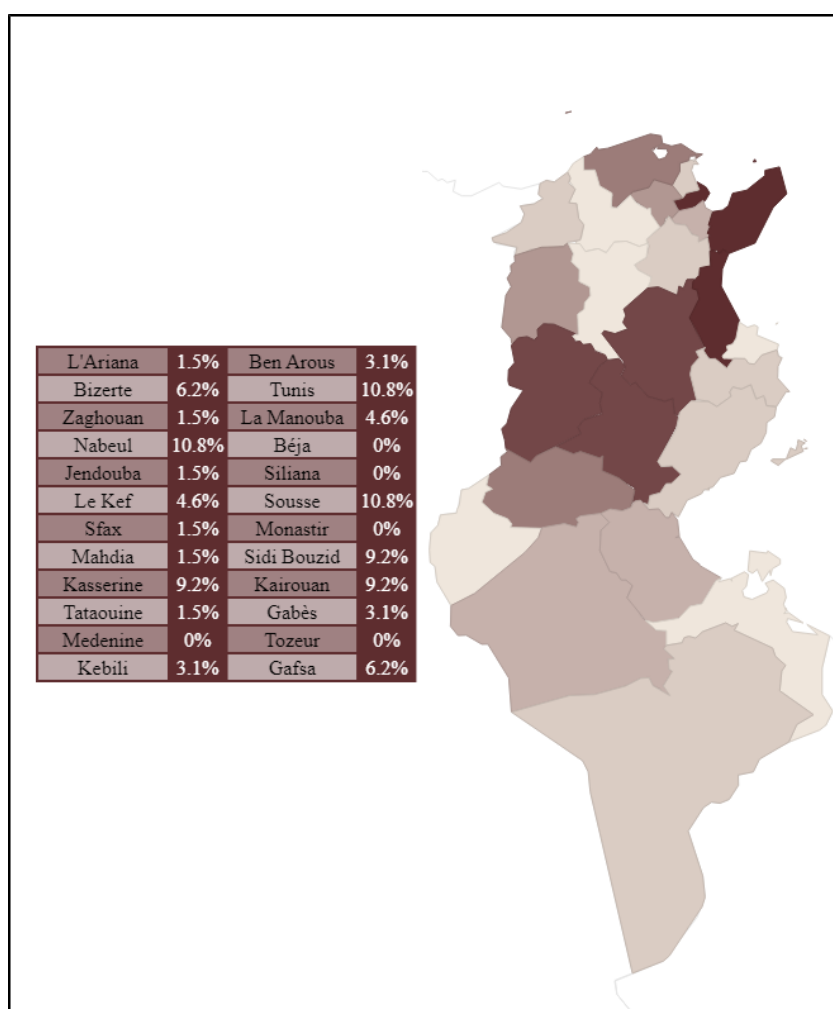


Men were responsible for 67.2% of the violence recorded during the month of February 2022, while the percentage of women was about 18.8%. On the other hand, the percentages of victims of violence by gender indicated that both genders were exposed to almost the same level of violence: women at 41.3% and men at 42.9%. From this, we can say that violence is a phenomenon that is not subject to any gender division or discrimination and no one is excluded.



The month of February witnessed an almost equal spread of incidents of violence between the governorates of the republic, unlike the previous months during which the governorate of Tunis monopolized about one third of the incidents of violence recorded. In addition, the percentage of violence was between 9% and 10.8% in about six governorates, namely Tunis, Sousse, Sidi Bouzid, Kairouan, Kasserine and Nabeul.

The Tunisian Social Observatory would like to stress that the persistence of the state of uncertainty, the lack of alternatives, the spread of frustration, the blocking of horizons and the loss of the components of a decent life for the Tunisian citizen can only be seeds and motivations to further deepen the phenomenon of violence and the spread of these behaviors.



This situation makes the most vulnerable groups such as women, children, the elderly, people with special needs and different according to gender, color, religion, or affiliation, are the most vulnerable to forms of violence, violations and attacks often systematic.

Conclusion

This relative calm, despite the large number of protests recorded, estimated at 962 protest movements throughout the month of February, an average of more than 30 protest movements per day, does not seem to be the prelude to a calm year. It is the calm preceding the storm in an upcoming election year, which will include a referendum on the political system on the occasion of the anniversary of Republic Day and legislative elections on December 17.

In general, the results of the protest movements observed during the month of February reflect the continuity of a state of astonishment or a state of expectation in the face of an exceptional and ambiguous political situation in the country. Especially given the lack of clarity in the vision regarding the prices of certain subsidized materials and their availability. And if prices continue to rise and coincide with the month of Ramadhan, which is a season of exceptional consumption, this may constitute direct triggers of a social uprising more than likely.

New methodology of scientific calculation

From March, the Tunisian Social Observatory of the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights has adopted a new methodology of scientific calculation whose bases are

Definitions:

Instantaneous movements: characterized by the surprise and speed of the 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 terms of the parameters of protest development, including the use of violence.

Planned movements: movements that were essentially instantaneous, but which have evolved and developed mechanisms of action in time and space and have been able to acquire the capacity to organize and prepare for one 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

Anarchic (violent) movements: These are movements that make counter-violence 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 elements of organization, program, and clear means.

Calculation methodology:

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

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

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

Methodology for monitoring irregular migration

- **Interception operations**: the monitoring is based on reports from the Ministry of Interior and statements by the National Guard spokesman in the various media. In most cases, they do not include detailed data (gender, age groups, country of origin of migrants...)

- **Arrivals on European coasts**: several structures issue numerical data on arrivals in Europe, such as the High Commission for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration, the Ministries of the Interior of European coastal surveillance countries. The figures presented remain approximate and require continuous updating according to the data published by official and civil structures that may be published in subsequent reports, but which provide a reading of the evolution and change in the dynamics of irregular migration.

- **The invisible figures**: these are the number of migrants who reach European shores without going through local authorities or international structures and are not included in a census. These figures are important and differ according to the tactics of the networks of smugglers. It also includes departure operations from Tunisian coasts that manage to escape strict security control or those whose passage is intercepted without issuing reports or without announcing them.

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

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