



The representations of illegal migration in Tunisian media platforms: qualitative analysis 2021 2022

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The representations of illegal migration in Tunisian media platforms: qualitative analysis (2021-2022)

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INTRODUCTION

In his study entitled “The Matter of images”, Richard Dyer said “How we are seen partly determines how we are treated; the way we treat others is based on the way we see them; this way of seeing comes from representation. ».

The importance of studying media effects emphasizes when our perceptions of the world do not necessarily match reality. George Gerbner’s cultivation theory explains this phenomenon¹. Gerbner’s theory argues that as a central storyteller, television skews our perception of reality to match the reality portrayed in the media. Gerbner argues that “the longer we live with television, the more invisible it becomes,” and the more our ideas of reality reflect the reality portrayed through media”.²

Therefore, this work aims to provide an in-depth analysis of media narratives, especially Tunisian media about immigration from the southern side to Europe (from Tunisia, Libya or others African / Arabic countries to Italy, Spain or other European countries) in order

¹ Gerbner. George, Larry Gross, Michael Morgan, and Nancy Signorielli (1993). Living With Television: The Dynamics of the Cultivation Process. Trans. Array. 179 pages. Trans. Array. P17

² Ibid . P 18 See more : <http://wiki.commres.org/pds/CultivationTheory/LivingWithTelevision_TheDynamicsoftheCultivationProcess.pdf>.

to reveal a particular representation of immigrants towards Europe as shown in social media platforms.

The specific focus will be on ‘migrants’ representation’ and on ‘how Tunisian media (Arabic) platforms have represented immigration news stories in order to expose the different contexts interpreting by Tunisian official pages especially on Facebook and YouTube.



Figure 1 Facebook users number in Tunisia - January 2021

Regarding to the big number of Tunisian followers registered on the Facebook platform, (8, 270, 000 followers³) we will focus on Facebook posts on Media official pages like: (Mosaique FM, Shems FM, The National TV 1, and others).

And we will also analyze YouTube publications to extract some

stereotypes and some images of migrants shown in Tunisian media discourse.

As the manual coding of this project is based on several contexts such as: (People, culture, values, law, etc.) we will follow the same manual coding to categorize the different contexts shown in the news stories published or broadcasted by Tunisian Media and others (Arabic TV channels).

In addition, we will focus on the Tunisian national context which is the general context in relationship with politics and diplomacy fluctuations, this context has to reveal the representation of migrants in the passage countries (Tunisia, Libya, etc.) and their perceptions about the European countries (such as: Italy, France, etc.).

Consequently, this point has to disclose if any changes have been occurred during the last few years in the immigration representation.

That’s why the starting point for framing this work is to have a collection of posts focusing on immigration stories in Media discourse and to extract the several contexts from it. Then to categorize these stories and examine the different tools like: (images, keywords, opinions, statements, orientations, etc.), the outputs of this framework have to facilitate the comparison between the European media narratives about immigration and the

³ There were 8 270 000 Facebook users in Tunisia in January 2021, which accounted for 67.1% of its entire population. The majority of them were men - 54.8%. People aged 25 to 34 were the largest user group (2 900 000). The highest difference between men and women occurs within people aged 25 to 34, where men lead by 1 600 000.

non- European narratives about immigration, like Tunisian media narratives and others (for example: Arabic TV channels news stories)

It's common also to conduct sentiment analysis of the Tunisian and Arabic interviewees about Europe as a preferable destination for immigrants coming from sub -saharan African countries and sometimes, we can add 'how Tunisian followers have commented on the different stories, in relation to their ideas around Europeans and Europe as a new life space for immigrants'.

Thus, this work will answer the following questions:

~ **How are migrants represented in the Tunisian media narratives?**

- **Which image have they taken during the news stories? (a positive or a negative one?)**
- **Did the social media followers like this image? which orientations do they have toward immigrants?**

Moreover, this task will focus on the different practices of Tunisian media covering migration stories and how they present migrants and Europe as destinations through their discussion.

Therefore, we will emphasize the main representation given by the Tunisian media during 2021 and 2022 in order to have the same period selected for the project analysis and we can highlight some important information related to the Tunisian media narratives during 2023 too.

METHODOLOGY

- ~ Methodology refers to the systematic approach or set of principles used in a particular area of study or activity to gather data, analyze information, and reach conclusions. In academic research, methodology outlines the steps or procedures followed to conduct a study, including the research design, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques. It's crucial because it ensures the reliability, validity, and replicability of research findings. Different disciplines and research questions require different methodologies, such as qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods approaches.

~ **Conceptual framework**

This work starts with a key concept which is **“representation”** / The verb “to represent means “to bring to mind by description,” as well as “to symbolize, to be the embodiment of”⁴The term “representation” as it is used here connects to a long tradition of work within humanities-oriented screen, media, literary, and cultural studies that addresses the ways that social groups are depicted in popular media⁵

It is within this cultural-critical paradigm of media studies that scholars created and studied **the idea of representation**. This concept helped scholars move beyond understanding **media messages** as simply a portrayal of reflection ⁶

Thus, the University of Minnesota defines **media representation** as “the ways media portrays particular groups, communities, experiences, ideas, or topics from a particular ideological or value perspective.” In other words, media representation tells us that the media reflect ideology, not reality. It makes us aware of how media “construct” or “re-present” reality and affect our perception of ourselves and of our surroundings ⁷.

In this globalizing world it is also important to explain how cultural diversity across nations is portrayed in the media⁸.

A media representation can combine different levels together, it's based on how media contents were stroking together to create a homogenic structure, it can refer later to the process that media material undergoes before reaching an audience then it refers to the process of selecting content for media material.

⁴ See more : Etymology dictionary, represent : link : [represent \(en-academic.com\)](https://en-academic.com/dic.nsf/enwiki/Represent)

⁵ Carr, D (2017) ‘Methodology, Representation, and Games’ for publication in Games and Culture. September 2017.see more : https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/1572545/1/Carr_Methodology_Representation_Games_AAM.pdf

⁶ Elfriede Fürsich (2010), Media and the representation of others, international Social Science Journal , UNESCO, p 115

⁷ Elcomblus, “What Is Media Representation?” link : <https://www.elcomblus.com/what-is-media-representation/>

⁸ Elfriede Fürsich (2010),op cit, p 116.

Therefore, media representation has to overcome the stage of anchorage, it refers to give mental images and how these **images are received and understood by the public**, the meaning of each image can be different from one person to another.

Certain media representation could deepen **the stereotypes** created by society and cultural heritage, as stereotypes can refer to the oversimplified representation of a person or thing, additionally, Media representation could be a logical result of ideology (refers to the set of opinions or beliefs expressed through a media material”.

Media representation is an interesting, **multi-layered topic** in media and information literacy. It examines the influence and responsibility of media, as well as the responsibility of those who receive and provide information. It also encourages us to examine how our own values and beliefs, our sense of right and wrong, and our definition of truth affect and shape these media representations.

~ **Methodological framework**

This study employs DESCRIPTIVE AND ANALYTICAL METHODS and focuses on DISCOURSE ANALYSIS, utilizing a qualitative tool to analyze Tunisian (Arabic) media narratives (texts, photos, storytelling).

To understand media and information literacy, we must observe images and examine the media contents published/ broadcast/ in social media official pages on Facebook and YouTube in order to investigate not only the media images or texts, but also their context which we often overlook for more objectivity in extracting “representation”.

It is important to recognize that while the media has great power to provide direction and challenges to impact the public and followers, it also reflects the cultural aspect of a society by providing a variety of stories and representations that we request and admit.

Hence, the BBC defines representation “as how societal aspects such as race, gender, age, ethnicity, nationality and social issues are presented. When it comes to media, especially film and television, this audience is vast. Mass media broadens our scope of perception when it comes to society, multiculturalism, and the world. It holds, for many an educational impact as it showcases unique experiences that are otherwise beyond reach. This is why representation is crucial. In a multicultural, diverse and multifaceted society, it is vital to amplify the voices and share the stories of all”⁹.

⁹ Huang,V.(2021,june12). The importance of representation in media. Race to a cure .
<https://www.racetoacure.org/post/the-importance-of-representation-in-media>

~ Theoretical background

To extract Media representation about illegal migrants in Tunisian Media platforms we need to adopt **Media framing theory** as a scientific base, because “Framing, as a theory of mass communication, refers to how the media packages and presents information to the public.

According to the theory, the media highlights certain events and then places them within a particular context to encourage or discourage certain interpretations. In this way, the media exercises a selective influence over how people view reality.

Anthropologist Gregory Bateson is credited with first positing the theory in 1972.

Framing is sometimes referred to as second-level agenda setting because of its close relation to Agenda-Setting Theory”¹⁰.

RESEARCH SAMPLE

“A research sample is a representative subset of its population”¹¹. therefore, this research is based on a random sample that includes a number of official social media pages from different Tunisian (Arabic) media (Facebook and YouTube).

The regular line or the basic link between these various media contents is the period we have chosen to extract media representations about irregular migration from Tunisia to Europe, the research period extended from 2021 to the end of 2022.

Nevertheless, we can interpolate some interpretations of media contents from narratives its date back to years before 2021 or explain events in 2023.

A number of media discourses, images analysis, and some news stories and information broadcasted by the Tunisian (Arabic) media were taken from the media production of Tunisian radio stations such as:

- **Radio Mosaïque FM, Shams FM, Diwan FM and IFM.**

And a number of Tunisian television channels, such as:

- **First National, Channel 9 and Al-Hiwar Al-Tounsi.**

And extracted from electronic newspapers and news websites, such as:

¹⁰ See more : Framing Theory, link : <https://www.communicationstudies.com/communication-theories/framing-theory>

¹¹ Banerjee Amitav, Suprakash Chaudhury (2010), Statistics without tears: Populations and samples, January 2010, Industrial Psychiatry Journal, Vol.19 (1), PubMed, 60-65.

- **Al-Sabah News, Web Manager, Touness Arrakmia, Alchourouk Online and others**

Additionally, some analysis were also based in some literacies selected from Arab media created by golf countries - which are widely followed by Tunisians and Maghreb publics - such as:

- **Al Jazeera TV, Al Arabiya TV, Sky News Arabia Tv and Al Hadath TV.**

In the following table the detailed sample structure:

Table 1: The detailed research samples

MEDIA	Link to Media contents	Social Media
Mosaique FM	https://fb.watch/l-HzuvK9vi/ https://www.mosaiquefm.net/ar/%D9%85%D8%AC%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%B9-%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3 https://fb.watch/l-HKbctJlx/ https://fb.watch/l-HOLHp728/ https://www.mosaiquefm.net/ar/%D9%85%D8%AC%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%B9-%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3 https://www.facebook.com/assabahnews/photos/a.574835269197408/1938525269495061/	Facebook
Shems fm	https://bitly.ws/3dL8d https://fb.watch/l-GY-D21JI/ . https://fb.watch/l-H6xLRCUG/ https://fb.watch/l-Hiz1WWGu/ https://www.shemsfm.net/ar/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A3%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1 https://www.shemsfm.net/ar/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A3%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%88%D8%B7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9/257187/%D8%B1%D8%A6%D9%8A%	Facebook
Assabah News	https://www.facebook.com/assabahnews/photos/a.574835269197408/1938525269495061/ https://bitly.ws/3dL7F https://bitly.ws/3dL7X	Facebook Facebook Facebook

	https://bitly.ws/3dL8d	Facebook
	https://bitly.ws/3dL8K	Facebook
Tounes Arrakmia	https://bitly.ws/3dL9a	Facebook
	https://ar.tunisienumerique.com/%d9%85%d8%ac%d8%aa%d9%85%d8%b9/%d8%b4%d8%a8%d9%83%d8%a9-%d8%aa%d9%86%d8%b8%d9%8a%d9%85-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%87%d8%ac%d8%b1%d8%a9-%d8%b9%d8%a8%d8%b1-%d8%b5%d8%b1%d8%a8%d9%8a%d8%a7-%d8%a5%d8%b5%d8%af%d8%a7%d8%b1-8-%d8%a8%d8%b7%d8%a7/?fbclid=IwAR0rgYBj1I5kr8c5FPoDetujlWGdMlgEEylRiJ_k3Otz6PqyhKzZDN9hus	Facebook
	https://bitly.ws/3dL9t	Facebook
	https://ar.tunisienumerique.com/%d9%85%d8%ac%d8%aa%d9%85%d8%b9/%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a7%d8%aa%d8%ad%d8%a7%d8%af-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a3%d9%88%d8%b1%d9%88%d8%a8%d9%8a-%d9%8a%d8%a8%d8%ad%d8%ab-%d8%b9%d9%86-%d8%a7%d8%aa%d9%81%d8%a7%d9%82-%d9%85%d8%b9-%d8%aa%d9%88%d9%86%d8%b3/?fbclid=IwAR0rdFdeHGx5M6uXlhXerFByiA4b0-qZ97ccZkkhQIPvDCCDoljNjY8UYY-8	Facebook
	https://bitly.ws/3dL9V	
RadioMED FM	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xLLMg_YyPC4	Yotube
Radio IFM	https://fb.watch/m3MHfEVenI/	Facebook
Alchourouk Online	http://www.echoroukonline.com/ara/articles/488995.html	Facebook
Radio Diwen FM	https://www.facebook.com/DiwanFM/videos/925773288508088 صورة صادمة ! لحطام قوارب الموت في البحر المتوسط من 2014 الى 2023	Facebook
	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BGonm97V__c لأول مرة الانستغراموز سبأ السعيدني معانا مباشرة من ايطاليا	Youtube
Atessia tv	https://www.facebook.com/watch/?ref=search&v=1244639599516499&external_log_id=54d9aeb6-6a2f-45ab-aaaf-238344f3ea9d&q=%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%AC%D9%8A%20%D9%85%D9%86%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%88%D8%AA%20%D9%81%D9%8A%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%AD%D8%B1 ناجي بن نجمة : ننصح إلي شادين البلاد يخليوا الي يفكر في الحرقه يبديل عقليتو ورؤوف : حتى حد ماهو فرحان باش يرعي روحو للحوت و الموت فما ضغط يخليه يحرق لابس# ----- linktr.ee/9tv :تابعو التاسعة على الرابط التالي	Facebook
Nationa TV channel 1	الهجرة غير النظامية : رحلات استطلاعية دورية للوحدة الجهوية للحرس (177) - YouTube الوطني لمكافحة الظاهرة	YouTube

	<p>الهجرة غير النظامية اجراءات لتسريع عملية دفن جثث المهاجرين من غير التونسيين (youtube.com) https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=3375611659318918 https://www.facebook.com/TVN.Tunisie/videos/945097889860238 https://www.facebook.com/TVN.Tunisie/videos/1519830261824455 تقرير حول مذكرة التفاهم بين الاتحاد الاوروبي وتونس حول الهجرة الشرعية https://www.facebook.com/TVN.Tunisie/videos/594233342780432</p>	
Nationa TV 1	<p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hxOffzC0uTg الهجرة الغير نظامية و النفايات... ملفان متقاطعان في مسار علاقات تونسية إيطالية غيرعادلة (youtube.com) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fGMin3OWvU&t=10s</p>	YouTube
	<p>الهجرة غير النظامية : مسألة خلافية تعصف بالقارة العجوز (youtube.com) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fGMin3OWvU&t=10s</p>	YouTube
Skynews Arabia TV	<p>غرفة الأخبار # الهجرة غير الشرعية من تونس.. رحلات الموت مستمرة (youtube.com) الخلافت التونسية الأوروبية تعود من جديد حول ملف الهجرة غير الشرعية (177) YouTube - # الخلافت التونسية الأوروبية تعود من جديد حول ملف الهجرة غير الشرعية (177) YouTube - # إيطاليا تعلن عن إنقاذ أكثر من 2600 مهاجر غير شرعي خلال يوميين (youtube.com)</p>	YouTube
Aljazeera TV channel	<p>https://www.aljazeera.net/politics/2022/8/17/%d9%81%d8%b1%d8%a7%d8%af%d9%89-%d9%88%d8%b9%d8%a7%d8%a6%d9%84%d8%a7%d8%aa-%d9%84%d9%85%d8%a7%d8%b0%d8%a7-%d9%8a%d8%ba%d8%a7%d8%af%d8%b1-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%aa%d9%88%d9%86%d8%b3%d9%8a%d9%88%d9%86</p>	Facebook
HADATH TOUNSSI	<p>https://www.facebook.com/watch?ref=search&v=609315897337117&external_log_id=37b10229-f7f4-4b4c-8980-2378fae7d808&q=%D9%85%D9%82%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%A9%20%D9%85%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%86%20%D8%BA%D9%8A%D8%B1%20%D8%B4%D8%B1%D8%B9%D9%8A%D9%8A%D9%86%20%D9%81%D9%8A%20%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3 لحظات إنسانية أبطالها صيادون تونسيون، وثقوها على تطبيق "تيك توك"، حين تدخلوا لإنقاذ شبان مصريين تاهوا في البحر الأبيض المتوسط.. إليك القصة الحدث_التونسي # ◆</p>	Facebook

	<p>قصص آنية وأخرى متنوعة...سياسة وثقافة وسوشيال ميديا كلها في قناتنا على اليوتيوب فتابعونا https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqds-oiUv_tnXs3yCTv8r3g</p>	YouTube
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National context

Tunisia is considered as a transit country for irregular migrants, and it is among the countries most affected by the phenomenon of the influx of migrants among the countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean Sea.

The geographical location of Tunisia is a strategic location and it can attract groups of expatriates from sub-Saharan African countries who are looking for an adventure in order to cross the Mediterranean Sea to reach the Europe territory.

Nonetheless, Tunisia is qualified in 2011 as a non-stable country on economic and political levels, compared to some other countries in the region, Tunisia has experienced relatively more political stability in recent years, particularly since the 2011 Tunisian Revolution. While there are still economic and social challenges in Tunisia, its stability and relatively open borders can make it a favourable departure point for migrants.

The transportation of migrants across borders is often facilitated by networks of smugglers in Tunisia and other countries in the region, often for a fee. These smuggling networks exploit the desperate situation of migrants seeking better opportunities in Europe.

The short-term foresight of the macroeconomic management of the Tunisian economy during the period 2011–2018, resulted in the decline of the average economic growth from 4.6% during 2001–2010 to 1.5% over 2011–2019 and the deterioration of the macroeconomic fundamentals¹²

The high unemployment rates and economic hardships in Tunisia can drive some Tunisians to attempt irregular migration to Europe in search of better economic prospects. Additionally, Tunisia also receives asylum seekers and refugees from other countries in the region, further contributing to its role as a transit country

¹² Mahmoud Sami Nabi (2021), Tunisia after the 2011's revolution: Economic deterioration should, and could have been avoided, *Journal of Policy Modeling*, Volume 43, Issue 5, September–October 2021, Pages 1094-1109, link : <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0161893821000673>

Tunisia: Unemployment rate from 2003 to 2022

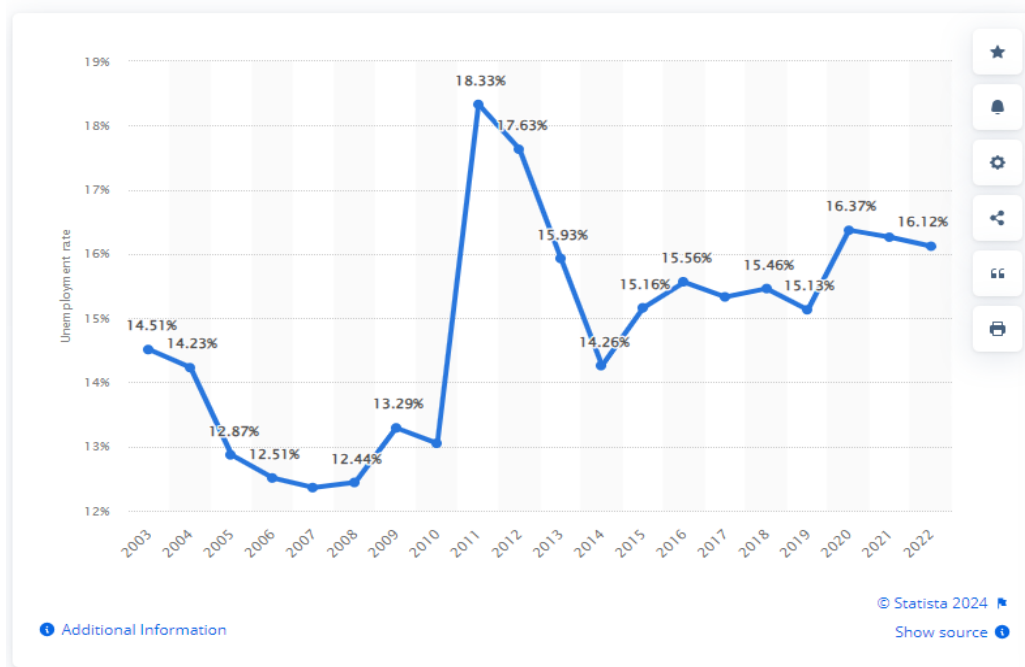


Figure 2 : Tunisia Unemployment rates from 2003 to 2022 ¹³

Despite being a transit country, Tunisia also faces challenges related to irregular migration, including border control, human trafficking, and humanitarian concerns for migrants who may face exploitation or danger along their journey.

Referring to the annual report on irregular migration for the year 2021 issued by the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights¹⁴ “The causes of the crisis of the Tunisian state are due to two dynamics. The first is the structural and historical inability of the elites and the Tunisian bourgeoisie. They cannot move to an independent capitalist mode. Their transition from the traditional bourgeoisie to the petty bourgeoisie only renewed its historical impasse, because this renewal was nothing but a class replacement in the colonial mode of production. The same one who rules the movement of the Arab bourgeoisie

The second is the policies of dependency adopted by capitalist countries. The program of structural reform and free exchange with the European Union is an “unequal exchange.”

¹³ See more Aaron O'Neill (2024), Tunisia: Unemployment rate from 2003 to 2022, Published by Statista in Feb 2, 2024 : Link : <https://www.statista.com/statistics/524516/unemployment-rate-in-tunisia/>

¹⁴ See more : FTDS : the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights (2021), The annual report on irregular migration for the year 2021, Link : <https://ftdes.net/rapports/migration2021.pdf>

The global capitalist system, according to Andre Gunder Frank, “ensures the transfer of economic surplus from the subject areas (the spheres) to the imperial centers (the metropolis). Whoever controls the distribution of political power, the forms of production organization, and the class structures of various regions controls this system.

Since the features of migrants have not changed and the transit routes have remained almost the same, as the Mediterranean remains dominant in the crossings of the migratory journey, and since economic and social factors have remained at the forefront of expulsion factors, this report will not ignore the recent factors and protest movements, but will focus mainly on the internal political factors and movements. The protest will be centred around political factors within and outside of the country.

The first is the crisis of representative democracy and the rise of populism, this climate reinforced feelings of despair and frustration, and was the driving force in producing the “national reservoir” of immigration and immigrants. The second, by which we mean European immigration policies, focused mainly on the concept of “securitization of immigration.”

This is the paradigm on which European countries depend, which was also one of the most important factors in the growing waves of irregular migration. However, it must be pointed out that the decade is nothing but a continuation of the corruption of the political elite that ruled before 2011, but the methods of corruption became clearer after the revolution due to the existence of freedoms, despite their limitations and sometimes threats.

July 25 is not the triggering event for the influx of migration waves. Rather, migrations after this date demonstrate the states of frustration that struck almost all groups and classes with varying characteristics throughout the decade of successive horrors and those before them”¹⁵.

Migration from and through Tunisia increased to levels that have not been seen since the months following the 2011 revolution between 2020 and mid-2021.

The reasons for this surge are complex, with no single factor responsible for the rise in departures. Rather, the decisions of Tunisian irregular migrants – who make up the overwhelming thrust behind these rising numbers – have been influenced by an interplay of economic and social factors. These include a worsening economic situation at home, poor career options, the social repercussions of unemployment or underemployment,

¹⁵ See more in : The annual report on irregular migration for the year 2021, Link : <https://ftdes.net/rapports/migration2021.pdf>

and pessimism about the ability or willingness of Tunisia's political leadership to improve the situation in the country¹⁶.

~ **What makes 2021 such an important year in the evolution of the immigration phenomenon from Tunisia to Europe?**

According to many authors who've witnessed the Tunisian scene, the year 2021 is among the key stations in the evolution of narratives around the phenomenon of immigration.

Thus, 2021 was a year, preceded by the outbreak of a pandemic, during which the whole world suffered from a situation made up of fear, an economic crisis and the repercussions of the health handicap. Due to the Coronavirus, Tunisia had the highest death rate in the Arab region and the African continent on July 14, 2021.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has had two significant impacts on the dynamics of foreign migrants using Tunisia as a transit point. First, public-health measures implemented by the Tunisian government led to significant job losses among its migrant population. Second, it led to an inflow of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa from Tunisia's neighbors, primarily Algeria, where they had been living, and where job losses and fears of deportation mounted during the COVID-19 pandemic".¹⁷

~ **The year 2021 was filled with national events:**

- **In July 2021**, a distress call was issued to the world, and the President of the Republic asked for support in confronting the Corona virus, and the army took over supervision of the vaccination campaign.
- **On July 10**, the first flight carrying medical aid and vaccinations lands at Tunis-Carthage Airport.
- **On July 25** witnessed the most prominent event when the President of the Republic, Kais Saied, decided to activate Article 80 and take a number of measures, including:
 - Freezing the work of the Assembly of People's Representatives and lifting the immunity of its representatives
 - Exempting the Prime Minister from his duties

¹⁶ Matt Herbert (2022), Between 2020 and mid-2021, migration from and through Tunisia rose to levels not seen since the months following the 2011 revolution, Posted in : 05 January 2022, Global Initiative Against Transnational organized crime, link : <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/tunisia-migration-europe/>

¹⁷ Matt Herbert (2022), Ibid.

- Assuming executive authority
- **On July 26, 2021**, the vicinity of Parliament witnessed a protest by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and a number of his deputies, demanding the resumption of their activities.
- Later, protests began demanding a return to legitimacy
- **September 22**: President Kais Saied issues Decree 117.¹⁸
- At the same time, protests opposing the July 25 measures continue in Tunisia.
- On September 29, 2021, Najla Boudin was appointed to form the government.
- The new government will take the constitutional oath and begin its duties on **October 12**.
- **November 15**: The President of the Republic issues a presidential decree announcing the Supplementary Finance Law for the year 2021.
- Later, **December 17** will be decided as a national day to commemorate the revolution instead of January 14.
- The same date was a new occasion to protest against the decisions of Kais Saied and for a number of politicians to go on a hunger strike
- Thursday, **December 23**: The President of the Republic announces the Finance Law for the year 2022

¹⁸ Decree 117 is a presidential decree issued by Tunisian President Kais Saied. It suspends much of the constitution adopted following the 2011 popular uprising against decades of dictatorial rule. Decree 117 places itself above the existing constitutional order and essentially abolishes the entire system of government laid out in Tunisia's 2014 constitution. It also abolishes the body in charge of reviewing the constitutionality of laws, perpetuates the suspension of Parliament, and confirms the removal of the immunity enjoyed by its members
Learn more: <https://www.leaders.com.tn/article/32442-officiel-le-texte-integral-du-decret-presidentiel-n-n-2021-117-du-22-septembre-2021-relatif-aux-mesures-exceptionnelles>



Figure 3 : A cartoon published by Assabah News (Tunisian e-journal) to describe the worsening of illegal immigration in 2017, moreover the statistics in 2020 and 2021 showed an incredible situation.

The results of a study on “Youth and Irregular Migration in Tunisia” showed that 45% of Tunisian youth are willing to migrate, even if it is illegal.

The study, prepared by the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights in cooperation with the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, revealed that 81% of the young people questioned are willing to finance irregular migration.

Data from the Tunisian Forum for Economic Rights, in the latest update of the numbers, indicates that the number of Tunisian illegal immigrants who arrived in Italian territory from the beginning of 2021 until November 2021 amounted to 15,210 immigrants, while the number of immigrants arriving in Italy during the same period in 2020 was 12,510 immigrants, an increase of 19%.

On the other hand, the number of illegal immigration operations that were thwarted from January to November 2021 reached 1,662 attempts, while in the same period in 2020, 1,062 attempts were thwarted. Thus, the number of immigrants who were prevented from crossing since the beginning of the year reached 24,116 immigrants, while the number of those who were prevented from irregular immigration during the same period in 2020 was 12,749 immigrants, that is, an increase of 90% in the space of a year.

Comparing the number of irregular migrants arriving in Italy in 2021 by month, we find that the largest number of irregular migrants who were able to reach Italy was recorded in July 2021, when it reached 3,907 migrants, followed by August with 3,904 migrants, then September with 1,655. An immigrant. While the lowest number of Tunisian irregular

migrants arriving in Italy in 2021 was recorded in April, their number reached 307 migrants, according to data from the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights.

Accordingly, Tunisian authorities have predicted that more than 34,000 migrants have arrived on Italian shores since the beginning of 2023, including some 4,000 Tunisians. Tunisia's eastern coast is the main departure point for irregular migrants to Europe via the Mediterranean¹².

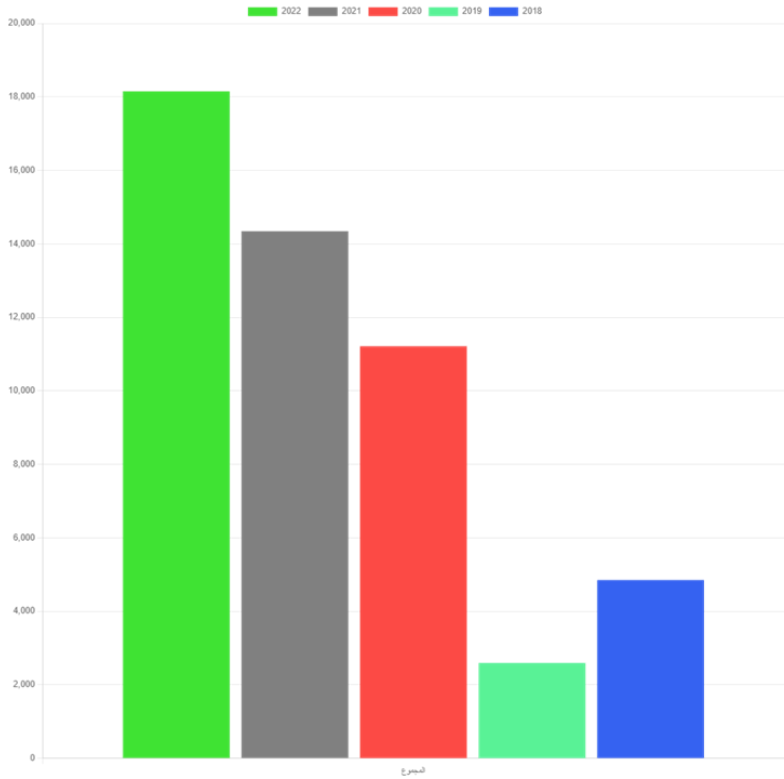


Figure 4: Number of irregular arrivals to Italy of Tunisian nationality by month during the year 2022

Source: Italian Ministry of the Interior - Updated on December 31, 2022

“On July 16, 2023, the EU and Tunisia signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) based on five pillars – macroeconomic stability, trade and investment, green energy transition, people-to-people contacts, and migration and mobility – the last being the most important.

The MoU complements the EU–Tunisia Association Agreement and Member States' bilateral initiatives, and prioritizes measures against irregular migration, with a view to avoiding loss of human life and developing legal pathways for migration.

The MoU defined a common approach based on upholding human rights and taking action to combat criminal networks of migrant smugglers and human traffickers”.¹⁹

Although Tunisia is suffering from a severe economic crisis, it has faced criticism for its treatment of migrants since February. Thus, some interested followers interpreted this situation as a real need for a Tunisian strategic policy to aid the north African country in handling the large number of migrants.

~ **Tunisia needs to devise a strategy and have an open policy debate on how to manage being a transit country.**

“Meanwhile, the departure of non-Tunisian migrants from the country brings few benefits to the state. Its impact is primarily negative, risking diplomatic tensions with Europe. So, officials who may informally tolerate some degree of Tunisian migration are less likely to extend this tolerance to the migration of foreigners.

While the factors that have prevented Tunisia from becoming a transit migration route are significant, they are not unchangeable. The current situation depends on the ability and will of the security forces to control the borders and departure zones. A serious political or economic crisis prompting instability in Tunisia could well change the situation.

This has already happened once, albeit with the migration of Tunisians rather than foreigners. In the wake of Tunisia’s 2011 revolution, lessened security force pressure enabled nearly 30 000 migrants to set off towards Italy.

Tunisia needs an open policy debate on how it wants to handle the issue of transit migration. Sound, proactive policy should be developed before incidents and crises arise. A lack of attention could have serious humanitarian consequences.²⁰

¹⁹ See more : EU-Tunisia Memorandum of Understanding, link : [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/it/document/EPRS_ATA\(2023\)751467#:~:text=On%2016%20July%202023%2C%20the%20EU%20and%20Tunisia,mobility%20%E2%80%93%20the%20last%20being%20the%20most%20important.](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/it/document/EPRS_ATA(2023)751467#:~:text=On%2016%20July%202023%2C%20the%20EU%20and%20Tunisia,mobility%20%E2%80%93%20the%20last%20being%20the%20most%20important.)

²⁰ Matt Herbert, Senior Research Consultant, Migration, ISS, and Max Gallien, PhD Candidate, London School of Economics (<https://reliefweb.int/report/tunisia/tunisia-isn-t-migrant-transit-country-yet>)



الاتحاد الأوروبي يبحث عن اتفاق مع تونس لمكافحة الهجرة



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الاتحاد الأوروبي يبحث عن اتفاق مع تونس لمكافحة الهجرة - تونس - أخبار تونس

ينرس قادة دول الاتحاد الأوروبي في بروكسل اليوم الخميس 29 جوان 2023، انجاز اتفاق مع تونس يهدف بشكل رئيسي الى مكاف...



Figure 5 : Arrakmeia entitled its article on Facebook:

EU is looking for a compromise with Tunisia in order to fight against illegal immigration

Outlines of irregular migration in Tunisian media narratives

In the span of 2020-2023, the Tunisian media expressed negativity towards illegal immigrants on the coasts of Italy and Europe. The Tunisian media depicted the migrants as a mass of lawbreakers and those searching for illegal ways to leave their home countries for Europe.

The proportion of males in irregular migration represents the largest proportion among the ranks of immigrants, and this is clear from the media focus on highlighting pictures and video clips in which males constitute the most prominent element.

New media data has been released since 2020 that confirms the existence of shifts in the gender composition of immigrants.

As the media focused on the presence of females among the ranks of irregular migrants, the social characteristics of those searching for irregular sea routes to Europe began to become more prominent.

In addition to reporting on families consisting of father, mother, and children in the boats that enabled the Tunisian Coast Guard to discourage them from crossing to the north bank of the Mediterranean.

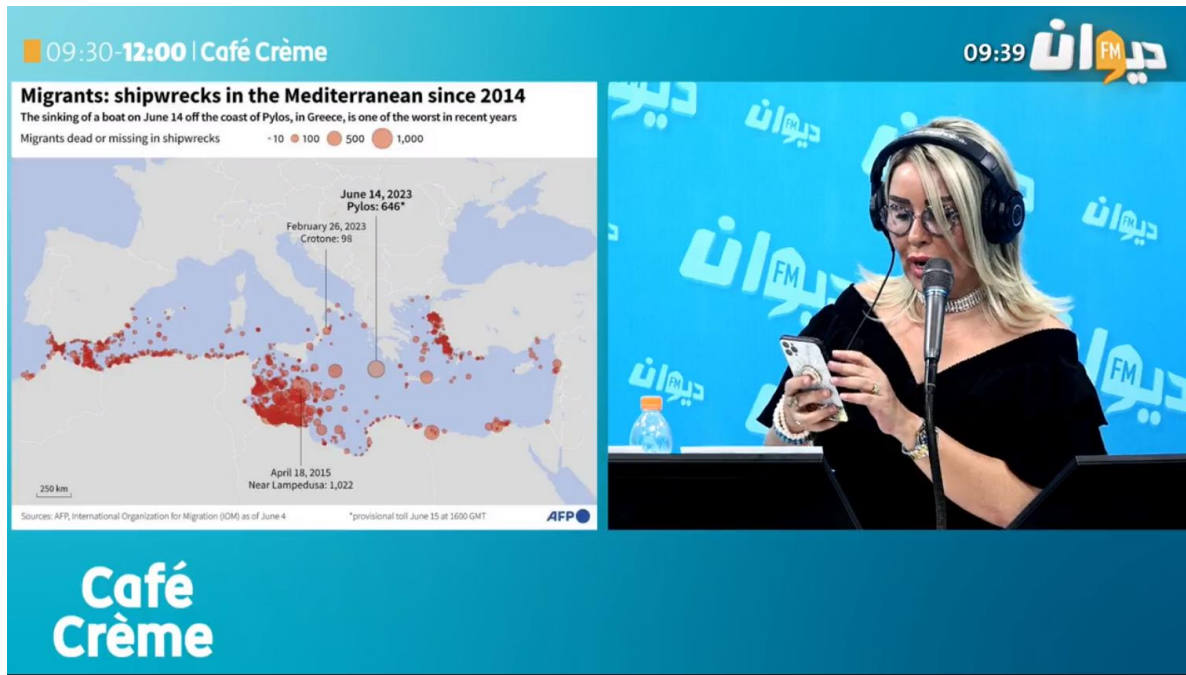


Figure 6 : VIA FACEBOOK STREAMING - Diwan FM Radio presents a shocking picture of death boat wrecks in the Mediterranean from 2014 to 2023! 19 June 2023 ·

The main features of immigrants appeared in the Tunisian media discourses; the majority of news stories published on social media platforms (Facebook, YouTube) have spoken about three categories of migrants in relation to the reason behind their immigration to Europe:

- Those who are escaping armed conflict in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Those who are seeking a better life in Europe due to the economic crisis in Tunisia.
- Those who are looking for freedom and working under better conditions than in Maghreb countries.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

- ~ Two types of illegal immigrants were identified through an analysis of Tunisian media discourse on social networking sites.



Figure 7 : Mosaique FM (Radio) presenter asking about why one million of Tunisian are thinking about immigration. What are the reasons behind this?



Figure 8 : Mosaique FM (radio) presenter speaks about how to make a solution for brain drain by developing a digital platform for online work.

- ~ **The first category represents Tunisian immigrants, and they are divided into two categories according to media discourse.:**

The first category of Tunisian migrants: is youth who have been educated at a university and have a great deal of education, they chose to flee the country by any means necessary because of the country's blocked economic outlook and severe employment crisis.

The second category of Tunisian migrants: is young people with limited cultural backgrounds. Nonetheless, they aim to flee in order to discover new possibilities for living and an opportunity to establish themselves outside of the many factors that determine social and cultural opportunities in Tunisia.

Did immigration from Tunisia become feminized?

- ~ In addition to the evolution of irregular migration phenomenon among males, which differs based on different characteristics such as cultural, social, and economic, our analysis of social media media coverage showed that **gender characteristics** were becoming more prevalent among immigrants in the last few years (2021-2022).



Figure 9 : Sabaa Saidi, a Tunisian young influencer encourages young people in her country to immigrate via an illegal method by spreading video of her adventure on Instagram to reach Europe.

Thus, we can add that Tunisian Media didn't discuss often these cases of women's illegal migration, but we can find some News stories about a failed adventure of women migrants or a successful adventure like the News Story of a Tunisian young influencer on Instagram called "Sabaa Saidi" (18 years old) whose made a big wave of Buzz in the Tunisian Media and even in some Arab TV Channels like the Saaoudi TV channel : "Alarabaaa TV" (watch her News Story on Youtube : [مؤثرة تونسية تهاجر : بطريقة غير شرعية وتثير الجدل \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...))

the young woman from sfax "Sabaa Saidi", was invited by the Tunisian radio station "Diwen FM" (24/02/2022) to talk about her adventure and to explain to Tunisians her fears during the boat trip.



Figure 10 : a radio interview with the influencer “sabaa saidi” after her arrival to Italy.

Although she admitted to being terrified, she managed to control her stress and create videos upon the boat's arrival on the Italian coast.

“Sabaa” She asserted that she was accompanied by four other women on the boat, one of whom was pregnant.

wants to share her experience with their followers.

She expressed her distaste for encouraging individuals to illegally immigrate, but she

“Sabaa's adventure shocked the Tunisians, their comments on Facebook and YouTube varied between Those who blamed the Tunisian media for their focus on the story that encourages young people and girls to immigrate in an implicit way and had different opinions about it .

The importance of highlighting the cause and spreading awareness among Tunisian youth was highlighted through several daring comments made because no one has a successful story, simply because “Sabaa” described her adventure as a trip to death.

In addition to the stories of women who immigrated illegally like “Sabaa Saidi”, other strange stories of Tunisian migrants have emerged, such as the 4-year-old girl whose story was covered by the Tunisian media with great sympathy.

A child who drowned without her parents has traversed the Mediterranean Sea while facing the risk of death by hoping to find a better life in Italy. A horrible news story has interested Tunisians and makes them quite angry about the child’s family’s disregard for their daughter’s life(according to many comments on Facebook).



الصدمة: طفلة الـ4 سنوات تصل إلى لامبادوزا بمفردها في إحدى قوارب الموت

Radio Med Tunisie 299 k abonnés Abonné 16 Partager Télécharger Enregistrer

Figure 11 : video / screenshot of the RadioMed FM coverage which shows the 4-year-old girl arriving in Lampedusa in Italy

This post in **the official page of RadioMed (Date: 20 octobre 2022)** was discussing the case of 4-year-old girl as a “Chocking News”, in order to describe it as a big problem in Tunisia, reporters were requesting about “conscience” and there is no paradise in Italy or in Europe.

The journalist/ Chronicle said:” The minds of Tunisian young people who want to cross into Europe are unfortunately filled with many illusions. There is no paradise for migrants in Europe. Tunisian young people must understand that they will face death in the Mediterranean Sea. Leaving on death boats is not a solution. Every family looking for illegal migration may be totally demolished in the Sea, their children are not blamed, they are a victims of the unconscious decisions of their fathers and mothers, families must search for a good future for their children in Tunisia with work and perseverance”.

The word “VICTIM “is a keyword in the Tunisian Media coverage of illegal immigration, we find a lot of reactions about some cases like “the 4-year-old girl reaching Italy costs on a death boat” similar to the attitude of the “Prime Time” journalists broadcasted by the Tunisian Radio station RadioMed FM.



Figure 12 : Tunisian MP Majd Karbaa’s post commenting on the story of the migration of the Tunisian girl (4 years old) on Facebook (NON-MEDIA)

The General Director of the National Observatory for Migration, Ahlam Hamami, considered that the issue of immigration has become feminized at the international and national levels, as represented by the size of Tunisian women abroad, the number of foreign women residing in Tunisia, or the number of migrant women around the world.

“Ahlam Hammami explained during a symposium on confronting violence against migrant women on the occasion of the celebration of Women’s Day, corresponding to August 13 of each year, that half of the migrants in the world are women according to 2021 statistics, noting that the number of Tunisians abroad reached 1,731,116 (according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration). Tunisians abroad, including about 661,112 thousand women, in addition to the number of foreigners residing in Tunisia represents 59,000, of whom approximately 29,000 are women, or about half”²¹.

²¹ See more on webmanager website, link : [مديرة مرصد الهجرة: الهجرة أصبحت مؤنثة على المستوى الوطني و الدولي - \(africanmanager.com\)](https://africanmanager.com)

The National Migration Observatory stressed the importance of migration flows at the global level, which are inevitably affected, according to her assessment, by the deteriorating political, economic and social conditions the world is witnessing.

It reviewed the most prominent repercussions of the health pandemic on the situation of migrant workers in the world, especially women, who are now suffering from double vulnerability, given their gender (migrant status), in addition to the economic and social vulnerability of those who lost their work or were unable to return to their countries, thus becoming vulnerable to all forms of violence and human trafficking.



Figure 13 Assabah News & Web Manager e-journal - the National Observatory for Migration considers that the issue of immigration has become feminized at the international and national levels

These remarks were highlighted by the Tunisian media, a change in the structure of immigrants has just developed and become a new representation to be retained by the public, based on the relationship between gender and immigration.

The family migration: the social flow on death boats represented by Tunisian (Arabic) media news stories

- ~ 2022 was a year full of tragedies related to the deaths of entire families at the bottom of the sea after failed illegal immigration attempts. The phenomenon turned into a topic of discussion in the Tunisian media, and the cases began to be explained in a purely humanitarian and legal manner that might go beyond the economic and political issues. In some media coverage, human rights activists appeared. People and experts in the field of international law have been talking in the Tunisian media about the necessity of state intervention to prevent new disasters.

IN 2022, many news stories were published/ broadcasted by Tunisian Media, the phenomenon of family illegal immigration constituted an important topic to discuss and expose for the Tunisian public, in order to present the evolution of the phenomenon and to forbid other families to leave the country on death boats, **some examples from Tunisian Media official pages on Facebook:**



Figure 14 : Tounes Arrakmia has explained in an article published on Facebook that immigration became a priority for Tunisian Families because of the economic crisis, Tunisians preferred to leave the country in order to find another destiny that's qualified as a better future for their children.



Figure 15 : Assabah e-journal has published an interview with a sociologist who explained how Tunisian families became convinced of illegal immigration as a solution for their socio-economic problems in Tunisia.



فرادى وعائلات.. لماذا تتصاعد هجرة التونسيين؟

يرصد المنتدى التونسي للحقوق الاقتصادية والاجتماعية ارتفاع أعداد المهاجرين التونسيين غير النظاميين بين يوليو/تموز 2021 والشهر ذاته من العام الجاري، إذ بلغ عدد الواصلين إلى أوروبا عبر الطرق المختلفة أكثر من 20 ألف تونسي.



مهاجرون غير شرعيين من شمال أفريقيا يصلون إلى جزيرة لامبيدوزا بجنوب إيطاليا (الأوروبية)



حفظ الملفات لمراسلتنا لاحقاً وأنشئ قائمة قرأتك

منيرة حجلوي
17/8/2022

Figure 16 : Aljazeera Net raised the issue of immigration of Tunisian families

W.F., 27, who preferred not to be named, was Tunisia's champion in kung fu for three consecutive years (2012, 2013 and 2014), and won the President's Award in the Arab Berber horse race in 2015.

On June 2, 2018, his boat with 180 other irregular migrants sank but he's survived thanks to his mastery of swimming.

Feelings of injustice and lack of government support led him to leave the Tunisian national team (kung fu), and the hardship of his family's livelihood forced him to drop out early and remain unemployed.

In June 2022, he secretly left by sea to be deported from the detention center in Cecilia, Italy, to Tunisia after his asylum application was rejected, but he insisted on repeating the attempt.

Thus, Sociologist Sami Nasr describes the phenomenon of irregular migration in Tunisia as "a social flood that sweeps away everything, and is not stopped by official communications, warnings, or pictures of dead and drowning migrants."



Figure 17 : (Non-MEDIA): a photo published on Facebook of a Tunisian family from sisi Bouzid on a death boat during their sea trip to Europe – illegal immigration

Nasr told Al Jazeera Net that this flood has begun to include the elderly, children, girls, pregnant women, entire families, the educated and the uneducated, and has become a phenomenon of significant magnitude.

In his opinion, all parties in Tunisia must study this phenomenon as an encrypted message that Tunisians from all segments of their society “lost hope for a better tomorrow in their country and saw that hope in the country of the diaspora, and that is what prompted them to sacrifice their lives.”

Nasr believes that reducing the drivers of irregular migration to financial conditions and unemployment is a wrong approach, citing the presence of Tunisian irregular migrants who are well-off or who have held positions in the state.

The humanitarian aspect is not absent in the Tunisian media representation

- ~ The Tunisian media didn't drop the security issues of its agenda, its coverage tried to expose the humanitarian aspect in discussing some cases especially about illegal African migrants with came from sub-Saharan countries.

Many news stories have revealed the topic; they describe security and repressive solutions as short-term policies that deal with a reaction and not an integrated strategy aimed at solving the migration problem from its roots.

This is after countries (on both sides of Mediterranean) failed to develop solutions and policies capable of effectively solving the problem from its roots. These security policies may give a false success that hides a moral and political failure.

Why will it fail? Simply because the illegal migrant knows quite well that he will face death during the journey before he moves.

Structural factors such as corruption, wars, and tyranny in the countries from which migrants migrate have not progressed in positive directions. These are the factors that push immigrants to migrate



Figure 18 The head of the Tunisian League for Human Rights calls on Tunisians on Shams FM to refrain from irregular migration and calls on the Tunisian state to intervene immediately.

~ **The second main category is young people who migrate from sub-Saharan Africa and are also divided into two categories:**

The first category: is conscious young people, but who have desire to improve their economic conditions in their poor countries and are trying to survive armed conflicts and search for the right to a safe life as an integral part of the human rights stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The second category: young people who are victims of human trafficking gangs who manipulate the minds of young people in sub-Saharan African countries (Tchad, Mali, Benin, Sinegal, etc.)

Thus, the stereotypical image of Sub-Saharan Africa has not changed much until now even in the Tunisian Media discourse, as Africa is within the framework of inherited constants: corruption, backwardness, natural disasters, poverty, hunger, and diseases.



Figure 19 A photo taken from media coverage on the “Digital Tunisia” website of a boat carrying a large number of illegal black immigrants crossing the Tunisian border towards Lampedusa, Italy.

In 2021, the National Authority to **Combat Human Trafficking** recorded “1,100 cases of trafficking, a third of which were women and more than half of which were children. Trafficking crimes also targeted foreigners by 82 percent, 64 percent of whom were from Ivory Coast²².”



المهاجرين في العامرة كيفاش وصلت الأمور إلى المرحلة الخطرة | الحقائق الأربعة - Les quatre vérités



les quatre vérités - الحقائق الأربعة
11 K abonnés

S'abonner

117



Partager



Télécharger



Enregistrer



Figure 20 : screenshot - an attack by irregular migrants from sub-Saharan Africa on a security car in Sfax - Tunisia - The picture was taken from a YouTube investigation by the Tunisian Al-Hiwar channel - The Four Facts programme ²³

The qualitative analysis revealed that level of sympathy for cases of drowning in illegal immigration trips varies in the style of media coverage between cases in which Tunisians are victims of immigration and those in which the largest number of victims are young people coming from sub-Saharan African countries.

This is clearly evident in the number of news stories presented about each type of illegal migrants, in addition to the method of media coverage, the pace of media follow-up, and the interpretation and analysis provided for the cases.

²² Hamadi Maamri (2022), The scourge of human trafficking is rampant in Tunisia and its victims are African immigrants, the independent (in Arabic), published in : 15/09/2022, link : [آفة الاتجار بالبشر مستفحلة في تونس وضحاياها | اندبندنت عربية \(independentarabia.com\)](https://www.independentarabia.com/) المهاجرون الأفارقة | اندبندنت عربية

²³ See more : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G7p21EYgPqk>

“The message is the medium,” a famous quote, written by Marshall McLuhan in 1964. Although the medium can affect how messages are received, the experience and personal history of users and audiences can also have an impact on the interpretation of messages. The first important step in becoming an information and media expert is to understand how information, ideas and meaning are communicated through and by various media and other information disseminators such as libraries, archives, museums and the Internet. Each medium has its own “language” or “grammar” that functions to convey meaning in a unique way. “Language” in this framework covers the technical and symbolic components, or codes and conventions, that information and media professionals may choose to use for the purpose of communicating ideas, information and knowledge, or to convey a certain meaning²⁴.



Figure 21 : Arrakmeia Facebook Page : Bengerdan : Will the International Organization for Migration provide donations to establish a permanent camp for irregular migrants?

²⁴ See more : Nazanin Firoozeh, Adeline Nazarenko , Fabrice Alizon and Béatrice Daille (2019), Keyword extraction: Issues and methods, Published online by Cambridge University Press: 11 November 2019, link : <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/natural-language-engineering/article/abs/keyword-extraction-issues-and-methods/84BFD5221E2CA86326E5430D03299711>

Keywords about illegal migrants in Tunisian Media narratives

- ~ Extracting keywords from Media discourse is crucial for several reasons:
Keyword extraction helps retrieve the 'key' elements of the studied documents²⁵.

in addition, we can understand the Content well, as the Keyword extraction allows you to sift through the entire set of data and get the words that best describe each document²⁶. This way, we can easily and automatically see what our media narratives are about:

It can also help to identify recurrent Terms or find out the most common issues in public interactions²⁷.

In summary, keyword extraction is an essential operation of textual information processing, such as information retrieval and summarizing, It helps in understanding the content better²⁸.

Table 2 : The most important statements circulating about irregular migrants in Tunisian media platforms and some comments on the media content published according to different contexts.

Cultural terms	Economic terms	Political terms	Social terms	Others
isolated	illegal immigrants	Terrorist/ Mafia	Violent	Dirty
uncultured	unemployed	Criminal	Miserable	irresponsible
ignorant	beggars	stateless	disadvantaged	malicious

²⁵ See more : Robbe De Sutter (2022), Mastering NLP: a guide to keyword extraction, January 5th, 2022, link : <https://radix.ai/blog/2022/1/mastering-nlp-a-guide-to-keyword-extraction/>

²⁶ Keyword extraction (also known as keyword detection or keyword analysis) is a text analysis technique that automatically extracts the most used and most important words and expressions from a text. It helps summarize the content of texts and recognize the main topics discussed.

²⁷ See more : Automatic intonation-based keyword extraction from academic discourse, link : <https://annals-csis.org/proceedings/2018/drp/pdf/42.pdf>

²⁸ Mohammad Aliannejadi (2023), link : [Mohammad Aliannejadi](#)

The analysis of media discourse about immigrants revealed a negative perception of stereotypes spread by Tunisian Media about illegal migrants while showing several parts of their marginalization and their bitter reality.

The miserable economic situation of migrants took centre stage in Media coverage. As several Media coverages have explained that, illegal immigration is a natural result of the scarcity of economic position and the lack of labor, food, and good infrastructure, etc.

The same thing appears in the use of social terms case. Tunisian migrants are referred to as **violent, miserable and disadvantaged**, as much news has spoken about their need for a health care, a good lifestyle and psychological support for young people and women.

Thus, different explanations have indicated that many young people from the poorer areas in Tunisia are already easy victims for clandestine immigration.

In the case of bad stereotypes in cultural terms the Sub-Saharan migrants are portrayed as **isolated, uncultured and ignorant**.

Many political terms such as **“terrorists, Mafia, criminals, and stateless”** have emerged during the discussion about illegal immigration on the Radio program and the TV Channel reportage.



Figure 22 : Shems FM FB Page - Hichem El-Mechichi in France speaking about the relationship between terrorism and illegal immigration (December 16, 2020)

In 2020, in one of his statements to the media, former Tunisian Prime Minister Hichem el-Mechichi linked irregular migration to terrorism, which angered Tunisians who saw this as a false and exaggerated depiction of the irregular migration scene and an attempt to evade the political responsibility of the rulers.

Despite the negative attitude of Tunisian followers (facebookers) about the relationship between terrorism and illegal immigration. certain media explanations have raised the issue and invited the Tunisian /Arab public to think about the security cause, not only of terrorism which is an international phenomenon but also to think of mafia trade and the relationship between mafia and irregular migration and between drug trade and immigrants and also slavery in its economic versions.

The security image of migrants through media coverage of Tunisian security intervention in issues of irregular migration

It should be noted that the word "criminal" is repetitive within Tunisian media discourse, not only in relation to the smugglers who help immigrants to join the death boats but also at the level of the security narratives of local authorities by which journalists create their news, reflections and explanations.



In the following table are the main keywords used by Tunisian/ Arab Media to describe the smugglers and to raise the security situation of immigration in Tunisia.

Table 3: The most used keywords cited by the Tunisian media in relation to actors in the migration scene

Keywords in relation to Media narratives about security			
Smuggling networks	Smugglers	Stealth immigrants	Deported / expelled
International mafia networks	Law violators /breakers	Rogues /Missing people	Brokers / intermediate

According to what appears to us in the research sample The Tunisian media have covered the arrest of some smugglers planning to transport illegal immigrants on boats. This focus has appeared in a number of reports, articles and photos published on the Tunisian media official pages on Facebook and YouTube, and the following is some examples.

Table 4: Illustrative examples from Tunisian Media narratives about Tunisian security operations against illegal immigrants.

 <p>Mosaique FM • Suivre 17 octobre 2022</p> <p>الكشف عن 4 شبكات لتنظيم الهجرة غير النظامية إلى أوروبا عبر تركيا وصربيا</p> <p>MOSAIQUEFM.NET الكشف عن 4 شبكات لتنظيم الهجرة غير النظامية إلى أوروبا عبر تركيا وصربيا الكشف عن 4 شبكات لتنظيم الهجرة غير النظامية إلى أوروبا عبر تركيا وصربيا</p> <p>Nourhen Kneni et 1,8 K autres personnes 563 commentaires 35 partages</p>	<p>Mosaique FM published on its official page on Facebook in 17 October 2022 a news story about Disclosure of four networks organizing irregular migration to Europe via Türkiye and Serbia.</p>
 <p>Assabah News صباح نيوز 25 octobre 2022</p> <p>تكفيك شبكة دولية تنشط بين تونس و#تركيا في مجال الهجرة غير الشرعية</p> <p>ASSABAHNEWS.TN تكفيك شبكة دولية تنشط بين تونس و#تركيا في مجال الهجرة غير الشرعية تعرف تونس خلال الفترة الأخيرة نشاط مجموعة من الوسطاء في مجال الهجرة غير الشرعية للنول الأوروبية عبر صربيا وذلك مقء...</p> <p>J'aime Commenter Partager</p>	<p>Assabah News (E-journal) published on its official page on Facebook in 25 October 2022 a news story about the disclosure of four networks organizing irregular migration to Europe via Turkey and Serbia</p>

Shems FM (page officielle) Média contrôlé par l'État dans le pays suivant : Tunisie · 28 septembre 2021 ·

كانوا موقوفين بمراكز الهجرة غير النظامية: ترحيل 76 شابا تونسيا من طرابلس



WWW.SHEMSFM.NET

SHEMSFM.NET

كانوا موقوفين بمراكز الهجرة غير النظامية: ترحيل 76 شابا تونسيا من طرابلس، أنهت مصالح القنصلية العامة صباح اليوم 28 سبتمبر 2021 جميع الترتيبات المستوجبة لترحيل دفعة تتكو...

Shems FM published on its official Facebook page, in 28 September 2021 a news story about 76 young Tunisians deported from Tripoli, Libya, after they were arrested in irregular immigration centers in Libya.

Arrakmia 26 octobre 2022 ·

شبكة تنظيم الهجرة عبر صربيا: إصدار 8 بطاقات إيداع بالسجن و بطاقات جلب في عناصر قارة بالخارج



AR.TUNISIENUMERIQUE.COM

شبكة تنظيم الهجرة عبر صربيا: إصدار 8 بطاقات إيداع بالسجن و بطاقات جلب في عناصر قارة بالخارج - تونس - أخبار تونس

1

Arrakmia has published in its Facebook official page, in 26 October 2022 a new story about Issuing eight summons cards for fugitives abroad involved in organizing illegal immigration to Serbia

Assabah News الصباح نيوز 17 octobre 2022 ·

جرجيس..استئناف عمليات البحث عن مفقودي مركب الهجرة غير النظامية



ASSABAHNEWS.TN

جرجيس..استئناف عمليات البحث عن مفقودي مركب الهجرة غير النظامية تم صباح اليوم الاثنين 17 أكتوبر 2022 استئناف عمليات البحث عن المفقودين في مركب الهجرة غير النظامية قبالة...

Abdelwaheb Elhajali et 1 autre personne 2 partages

Assabah News (E-journal) published on its Facebook official page in 17 October 2022, a news story about resumption of searches for missing people on an illegal immigration boat in the Zarzis region, southern Tunisia.



صفائح: لحظات حاسمة في كوارث الموت

Mosaïque FM 1.9 M d'abonnés

1.1 k Partager Télécharger Enregistrer

Mosaïque FM published in its YouTube official channel a reportage about arresting smugglers in Sfax trying to build boats for using in illegal migration operations.



صفائح: لحظات حاسمة في كوارث الموت

Mosaïque FM 1.9 M d'abonnés

1.1 k Partager Télécharger Enregistrer

Mosaïque FM published on its YouTube official channel a reportage about a dramatic incident near to Sfax shoers, a number of illegal migrants were fighting for living

The title of the video: “SFAX : for 30 hours of fight against the boats of death”



الهجرة غير النظامية: مسالة خلافية تعصف بالقارة العجوز

Watania Replay 2,65 M d'abonnés

5 Partager

On Al-watania 1 news journal:
A reportage was broadcasting during NATIONAL TV channel 1 entitled:
“Illegal migration: a controversial issue plaguing the old continent (EUROPE) “

Illegal migrants' features : When the media spoke about reasons!

- ~ Illegal migration, also known as undocumented or irregular migration, is a complex phenomenon driven by a variety of economic, social, political, and environmental factors. Here are some common reasons behind illegal migration exposed by Tunisian Media Narratives



Figure 23 : The Radio presenter on SHEMS FM announced statistics about Illegal immigration during the previous 9 months, which she described as a record toll

This post exposed the topic of “A record toll of irregular migration in nine months, discussed in “**the Radio program called “HAW ESS717” in Arabic** "هاو الصّحيح" (it means in English “ That’s the truth” (broadcast on Radio Shems FM and published on the official Radio page on Facebook).

The presenter of the Radio program touched on the causes of irregular migration through the transit country, Tunisia, and devoted space to a conversation with a sociologist about the major features of the Tunisian immigrant, who confirmed that the causes of immigration, in addition to being economic, are also profound social and psychological reasons.

The Tunisian young man risks his life to obtain psychological stability before material stability. There is a longing to obtain better means of living and a broader scope to freely express ambition and search for success.

The first characteristic of a young man who migrates from Tunisia irregularly is “frustration.”



Figure 24 : 76 young Tunisians were deported from irregular immigration centers from Tripoli city (Libya) to Tunisia

In the same period during the 2021, Shams FM was talking about 76 young Tunisians who were deported from irregular immigration centers from Tripoli city (Libya) to Tunisia, who intended to immigrate to Europe by sea.

In total, more than 152,000 migrants arrived on the Italian coast until the first week of December 2021, most of them from the coast of Tunisia, according to data from the Italian

Ministry of the Interior. This is a higher number than what was recorded in the same period in 2022 (nearly 95,000) and in 2021 (63,000)²⁹.



Figure 25 the topic of the Eddoussi Talk show on Shems FM: Irregular migration...the dream of the old continent (EUROPE)

Few months later, Shems FM, has invited the president of the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights, to speak about “The European dream of illegal migrants”; why migrants dream about reaching Europe and living in its countries.

Many social and economic reasons are behind, the Talk show, it revealed the incapacity of Tunisians young people to overcome the pain of unemployment, they qualified European territory as a new destination for making changes in their life (personal and professional).

²⁹ See more : Tarek Guizeni (2023), “From Tunisia to Europe - migrants chasing their dream in 2023”, published in 18/12/2023, DW in Arabic , link : [2023 – DW – 2023/12/18](https://www.dw.com/fr/migrants-chasing-their-dream-in-2023/a-64111111)

The Talk show represent the illegal migrant as an **offended man**, during the last year the evolution of relations between Tunisia and Italy (Europe) regarding irregular migration has been characterized by a lack of transparency, as they were based more on memorandums of understanding than on agreements.

The Talk show spoke about the needs of migrants to achieve their dreams and escape the economic crisis in their countries.

According to many reports, the unequal division of wealth is the main reason behind the exacerbation of irregular migration.

The Sub-Saharan migrants do not want to settle in Tunisia. They want to pass to Europe, in addition, irregular migrants are exposed to many violations in Italy and Tunisia as well

The irregular migrants are defined as a **dishonoured group**, except for a few who have certain characteristics.



Figure 26 : Sociologist: “Tunisia isn’t any more just a point of departure for the illegal migrants but it became a point of transit”³⁰ .

The Talk show guest, Dr. Mahdi Mabrouk, a researcher in sociology said “The Sub-Saharan illegal migrants consider Tunisia a point of Transit, or a stop to stay, to work and to collect money in order to go to Europe, because of that many Sub-Saharans have been observed these last years ; a farm workers and workers in the agricultural sector, such as

³⁰ Published on Shems FM , YouTube Channel :

<https://www.youtube.com/@SHEMSFMTN/search?query=%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%87%D8%AC%D8%B1%D8%A9%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%88%D8%B3%D9%8A>

harvesting olives, for example, in Tunisia, or as a waiter in a café, and other professions that Tunisian youth today do not like to work”.

In general, Tunisian families are against illegal migration, but some families are pressed to aid their children to go illegally by providing the amount required to leave, even if the amount is sometimes an advance from the bank .

There are great pressures on the family, which has to choose between its children remaining in a state of unemployment and frustration and their children’s desire to immigrate to search for a different fate in Europe.

Other illegal immigration stories ...positive Media narratives

Despite the darkness of the illegal migration scene shown by Tunisian Media platforms and screens, some testimonies, especially those represented through talk shows broadcast by private TV channels like “Attassia TV & Alhiwar Attounssi” during 2021 and 2022, have played an awareness-raising role for Tunisian youth, it has warning them against irregular migration and risky journeys on death boats.

Some of the survivors during an irregular trip towards Europe told their painful stories and their fear of death by drowning, and some of them spoke of an awful treatment and a bad feelings of humiliation in irregular immigration centers before being deported again to Tunisia.



Figure 27 : A guest of Attassia TV : Naji Belnejma: We advise officials in the country to bear the responsibility of changing the mentality of young people who wish to immigrate irregularly.

In order to omit the role of greedy mediators on organizing an illegal boat trip to Europe, instead of paying smugglers, a number of Tunisians have decided to buy their own boats and organize cross-ocean cruises to Europe themselves, a phenomenon that is growing rapidly.

This last period, Attassia TV (Rendez-vs 9 Talk show) has invited a survivor from Kelibia (North Tunisia) to speak about his journey and how it was worse to feel lost for three days at sea after leaving for Europe using a small boat and alone

It was a difficult journey that caused him financial and health losses and a psychological condition that he is still pursuing treatment with a psychologist.



بحارة تونسيون ينقذون مهاجرين غير شرعيين من مصر

Figure 28: Another positive story of that Tunisian sailors rescued Egyptian illegal immigrants who were pulled away by winds to Tunisian territorial waters ³¹.

Research results

Despite the chaos of the Tunisian media scene during the last decade, and in spite of the dominance of political subjects discussed on the media platforms, the Tunisian media played a massive role in showing the inevitability of a multi-faceted phenomenon such as 'illegal immigration'.

³¹ See more : Alhadhath Ettounssi official page on Facebook :

https://www.facebook.com/watch?ref=search&v=609315897337117&external_log_id=37b10229-f7f4-4b4c-8980-2378fae7d808&q=%D9%85%D9%82%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%A9%20%D9%85%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%86%20%D8%BA%D9%8A%D8%B1%20%D8%B4%D8%B1%D8%B9%D9%8A%D9%8A%D9%86%20%D9%81%D9%8A%20%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3

According to our analysis, the features of a Tunisian or sub-Saharan or other illegal migrant to Europe via the sea can vary over time and according to the category of the migrants themselves.

Similar to any phenomenon with a social, economic and political roots, illegal immigration has experienced upheavals this last period, we can test them at the level of gender, number, age, social characteristics, cultural and educational level and above all at the legal and political level (diplomacy).

This research based on a qualitative approach aims to show the different representations given by the Tunisian media around the illegal immigrant.

The in-depth analyzes based on the discourses and images presented by Tunisian /Arab media -sometimes - around illegal immigration have highlighted several narratives which subsequently gave representations, some of which are new images of the illegal immigrant towards Europe.

~ **Tunisian media differentiate between Tunisian immigrants and sub-Saharan immigrants.**

The Tunisian Media narratives showed the categorization of illegal immigrants, two categories and subcategories including two or three for each category:

- *Tunisian illegal migrants are divided into two categories:* “ High educated people and limited educated people “who’s suffering mainly of unemployment.
- *The Sub-Saharan migrants are alienated in two categories too:* “those who own money to go directly by boat towards Europe” or “those who have no money to go directly so they preferred to stay in Tunisia for sometimes to work hard tasks in order to collect money and to leave illegally the transit point (which is Tunisia) to Europe; mainly, those are the young people came from conflict zones in Africa.

~ **Main representations of illegal migrants in Tunisian Media Narratives**

The Tunisian media narratives have revealed the **main representation** of illegal migrants which has new dimensions at the level of:

~ **Gender/ feminized illegal migration**

The illegal migration became feminized, thus the illegal migrant from Tunisia isn't any more a male monopoly, an illegal migrant can also be a female person, during the last three years and even more (2020-2023) some Tunisian girls have shared their journey during an illegal immigration trip with Media public and social media followers.

A girl or a woman / a mother or a daughter can also be an illegal migrant and a journalistic story to tell or a great topic to discuss in tv or radio talk shows.

~ **Mass illegal migration of families' flow**

During the last three years (2020-2022), the illegal migrant in media narrative isn't any longer an individual element, the illegal migration becomes plural as many Tunisian families composed of 3 to 5 persons can make a plan to leave Tunisia with a smuggler.

The horrible stories broadcast/ published by Tunisian Media platforms of the death of an entire family in the Mediterranean became one of the most important news to share with the Tunisian public in investigative TV programs or in a Radio/TV talk show.

~ **Cultivate illegal migrants/ Brains drift**

According the Tunisian media narratives even talented young people in Tunisia are attracted by the illusion of European paradise, they can try once or more than one time to leave on death boats, they prefer to try another life outside Tunisia/ Africa.

The main representation of the illegal migrants in Tunisian Media narratives exposed them a victims of non-horizons for expressing himself, they're looking for more freedom, for more than a basic life.

The main representations in Tunisian/Arabe Media woven for this category of illegal migrants are: isolated, marginalized and brain drain.

~ **limited / Unconscious illegal migrants:**

The Tunisian media narratives have spoken a lot about the unconscious illegal migrants, they were been qualified as uncultured people, disadvantaged young people and victims of bad life conditions, a bad future perception, a big frustration is their country, the main representation about this category is the marginalized citizen.

~ **Violent / malicious illegal migrants:**

in relation to the phenomenon of illegal immigration, violence is among the criteria that are well discussed during Tunisian TV talk shows and others media contents during 2021, 2022 and it was well exposed in Tunisian media narratives in 2023.

Because of many dangerous incidents, and numerous confrontations between illegal migrants and policemen especially in Sfax, 'violent' became the main representation of Sub-Saharan illegal migrants in Tunisian news stories.

Resuming, a sub-Saharan migrant can be a probable source of danger on Tunisian territory.

A Tunisian smuggler can be also qualified as a violent person during a boat trip to Europe and even before, the Tunisian migrants' survivors have exposed their bad journey on a boat trip with a violent smugglers.

This category can be identified by: stateless, forceful and aggressive people.

~ **A legal breaker / a slave trader / a new slavery victim**

According to the Tunisian Media narratives the main description / mental image of an illegal migrant (the client) is a law breaker, in some news stories this illegal immigration organizer is a criminal.

In relationship with Sub-Saharan illegal migrants the criminal becomes a slave trader, many news stories focused on how sub-Saharan young people/ man/ and woman could be victims of the new slavery (the economic exploitation too).

These renowned can describe a real image of how illegal immigrations has progressed these last years (2021, 2022, 2023).

Some words pronounced during the Talk shows discussion such as: Deported / expelled

Law violators /Law breakers/ Rogues/ Missing people can express not only a legal aspect but also a political aspect of the phenomenon.

~ **Political representations: Imminent danger/ international networks / terrorists**

The discourse of political responsible in Tunisia can also be important content to transfer to the Tunisian public and other interested followers too.

According to political discourse, an illegal immigration can change the demographic composition of Tunisia, a massive flow of sub-Saharan people looking for chance in Europe

can transform their limited horizons or bad luck into an imminent danger by settling in Tunisia.

Tunisians suffered a lot of an economic crisis, the question asked by journalists was : “How can Tunisia overcome this issue with a big number of homeless from African countries that it has no borders with ?”.

The answer was to say that the country is a victim of international smuggling networks and it has to fight them. A mafia is also a source of great danger.

A political representation of illegal migrants has been drawn by Media narratives an image of a combat between this ‘Danger’ and the ‘sovereignty’ has taken place. A political figure said “illegal immigration is can be a source of terrorism”.

Another representation can be interpreted by audience: illegal migrants are terrorists.

In conclusion, many representations were blown out by the Tunisian media narratives during 2020- 2021-2022 and even after. According to the Tunisian/ Arab platforms: an illegal migrant is a man or woman, an individual or a family, a cultured or uncultured person, a lawbreaker and a violent element, a new slave or a slavery trader.

The illegal migrant is a man/woman with a will to leave, to escape and to cross or settle until he/she can cross to Europe.

The illegal migrant is smuggler or a victim of an international network, he/she has to be unconscious of danger that he/she can be face during the journey.

In addition, the main representations of political discourse spread by media narratives about illegal migrants are: violent, malicious, victim and an imminent danger or a probable terrorist.

The analysis we made has exposed an image that the Tunisian media public/ audience may consume through the European media discourse, as the main representations we found are very similar to the European media representation of illegal migrants but with some soft differences in the level of socio-cultural background and ideological politics to define and examine the phenomenon itself.

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