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Tunisia

France exports its racist theories to Tunisia

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Against a backdrop of economic crisis, with the state on the verge of default and the beginning of a challenge to his power - which has become autocratic since his constitutional coup of 25 July 2021 - Kais Saïed, the Tunisian president, has made statements that have triggered a wave of racist violence throughout the country.

In a statement on 21 February, Kais Saïed announced measures against the 'phenomenon of the wave of migrants of sub-Saharan origin'. He considers this phenomenon to be a "criminal action that started at the beginning of the 20th century with the aim of changing the demographic composition of Tunisia" in order to transform Tunisia "into an African country and no longer an Arab and Muslim country". Furthermore, the communiqué accuses the "hordes of illegal migrants of perpetrating violent, criminal and lawless acts".

Racist state offensive

This is nothing more or less than a conspiracy version of the 'theory' of the Great Replacement popularised by the French far right. Here it is combined with accusations of increased crime attributable to 'illegal' migrants. And these remarks are in contradiction with the law against discrimination voted in 2018 by the Tunisian Parliament. In fact, anti-black racism in Tunisia (and more generally in the Maghreb) has a long history and remains systemic. However, this racist offensive directly led by the state is a novelty.

It had an immediate impact: dozens of migrants were harassed by armed people. Some have been injured and many report rape. Tenants have been made homeless by their landlords, and hundreds of people are currently camped out in front of the International Observatory for Migration in Tunis. Some universities and several solidarity associations have asked sub-Saharan nationals to stay in their homes. There is an atmosphere of fear among the black population in Tunisia.

Europe's border guard

European states have decided to use Tunisia as a border guard and are effectively financing the outsourcing of controls. "Tunisia is said to have intercepted 29,000 irregular immigration operations in 2022, according to the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights. Europe provides many resources in the training of coastguards, including 20 million in training and equipment. " [\[1\]](#)

These events also coincide with the arrest of several political opponents by the "anti-terrorist" police. The use of racism and repression have once again become the basic techniques for maintaining power of a president whose legitimacy is falling apart at the seams. Despite the bans and arrests, demonstrations in support of migrants and against racism took place, notably in Tunis, showing that, even weakened, the resistance still exists.

*Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [l'Anticapitaliste](#).*

PS:

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