PAPER III

The Relationship between Violence against Women and Violent Extremism

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1. INTRODUCTION

Violence against women is an issue of international concern. Despite efforts by the Tunisian government to reduce gender inequality and violence against women, indicators of both remain high. There have been efforts to end violence against women since the country's independence. This included, for example, the promulgation of the Personal Status Code (PSC) in 1956 institutionalizing gender equality in several areas, the inclusion of an equality provision in the 1959 Constitution, and universal compulsory education. More recent efforts include the promulgation of a comprehensive law on violence against women, adopted in July 2017. [1]This law had the support of the government, civil society organizations and prominent women leaders. However, despite these past and present efforts, several national surveys and reports record the persistence of gender discrimination and high levels of violence against women.[2]

Since the Arab Revolutions and the beginning of the Syrian civil war, violent extremism and incidences of terrorism have increased regionally and in Tunisia. In this context, Tunisia has also experienced the emergence and growth of networks and groups of violent religious extremists. For instance, Ansar al-Shari'a, a Salafi-jihadist militant organization which operates in Tunisia and Libya, is listed as a terrorist organization by the Tunisian government. Young Tunisian men and women have also been among those travelling to other countries in the region to fight for the Islamic State (ISIS). Based on available data an estimated 700 Tunisian women out of an estimated 7,000 Tunisians (10%) joined violent extremist groups in Syria, Iraq and Libya since 2011.[3] The majority of these women are engaged in community and support roles; however, there are also accounts of women acting as recruiters, 'jihad al nikah' (sex jihads), and combatants, including suicide bombers. For instance, in October 2018, Mena Gebla, a 30-year-old Tunisian woman, blew herself up near a security vehicle at Habib Bourguiba Avenue.

There is a clear relationship between protecting women's rights and deterring violent extremism.[4] Therefore, a better understanding of the relationship between violence against women in public and privates spheres – including intimate partner violence, sexual harassment in the workplace and public spaces, and violence directed towards women leaders and activists – and violent extremism would be able to feed into policies and programs to prevent and combat violent extremism. However, at present, there has been little research on the link between violence against women and violent extremism. This is especially true of the case of Tunisia.

To that end, this paper aims to address the following gaps in the evidence base on violent extremism and violence against women: What is the relationship between violence and the forced or willing involvement of Tunisian women in violent extremism? Is this related to violence against women in public spaces or political life? Why has there been an increase in gender regressive ideology in Tunisia, despite relative progress in gender equality? The paper will be organized in the following way: First, the paper will provide a brief review of the legal status of violence against women in Tunisia. Second, the paper will analyze cultural, psychosocial, and psychological

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[1] Republic of Tunisia. "Organic Law No. 58 Related to the Elimination of Violence against Women." edited by Republic of Tunisia, 2017.

[2] Centre for Research, Documentation Studies and Information on Women (CREDIF). "La violence fondée sur le genre dans l'espace publique'' [Gender-based violence in the public space]. Tunis: Ministry of Women, Family and Children, 2016.

[3] Maro Youssef and Hamza Mighri, "Women's Groups Take on Radicalization in Tunisia,'' (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 26 March 2019), https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/78685

[4] Youssef and Mighri, "Women's Groups Take on Radicalization in Tunisia.''

factors that may underpin and link violent extremism and violence against women. The paper identifies examples of international and national responses to preventing and combating. Finally, based on these examples, the paper puts forward some recommendations for the preventing and combating violent extremism policies and programs, in light of the evidence that links violent extremism and gender inequality and violence against women.

Legal reforms to protect women's rights and support gender equality have caused a backlash. For instance, the process to withdraw reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) – that began in 2011 and ended on 23 April 2014 with Tunisia submitting official notification to the UN (originally signed by Tunisia in 1980)[5] – led to fierce opposition and protests that removing reservations to CEDAW would threaten Tunisian Islam.[6] There was a similar backlash against the law drafted by the Committee on Individual Freedoms and Equality (COLIBE). Organised demonstrations have taken place following each of these planned or implemented reforms. These demonstrations frequently followed Friday prayer, and often included sit-ins in front of the Assembly of the Representatives of the People of Tunisia, marches, seminars, and social and traditional media campaigns.

2. PUBLIC AND PRIVATE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN TUNISIA

The definition of violence under the 2017 law on violence against women is broad, integrating physical, psychological, sexual, and economic violence.[7] The law also provides new protection mechanisms for survivors of violence, including access to necessary services and legal and psychological assistance. Whether committed in private or public spaces, violence against women is rooted in relationships of unequal power between men and women. The unequal gendered power relationship have resulted in the subordination of women to men.

The persistence of gender discrimination linked to violence against women is globally ubiquitous. Despite legal and social achievements in favor of women's rights in Tunisia, violence against women remains high. In fact, a national prevalence survey on violence against women in Tunisia (ENVET) conducted by the National Family and Population Office (ONFP) in 2010 indicates 48% of women have experienced violence against women over a lifetime.[8] Psychological violence affects 29% of women, physical violence 32%, sexual violence 16% and finally economic violence at 7%.[9] This type of violence can vary depending on a range of factors. For instance, marital status may affect the types and severity of violence. According to the same study in Tunisia, divorced women report the

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[5] Human Rights Watch, "Tunisia: Landmark Action on Women's Rights'' New York: Human Rights Watch, 30 April 2014, https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/04/30/tunisia-landmark-action-womens-rights.

[6] Mohamed Kerrou, "Trois questions pour comprendre la polémique autour des successions et du mariage de la musulmane avec le non-musulman'' [Three questions to understand the controversy surrounding the succession and marriage of Muslims and non-Muslims] Huffpost Maghreb, 8 August 2017, https://www.huffpostmaghreb.com/mohamed-kerrou/trois-questions-pour-comprendre-la-polemique-autour-des-successions-et-du-mariage-de-la-musulmane-avec-le-non-musulman_b_17866200.html

[7] Cf UN Women National Committee Australia, "Eliminating Violence against Women – it's everyone's responsibility,'' UN Women National Committee Australia, accessed 26 August 2019, https://unwomen.org.au/our-work/focus-areas/eliminating-violence-against-women/

[8] National Office of Family and Population, "Enquête nationale sur la violence à l'égard des femmes en Tunisie'' [National survey on violence against women in Tunisia] (Tunis: Ministry of Health, 2010), http://www.medcities.org/documents/10192/54940/Enqu%C3%AAte+Nationale+Violence+envers+les+femmes-+Tunisie+2010.pdf

[9] National Office of Family and Population, "Enquête nationale sur la violence à l'égard des femmes en Tunisie'' [National survey on violence against women in Tunisia] (Tunis: Ministry of Health, 2010), 32

highest rates of violence of any marital status. Sixty per cent reported experiencing physical violence, 67% experienced psychological violence and 45% had experienced sexual violence.[10]

Women in rural areas, according to this study, have higher reported levels of violence than women in urban areas. Twenty-four per cent of rural women experience physical violence, compared to 20% of urban women; only a slight increase with 26% experiencing psychological violence, compared to 25% of urban women; and 18% of rural women experiencing sexual violence compared to 14% for rural women.

Acts of violence in public spaces affects 54% of Tunisian women. Seventy-eight percent of these women report having experienced psychological violence, 42% report physical violence and 75% report sexual violence.

Other sources corroborate these findings. In 2016, the Tunisian Centre of Research, Documentation and Information on Women (CREDIF) conducted a national survey entitled 'Gender-based Violence in Public Spaces in Tunisia'.[11] The two studies (ONFP and CREDIF) illustrate that violence against women in Tunisian in both private public spheres is rooted in male domination is rooted and patriarchal aspects of the Arab-Muslim culture in Tunisia, which, like all social thought, selects and integrates elements of religious corpus, traditions, and productions that can consolidate beliefs and identity.

In the public sphere, this domination involves controlling women's bodies and restricting access to public spaces (professional, educational, places of leisure, etc.) to maintain women's financial dependence on men and restricting women to a secondary status. The CREDIF study finds that 60% of women ask their spouse's permission to go out, compared to 12% of husbands (asking permission from wives).[12] Street harassment is common, despite laws criminalizing it.[13] By-pass strategies such as group outings, covering up, walking quickly and being as discreet as possible are used by women to minimize risks and gain access to public spaces.[14] The street is a passage for women whose access is conditioned by strict control of the woman's body.

Finally, this access to the public sphere is also linked to women's rights to education. For instance, there are still significant gaps in the level of girls' education, although this was a priority of the post-colonial state. Further evidence is provided in the National Institute of Statistics (INS), which reported that 25% of Tunisian girls were illiterate in 2015.

Male domination of public spaces is linked to women's subordination and containment in the private sphere. In the CREDIF study, there is a clear gender division of labor in: 67% of men say they work and 65% of women say they 'stay at home'. Women's financial dependence on men is a concerning reality, 57% of women say that their main source of income is a man's salary, compared to only 16% of men recorded relying on someone else's (not necessarily a woman's) income. Women's economic dependence on men makes violence against women in these relationships more serious, as women find it hard to leave, and their dependence means they find it difficult to assert their rights to live free of violence.

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[10] This may indicate different rates of disclosure between divorced, single, and married women, not simply prevalence rates.

[11] Centre for Research, Documentation Studies and Information on Women (CREDIF), "La violence fondée sur le genre dans l'espace publique'' [Gender-based violence in the public space] (Tunis: Ministry of Women, Family and Children, 2016).

[12] CREDIF, "La violence fondée sur le genre dans l'espace publique.''

[13] Lilia Blaise, "Tunisia takes a big step to protect women from abuse'' New York Times, 1 August 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/01/world/africa/tunisia-women-domestic-violence.html

[14] CREDIF, "La violence fondée sur le genre dans l'espace publique.''

Current research does not analysis the possible links between violence in private and public spheres and the involvement of women in violent extremism. Gender-sensitive primary research on the drivers for recruitment by violent extremist groups might reveal a correlation between different forms of violence and exclusion of women and their engagement in VE.

The emergence of radical groups, gender politics and violence against women

In 2011, leftist groups in Tunisia mobilized to take part in the 'Jasmine Revolution' which led to a bloodless coup deposing President Ben Ali and his regime. Subsequent political liberalization allowed religious groups to organize around different variants of political Islam. While women's organizing (especially within non-elite movements), Islam, and democracy were all central to the revolution, political Islam reaped the benefits of contemporaneous 'Arab Spring' revolutions across the region.[15]

Since 2011, Tunisia has seen the emergence of radical groups and the public has witnessed the appearance or reappearance of a radical conservative discourse that has provoked national debates and occasionally violent events, characterized as violent extremism. This goes, ironically perhaps, with the increase in the right to freedom of expression after fifty years of authoritarianism. These freedoms have invigorated Tunisian society and allowed for debate and the publication of ideas which were once censored. The country is still in a preliminary democratic stage, trying to figure out how to manage difference in order to live together in a civil and democratic state.[16]

Without trying to describe these movements arising

in the new open political climate as minority or marginal, it is important to identify the existence of a Salafist/rigorist/radical reading of Islam that views women, and their status, as targets within Tunisian society. There are several gender issues that extremist and violent extremist groups have mobilized around, including the Code of Personal Status (CPS), the re-emergence of 'traditional' marriage, gender segregation, women in public spaces, women's dress, and female genital mutilation.

In the context of the increasing openness of radical and conservative discourses, gender has been central. First, debates on the Constitution in 2011 and 2014 on individual freedoms and the status of women caused controversy. The Code of Personal Status (CPS) has also been the subject of multiple campaigns of denigration by extremist and fundamentalist groups, intending to water it down. It is considered by a faction of society as contrary to the precepts of Islam. To such groups, the CPS is a symbol of the modern (read non-Islamic) state founded by President Bourguiba. These campaigns criticize the code for having freed women and destroyed families. They blame the liberation of women for having destroyed the traditional concept of a model family.

Second, there have been attempts to reform marriage to more 'traditional' lines, taking it out of the purview of the state. One example has been the (re)appearance of the so-called 'Orfi' marriage (or traditional, unregistered marriages), especially among young Salafists.[17] It should be noted that customary marriage is a moral contract, typically performed verbally, which often has no legal value. It can be abolished at any time by the man and offers

[15] Emanuela Dalmasso and Francesco Cavatorta, "Democracy, Civil Liberties and the Role of Religion after the Arab Awakening: Constitutional Reforms in Tunisia and Morocco,'' Mediterranean Politics 18, no. 2 (2013): 225-41.

[16] A national consensus seems to be established on the civil and democratic character of the state. The new constitution is its crystallization.

[17] B. Cherif, "Le mariage coutumier gagne du terrain chez les salafistes tunisiens''[Customary marriage is gaining ground among Tunisian Salafists], Mr. Kapitalis. 30 January 2013, http://www.kapitalis.com/societe/14191-le-mariage-orfi-coutumier-gagne-du-terrain-chez-les-salafistes-tunisiens.html.

no guarantee of recognition for either the woman or any potential children. A further aspect of Islamist mobilizing around marriage has been agitation for the return of polygamy based on economic and religious arguments.

Third, fundamentalist and extremist organizations wish to challenge gender diversity (and promote gender segregation) in educational institutions (primary schools and kindergartens), in workplaces, in businesses, and also in Islamist political party meetings. In some jurisdictions, separate waiting lines for men and women have been observed, and in certain administrations we saw the complete separation of men and women.

Fourth, there has been several reports of physical and psychological violence related to the presence of women in public spaces. Women are considered a source of sexual temptation, according to 'awra'. Women's body have to be hidden. Several digital references attest to this point.[18]

Fifth, control over women's dress has been a touchstone for extremist propaganda. Social media has been used to spread propaganda and make public threats, there has also been accounts of encouraging women to cover themselves in some mosques. These campaigns have targeted either women's head and hair by encouraging them to wear the hijab, or cover the whole body by wearing the 'shari Libes'[19] or 'jilbab' or even the 'niqab.' These campaigns have tractions. For instance, one news source reported young girls going to creche wearing 'libres shari' and chanting 'Die from hatred' (Moutou bighaydhikom). Apparently, these protests have been orchestrated by foreign religious extremists with the support of the local community[20].

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[18] For example, see https://bit.ly/2KZbfre.

[19] Also known as "jilbab", is an Arabic term for a long-robed female Islamic garment often in black or other dark colours, covering the hair and the whole body, excluding only the feet and face.

[20] Slate Afrique, "Tunisie - Le prédicateur de trop?' [Tunisia – a state of excessive prayer], Slate Afrique, 22 September 2015, http://www.slateafrique.com/616619/tunisie-le-predicateur-de-trop

Sixth, there is evidence that the incidence of female genital mutilation, though unusual in Tunisia, has increased. This practice has been contested and sparked social debates. Sixty-six year old male politician Habib Ellouze, from the Islamist party Ennahdha, labelled female genital mutilation an 'aesthetic operation' sparking outcry.[21]

Female participants in violence against women and violent extremism

The role of women in extremist groups in the Middle East and North Africa appears to have changed significantly over the past 30 years. Women's roles, to be dutiful wives and good mothers—inculcating children with the precepts of Islam, has gradually expanded and diversified, particularly within ISIS. They now operate within various components of Jihadist groups: logistical support, active participation in recruitment, management of virtual communication, effective participation in combat with the use of weapons and execution of kamikaze operations.[22] In other words, the role allocated to women has gradually shifted away from traditional gender stereotypes. A new image of women has emerged, especially in propaganda, they are courageous, determined and seek to inspire and involve other women. For instance, in Tunisia, six women stood arm-in-arm to face the assault of the National Guard against their hide out in Tunis on the 24th of October 2014. In March 2016, during the attack on Ben Guerdana, several women also took part alongside their male counterparts.[23] All these examples illustrate this new profile of women for whom jihadism is, as it is for

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[21] Le Monde, "Un député Tunisien critiqué pour avoir qualifié l'excision d'opération esthétique'' [A Tunisian MP criticized for calling female circumcision an aesthetic operation], Le Monde, 11 March 2013, https://www.lemonde.fr/tunisie/article/2013/03/11/un-depute-tunisien-critique-pour-avoir-qualifie-l-excision-d-operation-esthetique_1846106_1466522.html

[22] Laura Sjoberg and Caron Gentry, "Reduced to bad sex: Narratives of violent women from the Bible to the war on Terror,' International Relations 22, 1 (2008): 5-23, DOI: 10.1177/0047117807087240

[23] Hamza, "Femmes jihadistes, actrices à part entière ou simples victimes?'

men, a deliberate, calculated choice, not necessarily forced upon them, that requires analysis and whose underlying mechanisms will have to be understood. Information on these women is still very limited. Qualitative and quantitative research will need to be conducted amongst this population to better identify their profiles, status and motivations and the extent to which they pose a threat to national, regional and international security.

Alongside these new roles and images of empowered women, inside violent extremist groups, violence against Tunisian women has been recorded. Several testimonies and secondary sources prove its existence. For example, a 17-year-old Tunisian woman named Ines who fled to Syria, states that she married five new husbands (in jihad al nikah) each week.[24] Marriage in this case, only lasts a few hours and its main objective, according to extremist propaganda sources, is to support the morale of the 'spouse' fighting by responding to his sexual 'needs.' In return, the young woman will gain access to Jannah (paradise).

As mentioned, violence against women is a reality described, quantified and widely studied in the world and in Tunisia. The gender approach has described its mechanisms and processes. Such violence is exacerbated and can reach extreme thresholds when it is 'justified' and integrated into ultra-conservative ideology and political currents, which have exploited the environmental conservatism in Tunisian society and instrumentalized religion.

3. PROCESSES THAT MAY EXPLAIN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Explaining the mechanisms underlying the link between violent extremism and violence against women seems to require a distinction between two different categories of facts. On one hand, women can be victims of violent extremism, which can be addressed using the gender approach and the nature of violent extremism ideology. We discuss socio-cultural, psychosocial and, finally, individual factors.

Cultural factors

Three cultural factors are important to analyzing the link between violent extremism and violence against women: a sexist socio-cultural milieu; religious literatures; and cultural gender roles. All these factors (may) lay the foundations or justify violence against women.

Violent extremists take advantage of a socio-cultural context that discriminates against women to develop even more violent discourse and practices. Violence against women is rooted in sexism and patriarchy. Women are targeted simply because they are women. The socio-cultural characteristics attributed to the female sex are historically linked to alleged physical, mental, psychological, and emotional weakness. This has resulted in a lower status than that of men who, on the other hand, have benefited from historically positive characteristics which position them as superior and dominant.

A macro reading of violence against women is qualified according to the specific contexts in which the male-female relationship and patriarchal societies create a fertile ground in which conservative ideologies are easily established, accentuating male domination. Social constructs of femininity and masculinity distinguish the status and role of each gender.[25] Femininity is associated with a subordinate social status fulfilling specific roles that are mainly confined to private spheres. Masculinity, on the other hand, maintains a dominant status, taking on socially valued roles, essentially evolving in public external spheres.

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[24] Naliba Hamza, "Femmes jihadistes, actrices à part entière ou simples victimes?' [Jihadist women, actresses in their own right or mere victims?] (Tunis, 2016.).

[25] Françoise Héritier, Masculin, Féminin, la pensée de la difference [Male, Female, the thought of difference] (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1996).

Religion

Extremist ideology draws fragments of knowledge from various sources - such as religion, history, science, according to their strategic interests. Extremists in Tunisia encourage submission to god's will. In particular, Sunni texts and doctrines have been the inspiration of many radical contemporary movements that promote the ideal of a 'model woman', who is dedicated in the fight against apostates and the establishment of the Islamic State.[26] After 2011, religious literature and extremist texts became widely available in Tunisia.[27] Religious literature has been developed to encourage women to take part in jihadist action, stating that it is an obligation for every woman who wants to submit to God's will (Ben Salah Aliri).[28] Importantly, in this literature, violence against women is also 'justified', through offering a gender biased, and warped, reading of Islam.

The vision of women in extremist ideology is nuanced according to the degree of radicalism. Differentiated roles, inequalities, the dominance of men, are prerogative in both ideological currents known as 'moderate' and 'radical'. One of the variants is to reduce women to their bodily dimension by confining women in the role of genitor and/or sexual object. Out of all these roles, the role of the parent is the most valued.[29]

Women are otherwise still defined by relationships or their position in the family (sister, mother, daughter, wife). When this type of ideal becomes a religious belief, it becomes necessary for believers, men and women alike to accept and submit to it.

Relatedly, extremists encourage women's submission to religious authority, that is, religious men who represent religious authority. We must remember that religious authority was used in Tunisia by political powers such as President Bourguiba and President Ben Ali for an extended period. After the 2011 revolution, religious authority under the control of the state had difficulty regaining credibility with Tunisian citizens.

This submission to religious authority is particularly clear in media. After 2011, the emergence of religious personalities and leaders has become a major issue, who have encouraged violence. Media platforms such as TV channels, radio channels, have been used to spread religious ideology. Preachers, namely from Egypt and the Gulf, made their presence and religious interpretation known publicly.[30]

Violence by extremism, as propagated through cultural justification, is symbolic, psychological, sexual, economic, and physical.[31] The degree of violence varies from 'ordinary' to 'extreme' violence according to the strategic and tactical objectives of the political currents behind them. The difference in the degree or violence tolerated in no way affects the foundations of this thinking regarding women.

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[26] Social thought (...) filters and integrates only the elements of information or events that strengthen and reinforce its approach and its path. See Marcel Bromberg and Alain Trognon, Psychologie sociale [Social psychology] (Malakoff: Dunod, 2004). M. Aburumman and H. Abuhnia, "Adoratrices du Jihad. Groupement de femmes d'Al Qaida à Daesh'' [Worshippers of Jihad. Groups of women from Al Qaida to Daesh] (Jordan, 2015).

[27] Chaima Bsibes, "Tunisie, Foire du livre 2012: Forte présence du livre religieux'' [Tunisia, Book Fair 2012: Strong presence of religious literature], Mr. Tekiano, 11 November 2012, https://www.tekiano.com/2012/11/11/tunisie-foire-du-livre-2012-forte-presence-du-livre-religieux/

[28] Aburumman et Abuhnia. "Adoratrices du Jihad.'

[29] Rached Ghanouchi, La femme entre le Coran et la réalité des musulmans [Women between the Koran and the reality of Muslims] (Tunis: 2012).

[30] Stanley Milgram's work on obedience and authority provides some insight into these issues. This work highlighted the disastrous consequences that an authority perceived as credible and legitimate can have on people who fit into a hierarchical structure linked to this authority. Stanley Milgram, Soumission à l'autorité [Submission to authority] (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1976).

[31] Symbolic violence, as defined by Pierre Bourdieu, is expressed through unequal power relationships. Psychological violence is a form of mental or emotional violence that harms one psychological well-being.

Ideological and political factors

Ideological and political factors identified here include socio-cultural environments, socio-economic marginalization, and a lack of women's political participation. This section analyzes violence against women in the public space, considering how violence expressed in different forms (i.e. political, economic and social marginalization) contributes to their recruitment in different ways.

Extremists benefit from social climate 'conducive' to radicalization. After 2011, social and regional inequalities intensified, economic and social crises multiplied, unmet aspirations rose to a high level, resulting in extreme frustration, a sense of exclusion and persecution, which had the potential to evolve into 'deviating behaviour.'[32] According to Merton, "deviant behaviour is a symptom of dissociation between goals and the means to achieve them.'[33] For some, the mismatch of life objectives and the means available can be resolved in various forms such as fraud, delinquency or violent extremism.

A second aspect of social climate that likely increases women's involvement in extremism is socio-economic marginalization. According to Al Gharbi, poverty, socio-economic and political marginalization are the main causes of the increase of Tunisian women involved in violent extremism.[34] In 2011, 66.3% of young women in Tunisia stated they were not working. It took a year or longer for 50% of female graduates to find a job but only 32% of their male counterparts experiences the same difficulty. According to Gaâloul, President of the International Centre for Strategic, Security and Military Studies (CIESSM), these community-based

'marginalized' women become 'leaders' by engaging in violence and terrorist operations.[35] This position offers them recognition, visibility as well as financial and religious rewards.

A third social factor in rising extremism is the lack of women's political participation, which may foster a more gender equal and inclusive environment. On a political level, the European Union's 'Gender Profile of Tunisia' demonstrated that the mobilization of women during and after the revolution did not translate into reality, out of 1,500 of the different decision-making positions available only 7% are held by women.[36] There is therefore a significant gap between the capacity for engagement and the mobilization of Tunisian women and their effective representation in political institutions.

A fourth factor is that extremists offer 'solutions' to socially justice minded women. According to a study by Bouzar et al., which focuses on the radicalization of several hundred women who joined jihadist groups active in Syria. A common point emerges from interviews; amongst various radical trajectories we find a strong desire for social commitment tinged with altruism.[37] Radicalized women find a different system of values in their new ideology, a framework that they have not been able to find previously along with a feeling of belonging, being part of a just cause and, by extension, they become an independent person in perpetual interaction with others, in other words they 'exist' in a different manner than before. These women feel they are serving a cause that they are working towards something right; through violent extremism and the possible creation of a new Islamic state, they endorse the defense of Muslims repressed all around the world and in Syria specifically.

[32] Thierry Toutin, "Sentiment de mal-être et de frustration'' [Feelings of pain and frustration], Criminalistique 1 (2018): 21-25, https://www.cairn.info/revue-criminalistique-2018-1-page-21.htm

[33] Toutin, "Sentiment de mal-être et de frustration,'' 23.

[34] Iqbàl Al Gharbi, "De la femme kamikaze au Djihad du sexe: une guerre faite sur le corps des femmes'' [From suicide bomber to sex jihad: a war on women's bodies] (Tunis: Université la Zitouna, 2015). http://womeninwar.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Beirut/7/Iqbal%20Al-Gharbi%20-%20De%20la%20femme%20kamikaze%20au%20Djihad%20du%20sexe.pdf

[35] Hamza, "Femmes jihadistes, actrices à part entière ou simples victimes?''

[36] Boutheina Gribaa and Giorgia Depaoli, "Profil gender de Tunisia'' [Gender Profile of Tunisia] (Tunis : Government of Tunisia and European Union, 2014), http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/tunisia/documents/page_content/profil_genretunisie_2014_courte_fr.pdf

[37] Dounia Bouzar, La vie après Daesh [Life after Daesh] (Ivry-sur-Seine: Workshop Editions, 2015).

Psychosocial factors

At the individual level, revolt against a sexist society can be part of women's motivations to joining violent extremist groups. There is an equal amount of intrigue and revulsion surrounding extremely violent women due to the fact that depictions of violence are associated with masculinity. The growth in number of Tunisian women involved in Islamist currents calls into question the stereotypes and misperceptions that women serve only in civilian roles in terrorist networks. Matthieu, marked by the testimony of these women said in his book: "They are not weak women, they are lionesses. They have a history, a social experience, a density."[38] Extremists capitalize on some women's desire for homogenous world view that is exclusionary. According to Boutih, the desire for anti-conformism and singularisation are undeniably part of women's motivation for joining jihadist groups.[39] This could be due to the inability to build a good image of themselves in the face of the ideals proposed by society, namely in terms of performance and consumption. Investing in other cultural ideals empowers them and restores a previously flawed image of themselves "a real breeding ground for all fanaticism."[40] Thus, women go through a process of "disaffiliation, reaffiliation and belonging."[41] As a result, newly radicalized women are trying to impose their new standards on those around them. It is a question of "claiming and affirming one's belonging to a counter-model, a counter-culture, which opposes the traditional figures of authority."[42] They are a key vector for cultural and religious transmission.

At the level of primary socialization, a failure of the family system, or the breaking down of traditional family structures are preyed on by recruiters. Recruiters speeches tend to highlight the need to act; this collides with many young women's familiar experiences which have often been marked by failure or even violence. Khosrokhavar highlights the strong recurrence of 'decapitated' families among the jihad candidates' pool in this context.[43] Thus, we see young woman taking out their feelings of loss, abandonment, misunderstanding, frustration and victimization on the external world. In crises, comes a 'search for excess' to fill the sense of emptiness and the fragility of narcissistic foundations which renders its relation to belief precarious, "exacerbating the desire for indifference and eternity and his quest for primary security."[44] According to Duhamel and Ledrait, the externalization of family conflict in which young women are often disempowered, leads them to imagine a life where they are "officers of order and justice, with idealized values that allow them to feel free from their family, while keeping the benefits of childhood."[45] This commitment pushes women to take risks in life at the height of internal anguish. This is one of the reasons why they embark on an adventure, making them heroines, "offering them the opportunity to escape the mediocrity and anonymity of their daily lives to join an elite [group]."[46]

[38] Matthieu Suc, Femmes de djihadistes: au cœur du terrorisme français: récit [Wives of jihadists: at the heart of French terrorism: a story] (Paris: Fayard, 2016).

[39] Thierry Toutin, "Quête identitaire et repli Communautaire'' [Searching for identity and Community Withdrawal], Criminalistique 1 (2018): 26-30, https://www.cairn.info/revue-criminalistique-2018-1-page-26.htm

[40] Jean Chambry, "Regard d'un psychiatre sur le processus psychique de la radicalisation'' [A Psychiatrist's Look at the Psychic Process of Radicalisation], Rhizome 59, 1 (2016): 74-77. DOI: 10.3917/rhiz.059.0074.

[41] National Institute for Higher Studies of Security and Justice, "Radicalisation islamiste et filières djihadistes: Prévenir détecter et traiter'' [Islamist Radicalization and Jihadist Channels: Prevention, detection and treatment] (Paris: Strategic Diagnostic Group Number 3, 26th National Session, 2015).

[42] Hamza, "Femmes jihadistes, actrices à part entière ou simples victimes?''

[43] Farhad Khosrokhavar et al., "La prison face au Jihad'' [Prison in the face of Jihad]. Esprit Editions 2 (2016): 58-71, https://www.cairn.info/revue-esprit-2016-11-page-58.htm?try_download=1; Pechriggl, "Corps transfigurés. Stratifications de l'imaginaire des sexes/genres.''

[44] Vincent Di Rocco and Magali Ravit,"Une croyance devenue folle'' [Belief gone mad]. New psychosociology journal 16, 2 (2013): 87-94. DOI: 10.3917/nrp.016.0087.

[45] Cindy Duhamel and Alexandre Ledrait, "Djihad au féminin: promesse d'une solution aux éprouvés pubertaires'' [Feminine Jihad: promise of a solution to the proven pubertal] Adolescence 35, 2 (2017): 413-432. https://www.cairn.info/revue-adolescence-2017-2-page-413.htm

[46] Quoted by Toutin, "Quête identitaire et repli Communautaire,'' p.24.

Linked to the above discussion of family trauma and breakdown, violent extremism among women can be the direct or indirect consequence of traumatic violence. Boutih describes in his research on the topic a profile of women "having experienced difficult childhoods, linked to the absence of their father, sometimes linked to abuse."[47] Certain individuals may be suicidal or have severe mental health problems. Duhamel and Ledrait reports that many radicalized women have a history of self-harm or attempted suicide. This violence, initially turned against oneself, seems to be externalized and instrumentalized by radicalization, turning towards other dehumanized and objectified persons.[48] According to this same reference, the image of the 'disbeliever' in this context ensures a counter-phobic function in the sense that it allows anxiety towards death to attach itself to another object, in this case hatred will suffice in order to relieve a state of internal tension between the desire and fear of death.[49] The struggle against the fear of dying is translated into a feeling of omnipotence and individual internal suffering and is thus projected onto the social scene

Still at the level of the family, in some hyper-protective or patriarchal families, women who are subjected to 'social stigma' for example for having a sexual relationship outside marriage, will be offered 'redemption' via martyrdom. The possibility of death in an attack would allow them to restore the honor of the family, some would see this as an example of radicalization reconciling with society. Failure to protect one's 'honor', in theory, is no longer a crime in Tunisia, although recent studies on the subject are lacking, sexuality outside marriage remains socially and legally prohibited. Parallels with the work

mentioned above for girls who 'lose their honor' in Tunisia are plausible. Vengeance can be a potent individual radicalization factor.[50]

It is plausible that the social expectation that women should marry may drive women to join violent extremist groups. That's because marriage is seen as an ultimate goal of social existence for women, above involvement in violent extremism. This is reflected in studies carried out in Tunisia[51] showing the importance of marriage for women. For women, status is conditioned by marriage. Being a single woman in Tunisia is not accepted by society and therefore viewed as negative by young girls and women. Remaining a virgin until you are married is still a major concern in Tunisia for some families and some young girls. This reveals the great difficulty, for these girls, to have love and sex outside the marital framework.

As a result, an informal network of marriage agencies have emerged in Syria and Iraq under Islamic State control. The propaganda of agencies outlines the promise of marriage for young women looking for a husband but also the added bonus of being accepted by God and gaining entry to paradise.[52] By contrast, for men sexual relations outside of marriage are valued and accepted. For men, single status is less burdensome than it is for women.[53] Thus, it is likely these networks facilitate men having casual sex. There has been some evidence on the existence of these agencies in Tunisia, but we currently do not have any reports or data in this area.

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[47] Cited by Toutin, "Quête identitaire et repli Communautaire," 27.
[48] Duhamel and Ledrait, "Djihad au féminin: promesse d'une solution aux éprouvés pubertaires."
[49] Duhamel and Ledrait, "Djihad au féminin: promesse d'une solution aux éprouvés pubertaires."

[50] Fethi Benslama, La guerre des subjectivités en islam [The war of subjectivities in Islam] (Fecamp: Line Editions, 2014).

[51] Yosra Nemlaghi, "Des femmes militent pour le retour de la polygamie en Tunisie" [Women are campaigning for the return of polygamy to Tunisia], Mr. Kapitalis, 21 January 2019, http://kapitalis.com/tunisie/2019/01/21/des-femmes-militent-pour-le-retour-de-la-polygamie-en-tunisie/

[52] Hamza, "Femmes jihadistes, actrices à part entière ou simples victimes?"

[53] See the Palestinian song "jasadak-hom"

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is essential that we continue to investigate and conduct research on the root causes of radicalization among women, the effects of propaganda, its rationale and ways to better combat violence against women. Targeted responses to protect vulnerable groups and addressed gender inequality in marginalized regions should also be prioritized to develop new initiatives, including preventative programs.

There are several concepts and terms used, such as citizenship, secularism (laïcité) and integration, when considering plans and actions for cooperation in what has become a real communitarian issue. These concepts and terms should be scrutinized and better understood for consistency.

Several preventive and authoritative actions against violent extremism have been undertaken in Tunisia. Each department, according to its prerogatives and scope of action, has proposed and carried out actions to this end. A strategy was also drawn up to coordinate the efforts of various stakeholders to facilitate a common vision and coordinated actions.

At the request of CREDIF, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the National Youth Observatory we have reviewed reports on violent extremism programmes provided and formulated a classification of relevant actions in five axes:

• Descriptive: the objective is to acquire the means for a better description of violent extremism. Statistics, databases, surveys and reports were compiled by various stakeholders.

• Protective: strengthening border security, on-ground interventions to dismantle active or dormant terrorist cells.

• Reflective: an effort to share available knowledge. Conferences, study days and seminars have been organized in this context.

• Formative: training sessions to equip stakeholders with tools to prevent the spread extremist ideology and support those who have been indoctrinated or at increased risk of indoctrination (young children, vulnerable families, etc.).

• Legislation: new anti-terror laws have been promulgated and laws must now aim towards strengthening gender equality. Government should implement singular, and specific educational strategies designed to counter the phenomena of radicalization, particularly among women who are victims of violence.

• More research is needed into the whether young women who lose their 'honor' or status may seek martyrdom in a violent extremism.

For Government

• The government should develop and implement gender-sensitive programmes for de-radicalization, and the rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremists. Relevant UN agencies should contribute and ensure gender specific dimensions are addressed to ensure gender equality and not reinforce gender stereotypes.

• Civil society, including women and youth groups and experts should be invited regularly by government institutions and Rule of Law actors to share knowledge and ideas on how to best address the needs and work towards social cohesion.

• Gender equality is key to prevent and combat violent extremism. Initiatives to promote gender equality should be developed and implemented with diverse stakeholders at the national and local levels for it to be accepted and internalized by Tunisian society and not perceived as a threat to the identity of the country or politically instrumentalized.

- Current legislative efforts will have to be maintained, laws should acts as a benchmark for society separating the legal from the illegal: special monitoring mechanisms should be established at the local and national level to ensure the implementation of the law in particular in regards with women's rights, as well as trainings on gender-specific dimensions of violence and responses at the local levels.

- Encourage egalitarian attitudes to women through sponsored and visible participation of women in the public sphere (police, military, sports, media, etc.) and decision-making processes at the political level.

- Include civil society in the design of prevention and countering programmes, including women groups.

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