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Migration, race, and gender: the policing of subversive solidarity actors in Morocco

Migration, race et genre : contrôler les acteurs engagés dans une solidarité subversive au Maroc

الهجرة والعِرق والجَندر : مراقبة الجهات الفاعلة المنخرطة في التضامن التخريبي في المغرب

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Résumés

English Français العربية
The policing of racialised migrant people in Morocco and across the Maghreb has been violent since the 1990s. The intimidation of those who support migrant people and seek to denounce human rights abuses against them has become an important dimension of border control. This article investigates the policing of "subversive solidarity actors": human rights defenders and activists who publicly or covertly engage in a critical stance on migration control policies and practices in Morocco. These forms of activism are considered a threat by the state because they make *visible* the brutality of migration governance and control in the country, which the state seeks to conceal. As objects of state mistrust and suspicion, solidarity actors experience everyday acts of intimidation and criminalisation.

Drawing on ethnographic material and interviews with migrant people and subversive solidarity actors, this article demonstrates how these solidarity actors - much like migrant people themselves - are differentially targeted according to intersectional differences. Racist and gendered bordering logics characteristic of migration management seep into the differential policing of those who dare act or speak out in support of migrants' rights. Race and gender provoke particular policing behaviours which are reinforced when people engage in politics or acts of solidarity considered subversive. This is reinforced by the persistence of racial hierarchies of domination in post-colonial Morocco, which still bear the legacy of the active enslavement of Black people in the country and the legacy of the country's colonisation by Europeans.

First, honing in on racial difference, the article sheds light on the differential policing of Black, Moroccan and white-European solidarity actors. While Black solidarity actors are often migrant people who have regularised their status and settled in Morocco, their decision to engage in subversive solidarity work marks them as "ungrateful guests" and relegates them to a position of vulnerability in which their administrative status is compromised. In contrast, white Europeans in Morocco tend to benefit from privileges and freedoms, including within the bureaucratic realm. Those engaging in subversive acts of solidarity may experience state intimidation or punitive acts of administrative exclusion from the country, however these usually (with some stark exceptions) amount to better treatment relative to the experiences of their Black and Moroccan counterparts. Finally, Moroccans engaging in subversive solidarity action are framed as "internal enemies" to the state and are hyper-aware that punitive action might be set in motion against them at any moment.

Second, this article focuses on gender, which also plays an important role in determining the ways in which solidarity actors are policed and their scope of action. Gender inequalities remain deeply entrenched in Morocco and social norms profoundly gendered. Particularly for women, activism is considered deviant, giving rise to greater police and social scrutiny of their acts and attempts to govern their behaviour. While men tend to face professional threats as insidious punishment for their activism, attacks on women more often target their family or intimate life.

This article emphasises the importance of taking the policing of solidarity actors into account to understand the policing of migration more broadly, stressing how the racist and gendered policing of migrant people bleeds into the disciplining of those who support them. We conclude with a discussion of how this policing impacts subversive solidarity actors and networks, by instilling fear and hindering (coordinated) action. While some interviewees demonstrated an awareness of both intersectional differences and overlapping experiences, we call for solidarity actors to mobilise these differences and experiences to strengthen their action on migration issues and their ability to withstand intimidation from state authorities.

Le contrôle policier des personnes migrantes racisées au Maroc et dans les pays du Maghreb, depuis les années 1990, s'avère violent. L'intimidation de celles et ceux qui soutiennent les personnes migrantes et cherchent à dénoncer la violation de leurs droits est devenue un volet important du contrôle aux frontières. Cet article s'intéresse au contrôle et à l'intimidation des acteurs engagés dans une « solidarité subversive » : défenseurs des droits de l'homme et militant.e.s engagé.e.s qui critiquent, publiquement ou de façon discrète, les politiques et pratiques de contrôle migratoire au Maroc. L'État considère ces formes de militantisme menaçantes, car elles rendent visible la brutalité du contrôle des personnes migrantes que l'État cherche à dissimuler. Les militant.e.s deviennent donc des objets de méfiance et de suspicion et subissent quotidiennement des actes d'intimidation et de criminalisation.

S'appuyant sur des observations ethnographiques et des entretiens avec des personnes migrantes et des personnes engagées dans une forme de solidarité « subversive », cet article démontre que ces personnes solidaires - tout comme les personnes migrantes - sont différemment ciblées en fonction de leurs caractéristiques intersectionnelles. Les logiques de gouvernance racistes et genrées qui caractérisent la gestion de la migration aux frontières s'infiltrent dans la manière de gouverner ceux qui osent agir ou s'exprimer en faveur des droits des personnes migrantes. Des considérations de race et de genre influencent les comportements policiers, et ces comportements sont renforcés lorsque les personnes visées sont engagées dans des actions politiques ou des actes de solidarité considérés comme subversifs. Cette dynamique est renforcée par la persistance de hiérarchies raciales dans la société marocaine postcoloniale, qui porte à la fois l'héritage de l'esclavage des personnes racisées noires dans le pays et celui de la colonisation européenne.

Dans un premier temps, cet article aborde la question de la différence raciale en démontrant les différentes façons dont les personnes solidaires sont contrôlées, selon qu'elles sont noires, marocaines ou blanches-européennes. Alors que les solidaires racisé.e.s noir.e.s sont souvent des personnes migrantes régularisées et installées au Maroc, le fait qu'ils et elles s'engagent dans des pratiques et discours de solidarité « subversive » les démarque comme étant des « hôtes ingrats » et les relègue à une position de vulnérabilité dans laquelle leur statut administratif est compromis. À l'opposé, les Européens blancs au Maroc ont tendance à bénéficier de privilèges et de libertés (notamment au sein de la bureaucratie). Celles et ceux qui s'engagent dans des actes de solidarité « subversifs » peuvent être victimes d'intimidation par l'État ou d'actes punitifs d'exclusion administrative du pays, mais en général (à quelques exceptions près) les conséquences sont moins brutales comparées aux expériences de leurs homologues noirs et marocains. Enfin, les Marocain.es qui s'engagent dans des actes de solidarité subversive sont perçu.es comme des « ennemis internes » de l'État, et sont hyperconscients qu'ils et elles pourraient faire l'objet de punition à tout moment.

Dans un second temps, cet article s'intéresse au genre, qui joue également un rôle important dans la façon de contrôler les personnes solidaires et leur champ d'action. L'inégalité des sexes reste profondément enracinée au Maroc, et les normes sociales sont profondément genrées. L'activisme des femmes en particulier est considéré comme un comportement déviant, donnant lieu à un contrôle policier et social accru de leurs actes, tentant de modifier leur comportement. Alors que les hommes ont tendance à faire l'objet de menaces professionnelles pour les dissuader de leur activisme, les femmes font plutôt face à des formes d'intimidation qui ciblent leur famille ou leur vie intime.

L'article insiste sur l'importance de prendre en compte les stratégies de contrôle des acteurs et actrices solidaires pour appréhender de façon plus large les stratégies de contrôle des personnes migrantes, et souligne que le maintien de l'ordre raciste et genré des personnes migrantes s'applique aussi au contrôle de ceux et celles qui les soutiennent. Nous concluons par une discussion des effets de ce maintien de l'ordre sur les acteurs, les actrices, et les réseaux solidaires « subversifs », notamment la création d'un sentiment général de peur qui entrave l'action individuelle et collective. La plupart des personnes solidaires interrogées avaient conscience des différences intersectionnelles qui influent sur la façon dont elles sont contrôlées. Nous appelons les personnes solidaires à mobiliser ces différences intersectionnelles et leurs expériences communes pour renforcer leur action sur les questions migratoires et leur capacité à résister à l'intimidation des autorités étatiques.

في دولة المَغرب ودول المَغرب الكبير اِتَّسَمَت منذ سنوات [المصنَّفين ضِمن عِرق racisées،] إنَّ سيطرة الشرطة على المهاجرين المُعتَصَرين التسعينيات بالعنف. لقد أصبح تَرهيبُ الذين يدعمون المهاجرين ويسعون إلى التنديد بانتهاك حقوقهم جانباً مهماً من أمن الحدود. يركِّز هذا المقالُ على مراقبةِ الفاعلين المشاركين في «التضامن التخريبي» وترهيبِهم : وهم المدافعون عن حقوق الإنسان والناشطون الملتزمون الذين ينتقدون، علناً أو سِرّاً، سياساتِ مراقبة الهجرة في المغرب وممارساتِها. إذْ تُعتبِر الدولةُ هذه الأشكالَ من النشاط تهديداً لأنها تُظهِر وحشيةَ السيطرة على المهاجرين التي تسعى الدولة إلى إخفائها. ولذلك يصبح الناشطون والناشطاتُ موضعَ ريبةٍ وعدمَ ثِقةٍ ويعانون يومياً من أعمال ترهيب وتجريم.

وبالاعتماد على الملاحظات الإثنوغرافية والمقابلات مع أشخاص مهاجرين وأشخاص مشاركين في أحد أشكال التضامن «التخريبي»، يُبَيّن هذا المقالُ أن هؤلاء الأشخاصَ المتضامنين - كالمهاجرين تماماً - يتم استهدافهم بشكل مختلف بحسب خصائصهم المتقاطعة. إنَّ منطق الحوكمة العنصري والجندري الذي يُميّز إدارةَ الهجرة على الحدود يتسلّل إلى طريقة حُكْم الذين يجرؤون على التصرُّف أو التعبير لصالح حقوق المهاجرين. فتؤثّر اعتباراتُ العِرق والجَندَر على سلوك الشرطة، وتتعزَّز هذه السلوكياتُ عندما ينخرط الأشخاصُ المستهدَفون في أعمالٍ سياسيةٍ أو أعمالٍ تضامُنٍ تُعتبَر تخريبيةً. وتتعزَّز هذه الديناميكيةُ من خلال استمرار التسلسلات الهرمية العنصرية في المجتمع المغربي ما بعد الاستعمار والذي يَحمِلُ إرثَين في آنٍ واحد : إرثَ عبوديةِ الأشخاص المُصنَّفين عُنصرياً سُوداً [أو المُعتَصَرين سُوداً] في البلاد وإرثَ الاستعمار الأوروبي.

أولاً، يتناول هذا المقالُ مسألةَ الاختلاف العنصري من خلال إظهار مختلَفِ الطرق التي يتِمُّ بها التحكُّمُ بالأشخاص المتضامنين، بحسب كونِهم سوداً أو مغاربةً أو بِيضاً أوروبيين. وفي حين أن المتضامنين

المُعتَصَرين سوداً هُم غالباً مهاجرون نظاميون مستقِرُّون في المغرب فإن حقيقة انخراطِهم في ممارسات وخطابات تضامنية «تخريبية» تَجعلُهم «ضيوفاً ناكرين للجميل» وتضعهم في موقف هَشّ يتعرض فيه وضعهم الإداري للخطر. وفي المقابل، يميل الأوروبيون البيض في المغرب إلى التمتع بالامتيازات والحريات (وخاصةً داخِلَ البيروقراطية). وقد يَكونُ المنخرطون والمنخرطاتُ في أعمال تضامُنٍ «تخريبية» ضحيةَ ترهيبِ الدولة أو ضحيةَ أعمال عقابية

للاستبعاد الإداري من البلاد، ولكن بشكل عام (مع استثناءات قليلة) تكون العواقبُ أقلَّ وحشيةً مقارنةً بتجارُب نُظرائهم السود والمغاربة. وأخيرا، يُنظر إلى المغاربة الذين ينخرطون في أعمال تضامن تخريبية على أنهم «أعداء داخليون» للدولة، وهم يدركون تماماً أنهم قد يتعرضون للعقاب في أي وقت.

ثانياً، يركِّز هذا المقالُ على الجَندَر [النوع الاجتماعي] الذي يلعب أيضاً دوراً مهماً في طريقة مراقبة المُتضامنين وميدانِ عملهم. ولا تزال عدمُ المساواة بين الجنسين متجذِّرةً بعمق في المغرب، كما أن الأعرافَ الاجتماعية جَندريةً [مرتكزةً على النوع الاجتماعي] بشكل عميق. إذْ يُنظَر إلى نشاط النساء على وجه الخصوص على أنه سلوك منحرف يؤدّي إلى زيادة الرقابة البوليسية والاجتماعية على أفعالهن، في محاولة لتعديل سلوكهنَّ. وبينما يميل الرجال إلى التعرض للتهديدات المِهَنيَّة لثنيهم عن نشاطهم، تميل النساء إلى مواجهة أشكال من الترهيب الذي يستهدف عائلاتهن أو حياتهن الخاصة.

يؤكد المقالُ على أهمية مراعاة استراتيجيات مراقبة الفاعلين والفاعلات المتضامنين من أجل فَهم أوسعَ لاستراتيجيات مراقبة المهاجرين، ويؤكّد على أن الحفاظ على النظام العنصري والجندري للمهاجرين ينطبق أيضاً على مراقبة الأشخاص الذين يدعمونهم. ونختتمُ بمناقشةِ آثارِ حِفظِ النظامِ هذا على الفاعلين والفاعلات وعلى شبكات التضامن «التخريبية»، ولا سيما خَلْق شعورٍ عام بالخوف يعيق العملَ الفردي والجماعي. فمعظمُ الأشخاص المتضامنين الذين تمت مقابلتهم كانوا على دراية بالاختلافات المتقاطعة التي توثِّر على كيفية مراقبتهم. ونحن ندعو الأشخاص المتضامنين إلى استثمار هذه الاختلافات المتقاطعة وتجاربهم المشتركة لتعزيز عملهم على قضايا الهجرة وقدرتِهم على مقاومة ترهيب سلطات الدولة.

Entrées d'index

Mots-clés : Maroc, personnes solidaires, migration, criminalisation, intersectionnalité
Keywords: Morocco, solidarity actors, migration, criminalisation, intersectionality
فهرس الكلمات المفتاحية: المغرب، شعب متضامن، الهجرة، التجريم، التقاطع

Texte intégral

> The ways activists are attacked [by the authorities] are racialized. [...] White people face expulsion through long procedures which are difficult to appeal. [...] Black activists are considered irregular and deported. Moroccans are accused of compromising domestic security - a very heavy accusation which can go far.
>
> Woman human rights advocate,[1] Rabat, May 2022

1 The policing of racialised migrant people seeking to reach Morocco or cross its borders with Europe has been violent since the 1990s (GADEM, 2018 ; Hannoum, 2019 ; Maâ, 2022). The intimidation of those who support migrant people in Morocco and denounce human rights abuses has become an important dimension of border control. The year 2013 marked a shift in migration politics: the intensity of this policing let up somewhat and channels of communication between the Moroccan authorities, migrant people, and civil society initiatives working to support them grew possible (e.g. regularisation campaigns). However, this was short-lived, and the intensity of criminalisation regained momentum, partly due to reinforced pressure and incentivisation from the European Union (EU) for Morocco to curb migration (European Commission, 2018; Refugee Rights Europe, 2019). Many civil society actors identified 2018 as a key date (the year of an intergovernmental conference on migration hosted in Marrakesh) marking the freezing of relationships with Moroccan authorities and an increase in state repression against migrants.

2 It is important to distinguish the “migration industry” made of up humanitarian actors (e.g. relief agencies ; faith-based organisations), often accused of facilitating the containment of migrant people through aid (Gazzotti, 2021), from human rights defenders (e.g. advocacy groups, civil rights organisations) who reject humanitarian neutrality in favour of criticism of - and sometimes outright attempts to subvert - state practices and policies. This is not to say that all humanitarian actors are complicit in border control, but that they accommodate rather than challenge state bordering practices. This article focuses on human rights defenders and activists, whom we refer to as “subversive solidarity actors”. Subversive solidarity actors share the common position of publicly or covertly defying state migration control policies, discourses, and practices. These critical actors come in many forms, ranging from activist members and employees of grassroots collectives to research centres and human rights organisations which sometimes form fragile alliances.[2] They include Moroccan women and men as well as Black migrant activists and Europeans. These actors tend to express their critical standpoint through the documentation of human rights abuses and their publication on social media or in reports, the organisation of political events such as protests and sit-ins, the programming of cultural events for a wider public etc.[3] Because they make *visible* (Bachelet and Palladino, 2023) the brutality of migration control in Morocco, these forms of activism pose a threat to the state which, as explored in the article, responds with insidious forms of policing deployed to stifle dissent and intimidate subversive solidarity actors - targeting them in different ways depending on markers such as gender and race.

3 Like people migrating informally, subversive solidarity actors are objects of state suspicion. They are subject to omnipresent policing that becomes an inextricable part of their lives. While there has been a significant increase in scholarly attention to border control and its impact on migrant people, less attention has been devoted to how border control impacts migrant people’s

support networks, particularly beyond Europe. Journalists and scholars have documented the spectacularised criminalisation of (predominantly white, western) solidarity actors involved in search and rescue operations (Aris Escarcena, 2021; López-Sala & Barbero, 2021), yet less attention has been paid to their everyday policing. Our article contributes to the growing corpus of studies on bordering logics by exploring how they are refracted in the everyday policing of migrant support networks that sit beyond the direct targets of border control.

4 While the focus of this article is on subversive solidarity actors and activists, Moroccan citizens who speak out on a wide variety of social and political issues have long since experienced state and police repression (Smolin, 2013). Human rights abuses against dissenters during the "Years of Lead"[4] remain vivid in the minds of Moroccans (Rhani *et al.*, 2022). In the 1990s, the Moroccan state began to shift away from physical repression as a tool for social control ; yet policing, in explicit and insidious forms, persists (Mohsen-Finan, 2007 ; Rhani, 2021 ; Naimi, 2016 ; Rhani *et al.*, 2022 ; De Smet & Kahlaoui, 2021 ; HRW, 2022). The contemporary policing of migrant support networks must be understood as playing out within a wider climate of crackdown on dissent. The same may be said of countries across the Maghreb, especially Tunisia, which has seen a return of the authoritarian state since the 2021 coup, whereby free speech is understood as a threat to the regime and identity politics have been reinforced (Geisser, 2023). Facilitated by a sense of impunity, racist state and civilian violence against Black migrant people has grown (Chemlali & El Ghali, 2022). Those who publicly support migrant people also increasingly come under fire (Geisser, 2023). Scholarly writing on the policing of migration in these countries has shown little interest in the targeting of migrant support networks, even though such policing impedes research on migratory issues (Gazzotti, 2023). This article seeks to address this gap by drawing on interviews with subversive solidarity actors in Morocco in 2022.[5] It is the result of insights gained through ethnographic fieldwork carried out by Bachelet since 2011 and Hagan since 2019.[6] It contributes to our understandings of *who* the Moroccan state targets in its efforts to stifle migration and *how,* with a focus on insidious practice of everyday criminalisation (e.g. intimidation, surveillance etc) faced by subversive actors rather than direct and formal processes (e.g. trials). A detailed account of the actors enforcing this repression (e.g. decision-making, enforcement) is beyond the scope of this paper. However, informants stressed the central role of the Ministry of the Interior and identified the collaboration of various Moroccan state actors (*wali*, *moqaddem*, *Sûreté Nationale*) and other coopted non-state actors (e.g. banks) in policing their activities. They often identified the source of such policing in vague terms ("the state", "the authorities", or "the Makhzen") - which only intensified the effects of the threat. This article is focused on how such policing is experienced by subversive actors, often in their intimate lives. It demonstrates how racist and gendered bordering logics seep into the differential management of those who dare act or speak out in support of migrants' rights.

5 The identity categories we discuss should not be reified. They overlap and are not exhaustive, as argued by scholars and activists who apply an intersectional lens to the workings of systems of power and discrimination (Crenshaw, 1991; Yacob-Haliso, 2016). Drawing inspiration from such an approach, this article first centres race and then gender, because these are the identifying traits most identified by the subversive solidarity actors we spoke to as relevant to their policing. It is important to stress that within each "profile" of critical solidarity actors, a range of positionalities and experiences emerge: class, sexual orientation, religion (along other factors) inform how these people are policed, though these cannot be fully addressed here due to space limitations. Finally, we discuss how differential modes of policing informed by race and gender impact the landscape of migration activism in Morocco, and the forms that critical solidarity action takes under these conditions.

Hierarchies that stick: Policing through a racial lens

6 As feminist scholars have long argued, geopolitics play out at the intimate scale of the body and everyday experience (Hyndman, 2001 ; Dowler & Sharp, 2001 ; Mountz 2018). Borders are issues of particular geopolitical tension as sites where human dynamics are viscerally governed by appearance (e.g. skin colour), and where the impact of politics on the intimate is vividly felt. As Sahraoui observes, "migration control at the border shapes the corporeal experiences of migrant persons differently, owing to classed, gendered and racialised understandings of otherness" (2020, p.908 ; see also Mountz, 2018). Indeed, "power operates through intersectional patterns of domination" (Sahraoui, 2020, p.908). Like migrating informally, the stakes of becoming involved in activism in Morocco are highly dependent on these characteristics.

7 Policing is “an institution of social sorting. Its business is maintaining boundaries, patrolling social borders, and mediating questions of membership and belonging” (Loader, 2023, p.314). It partakes in (re)producing social categories like race, which often informs violent police action (*ibid*). While the notion of policing is predominantly understood in the sense of the controlling and punitive acts of state actors and namely police forces, it also refers to *social policing*, informed by racial and gendered norms, and bound up in the logic of policing along lines of difference performed by representatives of the state. Racial and gendered hierarchies are the product of historical systems of domination such as enslavement and colonialism, and profoundly influence experiences of migration and migration policing patterns of the present (Gross-Wyrtzen & El Yacoubi, 2022; Mayblin & Turner, 2021). Like many other nations, racial biases in Morocco and the Maghreb stem from the region’s historical role in the slave trade (El Hamel, 2012). Above even religious difference, race operates as a key marker of difference in the region (Ennaji, 1999; Alexander, 2019). These racial biases *persist* in part because of the “culture of silence” in Morocco, a “refusal to engage in discussions about slavery, racial attitudes, and gender issues” (El Hamel, 2012, p.13-14). Post-colonial Morocco still bears the legacy of the active enslavement of Black people, as well as the legacy of the country’s colonial past in which hierarchical difference between European colonisers and Moroccans was enforced along racial lines.

8 Many Moroccans, as articulated in Hannoum’s work on Tangier (2019), tend not to identify as African, preferring to see themselves as closer to Europeans. This self-image is reinforced by the state’s criminalisation of Black people, which encourages locals to distance themselves from their “Africanness”. The history of European colonialism in Morocco is still palpable, maintaining another form of racialized hierarchy reinforced by white solidarity actors and researchers (Gazzotti, 2023). This hierarchy benefits these groups, vesting them with a sense of legitimacy and security while attributing them a certain power of access to interlocutors and spaces (*ibid*).

9 Below, we ask how race provokes particular policing behaviours, which are reinforced when people engage in acts of solidarity considered subversive. While physical policing methods such as arrests and forced removals are commonly experienced by migrant people in Morocco, the policing that critical solidarity actors face is (usually) less physical, deployed through surveillance and intimidation or defamation.[7] Both modes of policing have a psychological impact which manifests as an omnipresent sense of fear and insecurity, be it of displacement and violence (in the case of migrant people), or of reputational damage or legal action (in the case of solidarity actors). In the later sections of the article, we return to the issue of gender.

“Ungrateful guests”: the threat of de-regularization and deportation for Black migrant activists

10 People racially profiled as “sub-Saharan migrants” are violently policed, experiencing dispossession, physical violence and forced dispersal designed to exhaust and deter them (GADEM, 2018; Gazzotti & Hagan, 2021). Race is central to policing, and to the construction of illegality within border regimes (De Genova, 2017; Isakjee *et al.*, 2020). The notion of human illegality is informed by the production of Blackness “as inferior, non-indigenous, and wedded to histories of racial slavery” (Gross-Wyrtzen 2022, p.3).

11 These dynamics are mirrored in the policing of human rights activists from a Black migrant background. Migrants’ associations have played an important role in exposing state violence against migrant people (Alioua, 2009; Bachelet, 2018). The period following the mediatized large-scale crossing attempts by migrant people (Migreurop, 2007) at the Moroccan–Spanish border in 2005 saw a rise in civil society mobilisation and the creation of new migrant associations (Bachelet, 2018). Migrant organising (alongside civil society) in the 2000s and early 2010s was successful in influencing the 2013 National Strategy of Immigration and Asylum (SNIA) (Üstübici, 2016; Magallanes-Gonzalez, 2021) seeking to implement a more “humanist” vision of migration.

12 Nonetheless, Black migrants with a regularised status are often treated as if, by engaging in activism, they have relinquished the privileges associated with having an official status. They inhabit a double subjectivity that places them at the intersection of several forms of policing. As a male migrant activist explained: “If you’re a migrant *and* an activist, the authorities show you no respect.” They may be subjected to forced arrest and dispersal. Their administrative status may be compromised. A man from Western Africa acting as leader of an association described:

> We live in fear from one day to the next. There's no difference between the activist and the migrant who lives in the forest. We are treated the same way. When a migrant arrives from the forest to the town, he might be stopped by the *moqatar*. And you, you have been in town for years but you're late renewing your residency card, and you're arrested too. [...] You're in the bus together and both displaced. Even though you have papers, it doesn't make any difference.

13 This activist is punished through their relegation to the category of undocumented migrant and the violence this entails. This emphasises how policing in Morocco is informed by racist assumptions. While migrant people can work to regularise their status, their appearance means they remain in a category governed by suspicion. The authorities use fear - threatening to push migrant activists out of their regularised status - to discipline them and deploy the tools (violent, arbitrary arrest, deportation) usually used against Black migrants (GADEM 2018) against activists without valid immigration documents. A male West African activist explained that migrant activists suspect that administrative difficulties relating to their residency cards are compounded by their activism: "they create the conditions to put you in a weak position, one from which you won't be able to speak out. If you don't have the [residency] card then you know that your strength is limited." Others agreed:

> There's huge psychological violence against activists. [...] It's difficult to explain, it's hard to challenge. It's the perfect ammunition: they make you paperless, they keep you in it, you cannot work. You can't do anything else. You don't realise - and then twenty years have passed but you have no future.

> I don't even have a *récépissé* [for the residency card application I submitted]. They tell me my application is being processed. It's all very stressful. They put you in an uncertain situation to hold you back, so you rethink your activist commitments. [...] The authorities have everyone's file and they're waiting for you, they know that if you're an activist they need to block you when you come to renew your status.

14 In the face of such pressures on their lives, the stakes of getting involved in subversive solidarity are high for Black migrant activists - and not easily offset by accessing supportive networks of organisations and activists. The insights discussed here were gathered amongst male migrant leaders of associations - in the Moroccan context, it is easier to access men as they have a monopoly over leadership of migrant associations. We turn to the experiences of Black women in the last section.

The intimidation of white European solidarity actors

15 Analyses of race in migration studies have focused on people profiled as Black migrants. But the role of *whiteness* in bordering processes is often overlooked, mirroring how the presence of white migrants tends to be valorised (Gazzotti, 2021). It is often considered that "the Black body of the West African migrant announces its polluting outsideness, [but] the European white body adds to the modernity of the city, its cosmopolitanism" (Hannoum 2019, p.148). The white solidarity actors we spoke to perceived themselves to benefit from a privileged status in Morocco - in the Moroccan migration context, these are mostly European citizens. In contrast to the Black migrant person, the embodied privilege of the white migrant person means their presence and freedom of mobility are assumed - an "inflated privilege" granted to Global North passport holders by the postcolonial border (Gazzotti 2023). This is visible in how Europeans often reside and work in Morocco by accumulating 90-day tourist visas instead of applying for a residency permit: a breach of domestic law that often goes unnoticed or unpunished (Gazzotti, 2021).

16 Yet, white Europeans engaging in subversive solidarity in Morocco may experience deterrence through intimidation and be subjected to violence. The examples raised by respondents were described as less common and often indirect (e.g. wiretapping). A European woman working for a human rights initiative spoke of having issues renewing her residency card. She was questioned about her "political affiliation" and involvement with some associations. When she gave the name of the initiative she was involved in, the clerk wrote it on her application in block capitals. "He wanted me to *know* that he knew," she explained, intimidated by the gesture. While Europeans generally experience few challenges to their presence in Morocco, the past decade has seen several activists, journalists and researchers removed from the country and/or banned from returning on the grounds that they carried out investigations unauthorised, or that they represent a threat to public order. For example, Spanish Jesuit priest and activist Esteban Velázquez, who supported migrant people living in the forests near the border city of Nador and spoke out

publicly against the authorities, was told that his residency card had been revoked and refused re-entry to Morocco from Melilla in 2016 (López-Sala & Barbero, 2021; Maâ, 2022). As one female respondent explained, the processes via which foreigners of this profile are expelled from Morocco often are not formally justified. State authorities draw from a repertoire of administrative sanctions to criminalise and penalise dissenters (López-Sala & Barbero, 2021; Olmo & Urda, 2015). Moreover, those targeted often prefer not to speak out or challenge decisions to avoid further issues, hoping for a resolution. While expeditive expulsion (or not being allowed back in) is unsettling (especially for residents), it is usually non-violent and does not involve arrest and detention, hence is "moderate" compared with the risks faced by Black migrant activists and Moroccans. The stakes involved in being intimidated or returned home tend to have shorter-term repercussions.

17 One jarring case of intimidation however sought to send a message to subversive solidarity actors at large. Helena Maleno Garzón experienced fierce and unrelenting criminalisation through the 2000s and 2010s, demonstrating how in some examples, white human rights defenders may also face brutal policing. A Tangier resident, Maleno Garzón was active in exposing human rights violations carried out against migrant people. She experienced harassment and intimidation, including a violent physical attack in 2014. In 2017, she received an anonymous photograph of a loaded gun, with a note telling her to "keep quiet" as she was "making the authorities uncomfortable" (López-Sala & Barbero, 2021, p.687). In 2017, seemingly in reaction to her support of migrant people attempting the sea crossing to Spain via a helpline, she was prosecuted for human trafficking and facilitating smuggling - first in Spain then Morocco - cases which were overturned. In 2021, she was deported from Morocco to Spain, separating her from her underage daughter for several weeks.

"Internal enemies": the uneasy position of Moroccan solidarity actors

18 The landscape of organisations working on migration issues has flourished since the mid-2000s, but those involved often express disillusion regarding their ability to impact the Moroccan political system. As the head of a human rights organisation, a Moroccan man, put it:

> Nothing moves forward. [...] There's no counter-power, [...] we organise seminars, workshops, formulate recommendations... but none of it becomes law. Things have been blocked for years - on women's rights, freedom of religion... Everyone's at the police's mercy.

19 Beyond resistance to change, in cases where associations are critical, they risk administrative, legal, or reputational crackdowns by the state. As a Moroccan woman employed by a foreign funding organisation put it: "The people nearest the fire are the people working in the field. And those who work in Arabic."

20 As citizens, Moroccans are both well-positioned to speak out against the state and particularly vulnerable to its wrath, since the state seeks to protect its image as rights-respecting at all costs (Naimi, 2016). Although Moroccans supporting migrants have thus far not faced spectacularized trials, the general climate of repression in the country means the threat looms over them nonetheless. They are hyper-aware that punitive action could be set in motion at any moment, reacting to acts and opinions that defy the authorities. The fear of criminalisation is exacerbated by regular state threats to human rights activism in the country (Rhani *et al.*, 2022; De Smet and El Kahlaoui, 2021), as well as crackdowns on journalists who dare to defend protesters or expose state corruption - for example Omar Radi, a journalist questionably charged with espionage, indecent assault, and rape, and sentenced to six years in prison (HRW, 2022). As a female Moroccan human rights defender described, "for Moroccans [criminalisation] is more perverse: they charge you for things that have nothing to do with your activism."

21 While this issue is mostly experienced by members of local associations and outspoken grassroots human rights organisations, it is also a concern for Moroccans working for international NGOs and agencies. As Geisser writes about Tunisia, the notion that international NGOs and local solidarity associations represent a treacherous "internal enemy" is palpable (2023, p.12). This sentiment is particularly projected onto Moroccan employees. The president of one such NGO, a Moroccan man, described:

> With every report that comes out, we are accused of being foreign agents, [...] whereas we are telling truths that everyone is aware of. [...] This climate scares nice, normal citizens who would like to act in service of humanity, to help foreigners - but they're afraid when they see the authorities lock up human rights defenders.

22 While one might expect that employees of international agencies benefit from greater protection from policing, interviews reveal that they, too, are often made to feel afraid of the repercussions of their work. A Moroccan woman working for a foreign organisation funding projects in Morocco explained:

> We feel we're being watched. One day I received a call from the Ministry of the Interior. They were nice enough, but I freaked out. [...] They told me: "you live there, your Dad's job is this, your Mum lives there, your brother there, your sister there..."

23 While this form of intimidation troubled her, she considered it somewhat expected for a person working on controversial issues, and went on to nuance her experience: "at least we face less pressure than the associations [...] we face a lot of risks, but I don't think we face the same risks they do." Yet, she expressed helplessness in dealing with the threat of policing because of its unknowability: "What's the solution? Everyone is working in these conditions. Some pay the price for others. Others are more critical than us, more dangerous. But the risk is still there."

Women on the move: Policing Black migrant women and activists

24 Gender remains a prominent line of difference informing social policing in Morocco. Despite legal reforms in the 2000s designed to ensure greater "male-female equilibrium" (Chafai 2017, p.827) and widespread appetite for gender equality, inequalities remain entrenched and social norms profoundly gendered. Moroccan women experience greater social scrutiny than men and face more pressure regarding their behaviour and the activities it is appropriate (or not) for them to be involved in (*ibid*.; Cheikh, 2017). The maintenance of a gendered and heteronormative order is guaranteed both through social relations, discriminations, microaggressions (Chafai, 2017), and through the everyday work of the police who enforce "proper" behaviour (Cheikh & Pluta, p.2023). This moral policing is informed by Islamic religious morals and ideology regarding the sanctity of the family unit, and reinforces a certain social order and women's position within it (Cheikh, 2017). What follows discusses how Black migrant women are policed, before emphasising how a patriarchal order manifests in the policing of Moroccan and white western women working on migration issues.

25 While gender dynamics have historically been overlooked in migration studies, and although representations of border crossers remain predominantly male, a growing corpus explores the feminisation of migration (Stock 2012; Bosworth *et al.*, 2018; Tyszler 2019; Schmol 2020; Freedman *et al.* 2023; Hagan 2023). Migrant women in Morocco face similar challenges to those experienced by their male counterparts, although they tend to be less susceptible to arrest and forced removal in urban spaces (except in periods of great tension) (GADEM, 2018, p.33). The Groupe antiraciste d'accompagnement et de défense des étrangers et migrants (GADEM) for example reported that in summer 2018, women were displaced even if pregnant or with children, which is illegal according to Morocco's own 02-03 law (*ibid*, p.34). Tyszler's vivid ethnographic work sheds light on the violence and exclusion migrant women in Morocco often experience as a result of gendered power relations exacerbated by violent border policing practices (2019 ; 2021).

26 Migrant women tend to live more socially hidden lives than men "out of fear of both reprisals on the part of armed government authorities and harassment and brutality by the civilian population" (Mekki-Berrada, 2019, 1182). They benefit from greater access to shelter but occupy an invisible status "significantly associated with emotional distress and anxiety" (*ibid*). They can be seen begging in the streets with children, but rarely in public social spaces, except sites of access to humanitarian support. Their sense of insecurity is often linked to the widespread assumption that Black migrant women are involved in sex work, and their frequent experiences of sexual harassment (Gross-Wyrtzen, 2020; Tyszler, 2019). Such assumptions are a clear product of cultural stereotyping and of the racialisation of migrant women (Angel-Ajani, 2003; Bosworth *et al.*, 2018); the over-sexualisation of Black migrant women in Morocco appears to stem from the same historically entrenched racial and gendered power dynamics that underpinned enslavement. Within a profoundly patriarchal society, Black female slaves were subjected to sexual violence as well as to economic exploitation and physical labor (El Hamel, 2012).

27 The stereotyping of female migrants and policing through the targeting of their sexuality also plays out in the policing of the behaviour of female human rights defenders and activists. Though there are some vocal exceptions, fewer women from a migration background are publicly active in the defence of migrant rights in Morocco than men. Irrespective of their skills and experience, their role in organisations set up by migrant people is often reduced to interventions on issues

regarding “women, children and families”, illustrating how the intersection of race and gender may undermine women’s voice in the public sphere.

“Moral deviance”: the policing of Moroccan women’s solidarity

28 Moroccan women involved in human rights activism consider their struggles to be deeply interlinked with those of Black migrant women. As one woman working for a human rights organisation put it: “migrants’ rights can’t be protected if rights generally aren’t protected.” Another Moroccan woman working for a Moroccan organisation observed that gender and women’s issues are too often an after-thought in activist circles, with issues like freedom of expression or access to healthcare taking a more central role than gender equality. She emphasised the importance of centring this issue, arguing that the rights and struggles of migrant and Moroccan women are two sides of the same coin:

> [The rights of] migrant women and Moroccan women are linked. Each person within a given territory should be able to access rights, but for migrant women, vulnerability criteria and discrimination are twice as bad compared with what Moroccan women face. Especially if they are Black, alone, unmarried, or unmarried with children. Addressing questions relating to migrant women helps push forward the laws that affect Moroccan women, [...] like civil partnership, freedom of choice, not getting married. Addressing these issues is also beneficial for Moroccan women. [...] Defending human rights is unconditional - it isn’t nationality-specific.

29 This emphasises how and why activism, and namely Moroccan women’s activism, represents a greater threat to the state than humanitarian action, centring women’s rights and seeking to erase concepts of racial or national difference upon which Morocco’s social order depends. Cheikh & Pluta (2023) observe how Moroccan policing seeks to guarantee and reinforce a “patriarchal order”, which spills over into the ways that women activists are policed. Many Moroccan women advocating for migrants’ rights described experiencing profoundly gendered policing:

> There are some pressures that are difficult to talk about, and that others don’t appreciate or aren’t aware of. For women, it often plays out through their families, they are submitted to pressures that are underacknowledged.

30 As another female advocate emphasised, while men tend to face professional threats as insidious punishment for their activism, attacks on women often target their family or intimate life. Another member of a human rights association described how she was followed by the authorities, after which her male partner received a phone call from “people from the Ministry of the Interior” who told him: “your wife needs to calm down.” Such incidents are enraging and unsettling for women, who consider themselves independent from their male partners, yet whom the authorities seek to police through them. By encroaching on people’s private lives, it prompts fear in women of being targeted for behaviour considered inappropriate. As a Moroccan employee at a human rights association described:

> In the beginning, I was afraid. I would ask myself if I was at any risk. I live with my boyfriend, but we’re not married... Are they going to come and create problems for us? You always hear stories like that in Morocco.

31 In her work on prostitution and the policing of morality in Morocco, Cheikh (2017) identifies how women’s extramarital sexual practice is differentially illegalised according to perceived social class. While these laws generally target women from underprivileged backgrounds, when they are used to target women from higher socio-economic classes it tends to be a way of penalising them for their political activism (*ibid*). This strategy of moral policing seeks to maintain a heteronormative social order: it is used as an indirect tool to police these women regardless of their (most often) belonging to a socio-economic class considered more “respectable” (Cheikh, 2017 ; Cheikh & Pluta, 2023). While activism is a different form of “deviant” behaviour than that usually associated with the policing of women, the following interview extracts draw a clear link between the punitive practices set in motion to police not just the body but also principles and outspokenness.

32 Close police monitoring of people in their private lives can evoke social pressure from others, the repercussions of which are particularly painful for women. As a woman activist explained:

> It can create havoc [*la zizanie*] with the neighbours when they notice someone is being surveilled by the *mqaddem*. They see plainclothes police in front of your door.

33 This has repercussions on one's social reputation:

> Your family sees insults on your Facebook profile. You hesitate whether to even have a public profile because there's more pressure. It puts questions in people's minds. [...] People make comments, say you're defending women's issues because you yourself are unmarried and in favour of extra-marital sex, that you chose that path.

34 The same woman described how her work in defence of (migrant and Moroccan) women's rights led some to perceive her as morally deviant ; showing how this policing strategy seeks to dictate women's behaviours through fear.

35 The state is closely linked to certain mass media outlets in Morocco (Smolin, 2013). Beyond women's family and neighbours, attacks on their character may be made public: a female human rights defender identified that some media channels (e.g. ChoufTV) with close ties to the royal palace or Moroccan security and intelligence services, are prone to spreading rumours (HRW, 2022), especially about female activists. She explained that they would reinforce defamatory claims, making it seem women had been caught doing something "wrong", like smoking or having unmarried sex. She also described that the feminist "#MeToo" movement was co-opted by the authorities in Morocco, who would accuse male activists of sexual violence, knowing that this crime would make it particularly difficult for other activists and civil society to publicly rally in support.

36 While this mode of policing behaviour predominantly affects Moroccan women, as a form of social policing it also affects white, European women visibly engaged in human rights work or activism. Helena Maleno Garzón for example reported being called a "Spanish whore" when attacked in Tangier (López-Sala & Barbero, 2021). On several occasions during research, Hagan, a white European woman, experienced gender-based slurs from local male passers-by when seen in public with Black migrant men.

Conclusion

37 This article enriches analyses of violent border politics through a focus on the criminalisation and policing of subversive solidarity actors providing support to migrant people. Whilst such policing is enacted in different ways and with various implications, it operates along similar lines to the policing of migrant people. The article emphasises the importance of anchoring analysis of policing and bordering in local race and gender dynamics - a belated but crucial focus in scholarship on migration in the Maghreb and beyond. We emphasise that a clear racial hierarchy dictates one's ability to move and speak out, with white Europeans inhabiting a privileged position relative to Moroccan and Black migrant activists. When it comes to speaking out, Moroccans and Black activists are severely targeted: as treacherous citizens in the first case ; as disobedient and ungrateful "guests" of the state in the latter. This article contributes to filling an important gap in knowledge regarding how punitive state action is deployed against women engaging in human rights work or activism in Morocco.

38 The policing of subversive solidarity actors takes place within a space marked by conflicting interests and uneasy collaboration amongst European and Maghrebi countries. Repression and intimidation aimed at limiting action and stifling public challenges to migration politics in Morocco unfolds amidst a fraught political context. Civil society's room for manoeuvre is impeded by sensitive political issues; dissent is punished in both ordinary and spectacular ways. The different modes of policing highlighted in this article are effective, notably by inducing fear and self-censorship. This is articulated around different key issues depending on racial and gendered aspects (e.g. intimacy and family life for women, professional life for Moroccan men etc.) but also apprehended differently by our respondents (exhortations not to feel any fear amongst Black migrant activists ; detailed discussion of affective states amongst women). Yet, solidarity actors are not without resources. They devise tactics to respond to the policing highlighted above and form alliances to reach common goals. For instance, associations running into administrative or financial difficulties (i.e. not issued with the paperwork to legalise their existence) can find support in more established organisations.

39 Such arrangements, however, are precarious. Intense policing has nefarious consequences on solidarity and the possibility for joint action amongst diverse groups and organisations - a purposeful effect of policing (Hagan and Bachelet 2023). Trust can break down amongst solidarity actors. Despite their awareness of the strategies used by the authorities, doubts about others might seep into their minds because of reputational attacks and other forms of policing: "Is this person really involved in human-trafficking?" Finally, attacks on individuals or organisations do not necessarily lead to public displays of solidarity. Activists have decried being

left alone, with other organisations failing to defend them for fear of falling into the firing line themselves.

40 Our focus on race, gender and their intersection stresses how the potential for finding common ground and devising joint initiatives on (the policing of) migration can be enhanced through the recognition of multiple and overlapping subjectivities amongst subversive solidarity actors (e.g. common experiences amongst women amidst the patriarchal order). Realising such a promise requires an awareness of and response to the ways racial and gender dynamics are internalised and reproduced by solidarity actors (e.g. limited place for Black women's voices). Further research might shed light on other intersecting factors (e.g. class, sexual orientation) on these dynamics. While many interviewees demonstrated an awareness of both intersectional differences and overlapping experiences, we call for solidarity actors to mobilise these differences and experiences to strengthen their action and their ability to withstand intimidation from state authorities.

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Notes

1 We have anonymised all respondents and withdrawn details (e.g. nationality, organisation) for safeguarding. Most interview quotations have been translated by the authors into English from French.

2 As developed in the conclusion, collaboration between diverse actors is crucial for advocacy work on migration, however repression from the Moroccan authorities is also effective at putting pressure on coordinated action (see Hagan and Bachelet 2023).

3 The question of what constitutes and distinguishes practices of care and solidarity towards migrant people in Morocco goes beyond the scope of this article but deserves further analysis .

4 Post-independence period (1960s-1980s) during which the Moroccan regime imprisoned tens of thousands of dissidents, and many political opponents to the monarchy were tortured or disappeared (Slyomovics 2016).

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6 35 individual interviews with actors (17 women/18 men ; 7 Europeans, mostly French ; 12 Western-Central African ; 16 North Africans, mostly Moroccan) based at 20 different civil society organisations (migrant associations, Moroccan NGOs, international organisations, media, funders etc.) based across Morocco (Rabat, Casablanca, Tangier, Nador, Oujda, and Laayoune).

7 Similar practices are enforced in other countries including France, where migrant people are violently policed and their supporters subjected to intimidation (Hagan and Bachelet 2023).

Pour citer cet article

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