



The 1984 uprising in Nador: more than just a bread revolt

El levantamiento de 1984 en Nador: más que una revuelta del pan

Ángela SUÁREZ-COLLADO

Universidad de Salamanca

ascollado@usal.es

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2288-8867>

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Abstract

This article analyzes the origin, evolution, and consequences of the 1984 uprising in the case of Nador province, in the Rif region of Northern Morocco. By focusing on the structural causes that affected this mobilization at the local level, the sectors of the population that participated in it, and the framework of the demands expressed during the protest cycle, this study finds that not only the economic constraints, but also the peripheral situation of the region and its weak integration into the structure of the state constitute explicative factors of the outbreak of this revolt in the Rif.

Keywords: protest, 1984 revolt, Rif, Nador, Morocco, political repression.



Resumen

Este artículo analiza el origen, evolución y consecuencias de la revuelta de 1984 en el Rif, particularmente en la provincia de Nador, situada en el norte de Marruecos. Para ello se presta atención tanto a las causas estructurales que afectaron a esta movilización a nivel local, como a los sectores de la población que participaron en ella y al marco de las reivindicaciones expresadas durante el ciclo de protesta. En el estudio se constata que las limitaciones económicas, la situación periférica de la región y su débil integración en la estructura del Estado constituyen factores explicativos del estallido de esta revuelta en el Rif.

Palabras clave: protesta, revuelta de 1984, Rif, Nador, Marruecos, represión política.

Introduction

The 1980s in Morocco was a period of economic restructuring and social crisis that prompted various outbreaks of popular protests, such as those that took place throughout January 1984 in different parts of the country. These uprisings, commonly known as the "bread revolts" or the "hunger revolts", had their origin not only in the suspension of subsidies for basic commodities or the reduction of state budgets in social benefits as it is popularly believed but also in the immobility of the political system and its unwillingness to ensure social reproduction and the circulation of elites (Desrués and Moyano, 1997). In the case of the Rif, these problems (El Ouariachi, 1981) were aggravated by the peripheral situation of the region and its weak integration into the economic and political structure of the state.

The Rif region as a periphery has sustained a relationship with the central power that has been characterized by the tension produced by the center's attempts to gain control over the periphery through the processes of state and nation-building, and the resistance of the periphery to this expansionism. These dynamics have helped to give rise to different "stages of escalation of peripheral aims" (Rokkan and Urwin, 1983). In the case of the Rif, this escalation has evolved from integrating petitions in the early years after independence to economic and cultural claims in the seventies and eighties and the final demand for political autonomy, broadly taken up after Mohammed VI took the throne in 1999. In this evolution, in addition to the 1984 revolt, other episodes of confrontation between the center and the periphery have occurred during the post-

colonial period, such as the 1958-1959¹, 1987², 2005³, and 2016-2017⁴ uprisings, showing the persistence of rooted long-standing grievances related to the region's cultural, social, economic, and political marginalization.

Against this background and the research objectives proposed in this special issue, this article aims to analyze to what extent the distinctiveness and the particular situation of the Rif influenced the origin, process, and consequences that the January 1984 uprising had in the case of Nador province. Focusing on the structural factors that affected this mobilization at the local level, the sectors of the population that participated in it, and the framework of the demands expressed during the protest cycle, this study seeks to answer two central questions: Did the 1984 Rif revolt have any distinct features compared to the protests occurred in other parts of the country? Did past local episodes of mobilization influence its form and development?

To do so, firstly, I will address the economic, social, and political context of Nador province at that time to frame and analyze its role and influence in the emergence of protests. Secondly, I will examine the genesis, evolution, and impact of the uprising in Nador, as well as the typology of actors involved in it, their position in the prevailing power structure, and the framework of their claims; finally, I will discuss the changes and continuities of this protest cycle from previous episodes in the Rif and concurrent ones in other parts of the country, as well as its impact on other subsequent mobilization experiences at the local level.

The methodology used in the investigation is based on the analysis of primary and secondary sources, including the memories of political activists and organizations, and Professor Jean-François Clément's research archive on urban revolts in Morocco, composed by the documents generated by him during his fieldwork in the country. Concerning the memories of activists and organizations of that period, were collected during the fieldwork I carried out for my doctoral thesis between 2007 and 2011 in the Rif. In the case of this article, I have considered interviews with activists belonging to political organizations that participated in the revolt, as well as with individuals who, as

¹ This revolt occurred between October 1958 to January 1959 and it was related to the combination of different factors that contributed to widespread general dissatisfaction in the aftermath of Morocco's independence: the collapse of the regional economy; the slow pace of integration with the southern zone; relative neglect by the state during the early years of independence; the under-development of education, infrastructure, and employment in the region; and the assignment of official positions to people from outside the region, most of them French-speaking Istiqlal Party supporters – the party in government – from the southern area (Ashford, 1961; Hart, 1976).

² In 1987 a new revolt erupted in Imzouren after the death of two young people by security forces. The disturbances were followed by numerous arrests, especially of members of the Marxist-Leninist movement in the region (Suárez-Collado, 2013).

³ Between April and October 2005, a cycle of protests took place in the village of Tamassint, where 1,900 families were still affected by the destruction caused by the earthquake of February 24, 2004. During these months there were numerous clashes between the population and the security forces, as well as injuries and arrests (Suárez-Collado, 2013).

⁴ The so-called Hirak movement emerged between October 2016 and July 2017 in the wake of the death of Mouhcine Fikri, a young fishmonger crushed by a rubbish truck after he had climbed in to retrieve goods seized by the police. This episode generated a wave of protests and confrontations with the authorities that evolved from rallies demanding justice for Fikri's death to a cycle of mass protests making socioeconomic and cultural claims (Suárez-Collado, 2017).

high school students at that time, participated in the protest. Thus, narratives of activists have been incorporated to examine how protesters frame their experiences, articulate their goals, and make sense of their actions to challenge dominant narratives and historical accounts. Moreover, material produced by political organizations involved in the 1984 uprising has also been examined, in particular the one produced by the Amazigh association *Intilaka Atakafia* and organizations of the Moroccan Marxist-Leninist Movement. Various existing chronologies on mobilizations and protests in North Africa and Morocco, general and specific academic literature on revolts and social movements in the country of research, and the history and politics of the Rif, as well as written and online press, were also consulted and analyzed. Process tracing (Collier, 2011) was used as a methodological tool to identify the relationships between the factors causing the mobilization and the mechanisms leading to the given outcome of the uprising in the particular context of the Rif, and more precisely in Nador province.

Nador before the 1984 riots: a periphery fraught with economic and social challenges

Since the country's independence in 1956, the Eastern Rif, the geographic region where Nador province is situated, had been affected by its peripheral location vis-a-vis the country's political and economic centre. At that time, it was one of the areas with the greatest deficits in terms of accessibility and communication in the kingdom (Guitouni, 1995), conditioning the region's development capabilities and strengthening its dependence on activities that were outside formal economic channels. Thus, smuggling, local trade and emigration were its main sources of wealth, as well as important transformative forces.

Firstly, smuggling with Melilla represented a central economic activity for the city and the province of Nador, as up to 15% of the population made a living off it (Santucci, 1984: 900)⁵. It also allowed the introduction of a wide variety of products into Nador, which contributed to the strengthening and expansion of local commerce. In this regard, by the mid-1980s, 68% of the city's jobs were linked to the tertiary sector and more than 20% of total employment was in the commercial sector, well above the national average of about 9% (Berriane and Hopfinger, 1999: 94-95). Both dynamics had helped to consolidate Nador city as the economic engine of the province and as an important pole of attraction for the population of nearby rural areas. As a result, the city had undergone important socio-demographic transformations, experiencing a substantial increase in its population⁶, and promoting the appearance of new population settlements and the creation of the urban conurbation known as "The Great Nador".

⁵ This percentage included both the younger segments of the population - up to 60% of smugglers were under 35 - and traders with big capital and professional smuggling networks (Berriane and Hopfinger, 1999: 100).

⁶ The population of Nador city grew from 17,583 in 1960 to over 60,000 in the early 1980s.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s the province of Nador had emerged as one of the main centres of emigration from Morocco to Europe. In the early 1980s, the province of Nador was the first labour exporting province in the country, having almost 50% of its active population abroad (El Ouariachi, 1981: 246), and its diaspora became an important local economic agent. This situation produced important transformations in the city, as it became a “transit station” for the emigrant families from the rural areas. This population movement was intended either to facilitate the possible departure of other family members, or to provide them with better conditions of accommodation and education (Berriane and Hopfinger 1999: 41). In any case, this migratory behaviour also had its impact on the spatial and economic structure of the town. On the one hand, migrant remittances had bolstered the urban growth of Nador and the transformation of small suburban areas into new urban centres (Berriane and Hopfinger, 1999: 50), not only contributing to the revitalization of the building and trade sectors, but also to the increase in land prices, which was much higher than in bigger cities such as Casablanca or Rabat⁷.

On the other hand, remittances from migrants had helped to increment household budgets, expanding purchasing power and transforming the consumption habits of those sectors of the local population with relatives abroad. This dynamic managed to generate strong dependency relationships, to the point that local resources could only satisfy one third of the consumption of these sectors (Clément, 1987: 140), as well as important internal inequalities between those families who had and those who did not have resources from abroad (Berriane and Hopfinger, 1999: 75). Similarly, the difficulty of finding jobs that were reasonably well paid within the province also caused wages to depreciate, both in relative and absolute terms, while the cost of living became more expensive (Seddon, 1986).

Beyond these wealth sources, the region's economy had major weaknesses affecting both agriculture and industry. From one side, the concatenation of several years of drought since 1979 had caused an enormous decrease in the agricultural yield, being extremely low in 1983 (Mcmurray, 2001: 174). From the other side, the provincial industrial activity had entered a recession, affected by the delay in the opening of the SONASID steel plant (Troin, 2002) and by the decrease in the SEFERIF mining production, due to the competition in the markets and the fall in the price of iron. This situation had led to the dismissal of most of its workers during the first half of the 1980s and the emergence of a tense social climate of shutdowns and strikes (Berriane and Hopfinger, 1999; Hilmi, 2008; Clément, 1987). In short, the 1984 Nador was a growing city that had undergone important socio-economic transformations, but still insufficiently prepared to face the new educational, social, and cultural demands of a population that, younger and better educated than previous generations, suffered from a severe situation of unemployment and limited social mobility in the region (El Ouariachi, 1981: 228).

From the state perspective, the situation was not better as since the early 1980s the country's economy had been suffering the consequences of an adverse set of

⁷ In 1984 the price per m² for the construction of single-family houses in the Casablanca-Rabat corridor was 1,200 dirhams and 1,500 dirhams for multi-family properties, while in Nador it was 2,000 and 3,000 dirhams, regardless of land use (Mcmurray, 2001: 162-163).

circumstances: a development policy excessively dependent on capital investment, the fall in phosphate prices, the strengthening of the dollar, the increase in competitiveness and protectionism by the European common market, and the cost of the war in the Western Sahara, which consumed between 40 and 45% of the state budget (McMurray, 2001; Seddon, 1984; Diouri, 2000). By then, the external debt was already at \$11 trillion, the balance of payments had turned negative, and the trade debt had worsened greatly over the previous decades (Seddon, 1984: 15). Neither the income from remittances nor the tourism revenues were sufficient to cover the economic deficit, and the country became dependent on foreign aid and credits (Seddon, 1984: 15).

It was against this backdrop that the IMF approved in 1983 a reform programme that Morocco had to implement in order to obtain new loans. These included a progressive devaluation of the dirham, the renegotiation of a part of the external debt, large cuts in public expenditure (including investment) and the elimination of subsidies on commodities (Seddon, 1984: 15). In response to international pressure, Morocco decided in August 1983 to address some of these demands by adopting several measures, including the devaluation of 10 per cent of the national currency, the imposition of a 500 dirham border tax on anyone crossing to Ceuta and Melilla, as well as the decision to reduce the contribution of the Public Treasury to the Compensation Fund and the suspension of commodity subsidies. The implementation of these measures resulted in a significant rise in prices and a sharp loss of purchasing power among the poorest sectors of the population. Thus, between July and October 1983, the food price index rose up to 10.6% and the general cost of living index climbed to 8% (Seddon, 1986). By December, the price of basic products had already risen by 30% for oil, 35% for flour, 18% for sugar, and up to 67% for butter (Clément, 1986), which was the final spark that triggered protests throughout January of the next year.

The outbreak and evolution of the popular uprising in Nador

Social unrest had begun at the local level in August 1983, when a border tax of 500 dirhams was established for anyone wishing to cross into Ceuta and Melilla. This measure had greatly reduced frontier traffic, leading to a price increase and a shortage of goods in the province's souks. This situation provoked several clashes at the border over the fall and great unrest among the population that arose once the protests began.

In the case of Nador, the mobilizations were initiated twelve days after they erupted in Marrakech and six days later than in the neighboring province of Al Hoceima. Actually, it was the violent repression that the armed forces exercised against the protesters in Al Hoceima (Diouri, 2000: 115) that drove the organization of the first marches in Nador⁸. There, the revolt evolved in two different phases: from January 17 to 19, with the conquest of the streets by the demonstrators; and from January 19 to 24, a period during

⁸ Social unrest had begun at the local level in August 1983, when a border tax of 500 dirhams was established for anyone wishing to cross into Ceuta and Melilla. This measure had greatly reduced frontier traffic, leading to a price increase and a shortage of goods in the province's souks. This situation provoked several clashes at the border over the fall and great unrest among the population that arose once the protests began. Available at <http://sawtechaabe.com/?p=311> [Access: June 2nd 2016].

which the violent repression of the state succeeded in deactivating the protests in the city and the rest of the province.

Furthermore, the mobilizations presented particular spatial dynamics, in which the peripheries, both urban and rural, played a leading role in the dynamization and continuity of the protests. At an urban level, the neighborhoods located on the outskirts of the city acted as catalysts for the marches during the first days. Likewise, these were the areas to which the demonstrators retreated when the repression increased in the city center. This was the case of the Aviation, Laari Cheikh, and Oualad Mimoun neighborhoods, areas located on the edges of the urban center that had expanded anarchically at the rhythm of population growth and under the influence of international migration and rural exodus (Berriane and Hopfinger, 1999: 37), as well as the Poblao neighborhood, where the poorest Moroccans had settled since the time of the Protectorate. These were the zones where the effects of remittances (pressure on land prices), rural emigration (rapid growth of the urban population), and the downturn of smuggling (with the Oualad Mimoun souk as the main place to buy goods from Melilla) had been most strongly felt.

Similarly, the bordering towns of the “Gran Nador” conurbation and other rural zones in the province served as an escape route for protesters when the repression and control exerted by security forces in Nador city increased. Thus, the 1984 riots in Nador described a pendulum movement from the periphery to the center and from the center to the periphery over both the urban space of Nador city and the territory of the province.

The first two days of protest in the city of Nador were led by high school students, as had been the case in other parts of the country. The agitation here started in schools located in the outskirts, such as the Al Matar High School in the Aviation district -near the airport-, whose students were suffering from its precarious conditions. Therefore, they not only assumed the general demand of abolishing the increase in high school fees but also incorporated their own: a better bus connection between the city center and the high school; the restoration of water; and better school supplies (Clément, 1987: 134). The marches were progressively extended to other schools and lycées in the city center, which began to be occupied by the army on Wednesday, January 18. This situation prompted the earliest open confrontations between demonstrators and the security forces deployed in the city and the first civilian casualty (Clément, 1987: 135).

Thursday, January 19 was the most violent session of the uprising in Nador and marked the beginning of five days of brutal police repression. The day began with the decision of the students of Al Matar and Alkyndi high schools not to return to classes and to continue with the protests in other neighboring towns. The number of Royal Gendarmerie and security force units had expanded in the city, making it safer to mobilize in other sites. It was then decided to use the weekly calendar of souks in the province to organize new mobilizations, as had been done in Al Hoceima (Clément, 1987). This modified the protest pattern in two directions: on the one hand, there was a decentralization of the dissent towards other nearby towns and rural areas; and on

the other hand, it fostered the incorporation and involvement of more population groups.

The first destination of the students was Zeghanghane's Thursday market, where barricades were set up to prevent the arrival of the security forces. It was in this town, about 7 kilometres far from Nador, where the first riots and injuries of the day occurred, also involving the peasants who were in the souk protesting against the rising cost of potato seeds (Clément, 1987: 135-136). The targets of the protesters were the market shops, whose owners refused to close down, and the local iron ore mining facilities, which had been severely affected by the many layoffs in previous years.

The protests moved throughout the day from the neighbouring towns of Nador to the city center, as new sectors of the population became involved. Until the early afternoon, schoolchildren and high school students continued leading the protests, gathering as many as 10,000 in the center of Nador. The mass of young people began to be joined by different groups of adults, particularly smugglers, impoverished by the closure of the border, the most disadvantaged strata, and unemployed people, until reaching 12,000 demonstrators. They gathered in the center of the city and managed to corner the security forces around the central police station and the administration buildings. From that moment on, the slogans ceased to denounce the rising cost of living and the increase in school fees and incorporated regionalist and anti-Moroccan regime proclamations: "Down with Hassan II!, Long live Abdelkrim!"; "Long live Abdelkrim! Long live the Republic!"⁹ (Clément, 1986, p. 181); "Too many prisons and palaces"; "To go to the war, you remember us, whereas, for living, you ignore us" (Clément 1987: 138).

In this spirit, some sources refer to more concrete proclamations of independence by the northern Berbers and the burning of flags by protestors (McMurray, 2003). Both issues were, according to several testimonies, reported in a document prepared by Mansouri Ben Ali and presented to Hassan II. The report underlined the risk that the mobilization could turn into an armed movement and the need to end it. This alleged intervention by Ben Ali was connected to the intensification of the repression in Nador during the following days¹⁰.

The violent actions on Thursday were directed towards state buildings (government headquarters), symbols of Western life and upper classes (beauty salons and Western clothing stores), the influence of immigrants (the city's most sophisticated cafés and the Royal Air Maroc office), urban equipment (telephone lines, street lights) and signs of economic inequality and the rise in the cost of living (shops, banks, pharmacies) (Clément, 1987: 138-140). In addition, lootings happened in the neighbourhoods of Laari Cheikh and Poblao.

⁹ Abdelkrim was the leader of the Rif War, a conflict that took place between 1920 and 1927 in the Rif confronting the forces of the Spanish colonial administration and the indigenous Rif tribes. During this period the Republic of the Rif was established and enjoyed some international recognition and support.

¹⁰ "Les événements de 1984 dans le Rif. Le soulèvement d'un peuple que Hassan II a qualifié d'«awbach»", *Tabrat*, January 20th 2016. Available at <http://www.tabrat.info/?p=3699> [Access: March 20th 2017].

The control of the street by the demonstrators ended at 4 p.m. when reinforcements for the security units on the ground arrived in the city. From then on, around 3,000 men, with more experience¹¹, launched a two-hour hard and fast counteroffensive (Clément, 1987: 141). This new scenario forced the protesters to retreat to the outskirts of the city, such as the hill in the Poblao neighborhood, and to other locations near the border, such as Farkhana and Beni Ensar, with the idea of trying to escape and reach Melilla (Clément, 1987: 142).

The journey of Thursday, January 19 finished with almost 400 arrests in the province, mainly among students, which incremented over the following days. In this regard, Clément (1987: 142) refers to information concerning another one hundred arrests on Friday January 20th in the surroundings of the old iron mines of Taouima, where over twenty years later a common grave was found with about 15 bodies that investigations date back to the revolt analyzed in this article¹².

The cycle of mobilizations in the country started to wane on Sunday, January 22, when King Hassan II addressed the nation to explain and assess what the protests had been in the country. In his speech, he blamed certain sectors for the disorder caused during the previous days, frightened the population, and gave orders to the government and justice for prosecuting those responsible for the unrest. Thus, far from accepting that the protests could be due to difficult and deeply rooted problems (Seddon, 1986), the monarch attributed the riots to a triple conspiracy “Zionist, Marxist-Leninist and Khomeinist”. During his speech, the king expressly addressed the Rif to warn its inhabitants, whom he referred to as “awbach” (savages, despicable people): “You have known me as a prince, better not to know me as a king”. He also prevented the teachers and students, whom he considered to be the cause of the price increase, from the consequences that could arise if they continued with their behavior: “It is because of them that the cost of living has grown (...) If I reduce half the education budget, I could lower the price of basic agricultural commodities (...) I am therefore speaking about the young people, who are manipulated by others: the order has been given that they are punished in the same way as adults” (Rollinde, 2003: 230). However, the monarch also announced the suspension of the economic measures that had been adopted and the implementation of some initiatives to fight fraud and speculation¹³.

Hassan II's firmness and threats of repression, which were broadcast and reproduced over the next two days in all Moroccan newspapers, had an impact on the limited compliance with the general strike that had been announced for January 23¹⁴. However,

¹¹ According to Clément (1987:139-141) most of the soldiers who had been displaced in Nador in the first few days were too young and inexperienced, and faced the riots and protesters with fear. In front of them, the protesting masses did not hesitate to continue with their actions, so that until the arrival of reinforcements, the security forces were unable to take over the situation.

¹² "Morir con las bolas puestas", *El Mundo*, May 16 2008. Available at <http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2008/05/16/cronicasdesdeafrica/1210936890.html> [Access: August 13 2017].

¹³ ABC, January 24 1984.

¹⁴ ABC, January 25 1984.

Nador was an exception to the national trend, as more than 90 percent of commercial establishments and industries kept their doors closed, as well as primary schools¹⁵.

Both the riots and the actions of the security forces continued in Nador for two more days. On Monday 23, demonstrations took place in different towns of the "Great Nador" conurbation, including Zaio, Midar, Zeghanghane, and Selouane¹⁶. The army maintained its surveillance of the city of Nador and surrounding areas deploying tanks and overflying the security zone with a helicopter, from which people who remained on the streets, were shot, according to the international press and local sources¹⁷. In addition, during the last few days, the Spanish press reported the arrival in Melilla of members of a supposedly secret organization called the Riffian Liberation Movement, which would have expressed its intention to create an independent Islamic Republic in the Rif¹⁸. However, members of other Islamic movements who had also arrived in the Spanish enclave denied this plan and attributed the diffusion of this news to the Moroccan regime's attempt to pass on this information to European countries and legitimize its repressive measures¹⁹.

On Tuesday, January 24, the streets were still empty and the Administration closed, but only 30% of the factories and shops continued involved in the strike by this time (Clément, 1987: 145). In fact, since Saturday 21, some normalizing measures had already been adopted to resume economic and commercial activity, such as the opening of the border with Melilla. Thus, on the 21st, foreigners -with the exception of journalists- were again allowed to transit, and on the 23rd smuggling between the two parts was restored to normal (Clément 1987: 145), after the tax was discreetly withdrawn (McMurray, 2001: 174).

The aftermath of the protest: losses and gains

The first and most obvious consequence of the revolt in Nador was the different forms of repression experienced in the region during the uprising. According to the Prime Minister, the number of casualties in the province had been 16 deaths, in addition to 37 people wounded, 5 of whom were members of the security forces. These numbers were always questioned, both by the press and academia, since the information blockade imposed by the Moroccan regime and the various practices of information concealment by the state²⁰ made it difficult to quantify the real human losses. Therefore, in the case

¹⁵ *El País*, January 24 1984.

¹⁶ *ABC*, January 24 1984.

¹⁷ Both *Le Monde* and *Telegrama de Melilla* published information referring to those military actions. See Diouri (2000: 117) and "Offensive du Makhzen contre le Rif en 1958/59 et 1984", October 17 2014. Available at <http://www.agoravox.fr/actualites/international/article/l-offensive-du-mekhzan-contre-le-158164> [Access: August 10 2017].

¹⁸ *El País*, January 24 1984.

¹⁹ *ABC*, January 24 1984.

²⁰ Several testimonies have referred to various practices of victim concealment including burials in clandestine mass graves, the disappearance of hospital registration files, or the post-dating of victims' dates of death in the records. See "Les événements de 1984 dans le Rif. Le soulèvement d'un peuple que

of Nador, according to unofficial sources, the death toll could vary between the 25 fatalities according to the French press, the 20 deaths counted by Spanish diplomatic sources, the 40 estimated by the Spanish newspaper *El País*, and the 60 reported by other Spanish journalistic sources and associations of Moroccans in France (Clément, 1987: 115). Twenty-one years later, the report of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission (IER) estimated the number of victims in Nador province at 17 (16 in the provincial capital and 1 in Zaio)²¹. In terms of the number of arrests, although there are no official data, Clément (1987: 145) registered up to 483 arrests in the province of Nador. Other practices should be pointed out, which would show the irregularities and abuses committed by the security forces during the protests and in the following days. In this regard, several local testimonies referred to kidnappings, detention of people not present at the protests, intimidation, and blackmail - of up to 50,000 dirhams to the wealthiest families in exchange for not arresting their children - and incriminations obtained on the basis of verbal declarations signed under duress²². Despite these results, the mobilization also had its gains in the short term, especially regarding the elimination of the national and local triggering causes (the economic adjustment measures and the border tax with Melilla), although the structural roots remained unaddressed.

In the mid-term, the most relevant social impact was the judicial and criminal repression exercised by the state against the arrested demonstrators. There was a total of 80 judicial proceedings, 26 death sentences, 38 life sentences, and 25 centuries of imprisonment for all prosecuted at the national level (Clément, 1987: 113). In the case of the city and province of Nador, according to unpublished studies by Clément (1989), judicial repression was more severe than criminal repression, so that, although the number of people prosecuted was the highest in the whole country with 474 people brought before the courts, the final sentences were less harsh than in other Moroccan cities. Thus, 384 prison sentences and 90 acquittals were handed down in the trials at first instance, resulting in a total of 8772 months of imprisonment and reaching 171,000 dirhams penalties. Of the death sentences dictated, none was imposed on the detainees in Nador (Clément, 1989: 6). In the second instance, the number of sentences was reduced to 65, as well as the months of imprisonment, which remained at 3504, representing an average of 54.75 months per prisoner. As a result, in comparison with other parts of the country, the final sentences were less harsh in Nador than in Casablanca, Tetouan, Oujda, and Al Hoceima, despite being the province most punished in terms of the number of arrests after the riots.

Another direct consequence of this repression was the political and social paralysis in which the city and the province were submerged during the 1980s. As McMurray (2003: 143) states, both students and teachers were for years under an atmosphere of paranoia and forced apathy, which reduced socio-political activity to a minimum. In the years

Hassan II a qualifié d'«awbach»", *Tabrat*, January 20 2016. Available at <http://www.tabrat.info/?p=3699> [Access: March 20, 2017].

²¹ See "Síntesis del informe final de la IER", *Instancia Equidad y Reconciliación*, Rabat: Publicaciones del Consejo Consultativo de Derechos Humanos, 2006.

²² See "Les événements de 1984 dans le Rif. Le soulèvement d'un peuple que Hassan II a qualifié d'«awbach»", *Tabrat*, January 20 2016. Available at <http://www.tabrat.info/?p=3699> [Access: March 20 2017]

immediately following the revolt, student demonstrations, which had occurred with great frequency before, were hardly held.

Finally, in the long term, the consequences were more profound, since both the repression exercised by the state and the attitude of the monarchy towards the Rif had an important impact on center-periphery relations. Both contributed to strengthening the mistrust that the region has had towards the central power since independence up to now. The revolt intensified ethnic tension (McMurray, 2003: 143) and reinforced the narrative about the Moroccan regime's deliberate punishment and neglect of the Rif. Clément (1987: 144) collected some testimonies and local interpretations in this sense: "The king does not govern this part of the country, he owns it but there is no relation (with us)"; "It is not by coincidence if there are more deaths here than in Marrakech [...] that we were colonized by the Arabs is not a serious problem because they are all Muslims. What is serious is that there is nothing to do here, nothing... only hashish and smuggling". This type of understanding and vision of the central state has remained in the popular and regionalist discourse that strengthens in the Rif's political sphere from the early 21st century (Suárez, 2015), as will be discussed in the next section.

Even though the consequences of the protest were dramatic in terms of repression, subsequent social and political paralysis, and exacerbation of the distance between the region and the central power, the cycle of mobilization at the national level also managed to achieve some gains, such as the already mentioned suspension of the economic measures previously adopted and the implementation of some initiatives to fight fraud and speculation.

Changes, continuities, and significance of the 1984 revolt within the Rif's contentious politics

Beyond the aforementioned effects, the 1984 revolt in the Rif should be read from a historical and comparative perspective, since it not only shares and presents its characteristics and dynamics regarding the social mobilization and the protest cycle that develops synchronously in other parts of the country and North Africa, but it is also embedded in a sequence of regional mobilizations, from which it draws and to which it also contributes with its specificities.

The first half of the 1980s was a period of great upheaval throughout North Africa, resulting from the social crisis that economic adjustment programs and austerity policies caused in the region. The revolts that unfolded during January 1984 are framed within this context and form part of a cycle of protests that, during a decade, emerged in response to the shortage of life and the increase in the price of basic commodities, as occurred in Egypt in 1977, 1984, 1986 and 1989, in Morocco in 1981 and 1984, in Sudan in 1985, in Algeria in 1988, in Tunisia in 1984 and 1986 or Jordan in 1989 (Jiyad, 1997: 192).

Food subsidies have played a central role in the economies of North African countries, so their volatility concerning demographic changes and state adjustment policies has been one of the causes of the multiple urban revolts of the region. Furthermore, the persistence of certain dynamics, such as social inequality, corruption, nepotism, authoritarianism and the incompetence of the regimes in the area to respond to the needs and aspirations of their citizens should be added to the list of factors that ignited social mobilization over the 1980s. In the case of the January 1984 protests, which began in Tunisia and continued in Morocco, two main dynamics converged: on the one hand, the rise in the cost of living caused by the measures adopted by both states to confront the pressures exerted by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank for economic stabilization and expenditure control (Seddon, 1984); on the other hand, the immobility and inability of the two regimes to guarantee social reproduction, including not only material conditions and the production of wealth but also educational and cultural conditions appropriate for the population.

In Morocco, the social outburst began on January 11 in response to the rise in high school and university fees, prompting several student mobilizations in cities such as Marrakech, Agadir, Safi, Rabat, and Meknès, which quickly spread to other regions of the country and other sections of the population. The virulence and speed with which the protests propagated were directly connected to a concentration of half of the 25,000 units of Moroccan security forces in Casablanca between January 16 and 19, when the first Islamic summit of Heads of State and Government was being held.

Protests started on January 17 in Nador, as has been seen, and although the basic demands were shared, the uprising there presented its particularities, in terms of actors, demands, and forms of mobilization, which highlighted the existence of specific structural pressures. Thereby, it seems clear that the immediate specific causes of the riots (the increase of fees and prices) cannot exclusively explain the feelings and disaffection expressed during the upheaval period at the local level, which were more connected to other central problems, such the impact of international migration and smuggling on the regional economic and social sphere and the state's peripheralization policy towards the northern part of the country.

Contrary to what occurred in other Moroccan towns, where the sectors mobilized were mainly students, in the case of Nador there was a greater diversity in the groups that joined the protest. Especially relevant was the participation of smugglers, together with the unemployed and the most depressed sectors of the population, as well as militants from opposition groups, in particular from *Ila l-Amam*. On the one side, the high participation of smugglers revealed the importance of the underground economy for the maintenance of social peace in the region and its situation of underdevelopment. Together with them, the incorporation of peasants into the protests when the mobilization moved to the rural areas constituted another specific feature of the 1984 uprising in Nador. In this sense, the plurality of the actors involved as well as the scenarios on which the protest spread out challenge the most extended view of the 1984 contentious cycle in Maghrib countries as urban riots to transcend the urban-rural imaginary and show the impact that the 1980s economic adjustment had in rural peripheries, which were also part of the mobilization. On the other side, the significant

involvement and presence of young people and adolescents in the riots showed the effects that emigration had caused on the family structure in the Rif. As Clément (1987: 140) observed, many of Nador's students did not have their parents with them at that time. In cases where both parents were absent, the children either had to fend for themselves or were placed in boarding schools or with other relatives (Clément, 1987: 140). Likewise, when they remained with their mothers, significant problems had been detected in the family units, derived mainly from the absence of the father figure and a complicated relationship with the rest of their family (Clément, 1987: 140).

Finally, another remarkable feature of the 1984 protest in Nador was the noteworthy presence of people ideologically tied to *Ila l-Amam*²³, as the chronicles of the time reported²⁴. In the case of Nador, this connection could have been related to the close ties that Nadori students had with organizations of the Moroccan left, which included not only *Ila l-Amam* but also the Organization of Democratic Popular Action (OADP), the Socialist Vanguard Party (PADS), the Party of Progress and Socialism (PPS) and the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP) (Suárez, 2013). All these political organizations were, in one way or another, present in the city's associative network, especially within the *Intilaka Atakafia* association, which since 1978 had led the city's youth political and cultural activism, being a space for the articulation of new forms of resistance (Suárez, 2013). What is clear is that the 1984 revolts in Northern Morocco did have an impact on *Ila l-Amam*, as reflected in the piece *Les Luttes de Classes au Maroc depuis l'Indépendance*, written by Abraham Serfaty, leader of the organization, under the pseudonym of Majdi Majid. Thus, it was not only recognized the intensity of the contention in this part of the country recognized, but from that moment on the area began to be considered as one of the decisive regions for its revolutionary strategy (Majid, 1987: 179).

Further specificities of the protest in the Rif and Nador can be found in the channels used to mobilize the population. Notable among these was the role of the souks as spaces for circumventing the information blockade imposed by the state, circulating information on the development of the revolt, and activating politically the population. Both dynamics allowed the mobilizations to be widely supported and spread beyond the province's urban areas. As a result, up to 12,000 demonstrators were counted in the city of Nador and 2000 more in rural areas (Clément, 1987: 152), in contrast to other parts of the country, where the revolts had mainly taken place in urban environments.

In terms of the identity framework, as seen in the previous section, the revolt at the local level developed a protest narrative in which the ethnic-regional component played a prominent role. It presents the economic, political, and physical repression exercised against the population as a product of the country's ethnic divisions (Arab-Berbers) and the tension in center-periphery relations (the Rif versus the state). This distance

²³ *Ila l-Amam* was an organization linked to the Moroccan Marxist-Leninist movement, being the majority force in the country's universities during the 1970s. Its militants were widely repressed by the regime from the mid-seventies, which greatly weakened its capacity for mobilization. It is the seed of the current political party *Annahj Addimocrati*.

²⁴ The newspaper *Diario 16* wrote about the strong involvement of the organization in the riots: "This is the name [*Ila l-Amam*] that runs through the Rif" (Serfaty, 1998).

between the population and the state was also seen in the state's inability to end the riots through traditional channels, such as the intermediation of local notables. The various mediation attempts that were undertaken on 18 and 19 January failed, highlighting the deficits of the regime's power structure at the local level: that is, regional political elites who were not only dependent on national ones, but who also had limited legitimacy among the population, restricting their ability to negotiate and dissuade the mobilized sectors.

Analyzing the 1984 revolt in the Nador from a diachronic perspective, both changes and continuities can be observed regarding the dynamics of regional contention politics. Firstly, the relations with past experiences became very obvious, both on the part of the protester sectors and on the part of the Moroccan regime. On the one hand, the leaders of past revolts were invoked ("Long live Abdelkrim!"), while periods in the history of the Rif, which could be considered as questioning monarchical legitimacy ("Long live the Republic!"), were exalted to confront the state politics towards the region. On the other hand, the history of hostilities between the region and the central power was equally remembered by the Moroccan throne to warn of the consequences that state repression could have. To this end, there was no hesitation in mentioning the direct involvement of the king, prince at the time, in the suppression of the 1958-59 revolt in the Rif ("You have known me as a prince, better not to know me as a king").

Secondly, there was also continuity in the use of the souks as spaces for mobilizing the population and in the socio-economic basis of the demands, which continued to underlie the region's dissatisfaction with the state: the collapse of the regional economy; a slow integration with the southern zone; the neglect by the state; and the underdevelopment of education, infrastructure, and employment in the region (Suárez-Collado, 2015).

However, the 1984 revolt also presented some differences in comparison with previous protest experiences. Both in the 1921 and 1958 revolts, the leadership of the uprisings was in the hands of rural notables and educated elites, mainly teachers, merchants, and some military sectors. In contrast, students, smugglers, and the most disadvantaged sectors were the ones who assumed the leadership of the uprising in 1984, groups that no longer claimed for the integration of Riffian elites into the state's inner workings, but rather against it and its economic and social policies.

The intensity of the confrontations and the state repression during the 1984 revolt marked the memory of the Rif. In this vein, not only popular culture remembers those "shot down by the Makhzen"²⁵, but also local activists and politicians once the following king, Mohammed VI, launched his initiative of reconciliation, the so-called Equity and Reconciliation Instance (IER), as the "Rif Declaration" (2005) reflects. This declaration contained a series of demands considered essential for achieving a real reconciliation with the past between the state and the Rif: from a political and symbolic viewpoint, the apology from the state for its repressive practices committed against the Rif population in 1958-1959, 1984 and 1987, the economic reparation of victims and the respect and recognition of the region's political, social and cultural rights; from an economic

²⁵ Verses of a famous song by Thidrin.

viewpoint, the demand of a total development plan to stop the decades of deliberate regional marginalization by the Moroccan state in "historical debt". The resistance identity of the region has been built on a cumulative experience that includes the periods of state violence and repression of the Rif, such as the 1984 revolt, which resurfaces in the different cycles of protest that have afflicted the region in recent decades, up to the most recent one of the Hirak movement. Thus, the polytraumatization of Rif's memory has been a central element in the strengthening that regionalism, as a political tendency and as a social movement, has experienced over the last decade in the political sphere of the region. Within this frame, the 1984 revolt in the Rif has become a key episode in the strengthening of the awareness of Riffian society that they come from a uniquely distinctive region that merits recognition and has a history of repression that must receive political compensation.

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