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Morocco

In Figuig, women fight for a common good -water

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The uprising in Figuig, on the Algerian border, began at the end of October 2023 when, at a meeting of the town council, it rejected membership of the inter-municipal grouping intended to deal with the distribution of water and electricity, as well as treatment and sanitation.

The prefect then summoned the president of the municipality and then the members of the council, who changed their minds on 1 November and decided to entrust the management of these tasks to Oriental Distribution, which was experienced by the local population as a double appropriation, that of water through privatization, and that of their sovereignty, through the about-turn by their elected representatives. [1]

Mobilization and repression

Since then, the demonstrations have continued unabated. Twice a week, people have taken to the streets in different ways: on bicycles, in vans, rallying neighbouring villages, sit-ins, general strikes, women's demonstrations occupying public space non-stop.

The authorities let it happen, but after three months tried to ban a demonstration. Then there were two arrests, that of a woman raped by the pasha, who was convicted of... assault, and that of a movement activist, who was also convicted.

This repression only strengthened the movement, which took shape and gained the support of civil society. A support committee was set up at national level, and the demonstrators travelled to take their struggle to Rabat and then Oujda.

Mobilization against water privatization in 2023

This movement follows on from and is being conducted in parallel with the initiatives of an ad hoc inter-union group that mobilized through rallies and strike days throughout 2023 against the privatization of water and was at the root of a bill to create regional multi-service companies. The law has now been passed, and for the first time is being rejected by the local population. The population of Figuig intends to defend its ancestral management of water, seen as a common good, managed and distributed in such a way as to sustain the oasis in an arid zone.

The Figuig water management system was recognized as an "ingenious world agricultural heritage system" by the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation) in November 2022. This fight is part of the struggles waged by the people of this Eastern region against their marginalization, unemployment and the absence of public services, particularly public health.

The involvement of women in the movement, who held a resounding demonstration on 8 March, has had the effect of shaking up the political class. Several parties, which are not opposed to the privatization of water, have declared their "support for the women of Figuig" and called for solutions to be found.

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12 March 2024

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

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[1] *African Arguments*, 18 February 2024 "[The small oasis town leading the fight against water privatisation](#)".