



PROFILE OF INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT : ALGERIA

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Norwegian Refugee Council/Global IDP Project
Chemin Moïse Duboule, 59
1209 Geneva - Switzerland
Tel: + 41 22 799 07 00
Fax: + 41 22 799 07 01
E-mail : idpsurvey@nrc.ch

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PROFILE SUMMARY

Since the electoral crisis in 1991, hundreds of thousands of Algerians have been forced to flee armed attacks, massacres and large-scale human rights abuses. The precise number of Algerians displaced by the political violence is impossible to assess given the "information void" that has pervaded the conflict in Algeria since its onset. This said, some estimates have been published. The U.S. Committee for Refugees stated that by the end of 2001, some 100,000 to 200,000 persons were believed to be internally displaced (USCR 2002, p. 52).

Due to the long-standing problems of access, precise information is often not available about the internally displaced. In 1998, there were indications that persons were being displaced from Médéa, Blida, Ouled Allel and other towns south of Algiers (Dammers 1998). During 2002, local media and statements by the authorities gave a scattered image of the extent of the problem. What is known is that some 30,000 IDPs live in Tiaret, that more than 5,000 displaced live in Chlef, that over 30,000 IDPs live on the periphery of Saïda, that over 650 families fled the threat of violence in the region north-east of Ténès, and that over the past 10 years, some 40,000 people have fled Médéa and Aïn Defla (El Watan 20 November 2002, 12 November 2002, 6 August 2002, le Quotidien d'Oran 9 November 2002, El Watan 31 December 2002).

It is reported that the most recent movements of displaced persons are from vulnerable rural areas to the relative safety of metropolitan centers, and that most displaced live with family and friends and not in camps or shelters (undisclosed source 5 December 2000).

Causes

During 2002, violence in the country was once again on the rise. It was reported in June 2002 that already some 730 persons had been killed since the start of that year (BBC News 28 June 2002). As an indication of the seriousness of the situation, the International Federation for Human Rights submitted a written report to the 58th session of the UN Commission for Human Rights (March-April 2002), expressing its concern at the increase in displacement, as well as in other human rights violations.

In many cases, these armed attacks and massacres have led the local population to choose the safest option and leave their homes altogether. Another direct cause of displacement has been the destruction and theft of crops and agricultural property by the terrorist groups. It was reported in July 2002, for example, that these incidents led to massive population displacements near Relizane (Le Quotidien d'Oran 31 July 2002).

The Islamic Armed Group (GIA), notorious for its brutality, was said to be responsible for the bulk of the violence (HRW 2000). However, government security forces were also to blame for direct abuses of human rights as well as the repeated failure to protect civilians from attack (HRW 1999; Cohen 6 December 1999). The absence of sufficient protection from security forces or the lack of street lighting have been cited by the local population as serious negligence by the authorities, facilitating terrorist attacks on the population. Moreover, the subsequent demands by civilians to be allowed to arm themselves against terrorist attacks are often left unanswered (El Watan 26 August 2002).

Subsistence needs

Displaced fleeing massacres and violence in their home regions have been facing serious social and economic difficulties in the areas of refuge. Chlef, for example, is one of the worst-hit regions in the country, with an unemployment rate of 35 per cent, poverty, social exclusion, malnutrition, inaction from the authorities, and bad or degrading overall living conditions. A massive influx of people fleeing from terrorism has added more pressure on the overall situation, and as a consequence living conditions have further deteriorated in the shantytowns of the major urban centers.

What is very clear from reports out of Algeria is that the overall housing situation in the country is desperate. According to a report published by FIDH in November 2001, some 2.5 million Algerians live in 'hovels'. It is also reported that 30 percent of all households are overcrowded with as many as 15 to 20 persons per home. The government has launched a recovery plan, but it falls short of meeting demand by as many as 1.2 million homes (FIDH November 2001). A typical feature of the housing situation have been frequent relocations of people by the authorities. In most cases, these people have been provided with alternative housing. Internally displaced families, however, have often been expelled without having been provided with alternative shelter. The authorities often destroyed the shantytowns in order to make sure that the sites would not be re-occupied (Le Quotidien d'Oran 9 September 2002).

Even on the countryside, internally displaced people have been facing dire living conditions, such as the absence of drinkable water, a defective infrastructure, as well as the absence of health centers.

Return

In general, the security situation in Algeria does not allow for a mass-scale return of the displaced populations, since armed attacks and massacres are still occurring on a frequent basis. After massacres hit the village of Hjar Mefrouche, its inhabitants went to Aïn Kechra in November 2002 to protest against the authorities. There, they voiced threats to abandon their village if their safety would not be guaranteed. This example shows the seriousness of the security situation in Algeria and the obstacles to a possible return.

Despite this situation, the government does seem to be stimulating the return of displaced to their home villages. The authorities have tried, for example, to re-populate the village of Lekouassem in the infamous 'triangle of death' through the return of displaced populations. Since one and a half year, a return has begun through an improvement in security and the rebuilding of shelters. Despite these intentions, the actual facilities such as water and electricity remain basic or non-existent, hampering a real return. Another obstacle for return is the ignorance of the existence of agricultural support structures for returning farmers, the majority of whom never heard of anything of the kind.

Access

Throughout the whole of the conflict, the Algerian government has heavily restricted and often censored information about human rights conditions (HRW 2000). For years, all major international human rights organizations have been prohibited from visiting the country. Though some agencies were finally permitted entry in 2000, the visit of the International Federation of Human Rights, for one, was reportedly conducted under conditions of strict surveillance (FIDH July 2000). In fact, the FIDH made three requests to return to Algeria in 2001, but as of October 2001, no response was forthcoming from the government (FIDH November 2001). At the same time, Algeria continued to refuse visits by the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, as well as the UN Special Rapporteur on the question of torture (El Watan 10 December 2002). A hopeful development was the visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief in September 2002.

At the same time, the few human rights NGOs working in Algeria itself face continual obstacles and restrictions in the conduct of their work (AI 8 November 2000). The US Department of State reported that the authorities occasionally harass the human rights groups through surveillance and obstruction of communications. Moreover, domestic NGO's must be licensed by the government and are prohibited from receiving funding from abroad (US DOS 4 March 2002, sect.4).

International response

Overall, international reaction to the situation in Algeria has been one of cautious observation. Certainly, UN and bilateral condemnations of violence came following the large-scale massacres of late 1997 and

1998 (Dammers 1998). However, external support since that time has been markedly absent. For the most part, Europe has kept its distance, avoiding involvement or the use of influence to direct events within Algeria (ICG 20 October 2000). The US has made intermittent public expressions of concern about the human rights situation, while at the same time, remaining steadfastly committed to doing business in Algeria (HRW 2000). An interesting, although not pacifying, development has been the decision of the US government in December 2002 to provide military aid packages to the Algerian authorities for its fight against Islamic militants (NYT 10 December 2002).

Background

The current violence in Algeria was triggered by an army-backed coup in 1991 that blocked the electoral victory of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) over the National Liberation Front (FLN), the then ruling party and political heir of the Algerian revolution. In response, the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS), an armed group affiliated with the FIS, launched an armed campaign meant to bring down the new government (USCR 2000). Thousands of Algerians supported the opposition campaign against the new regime, and violence quickly spread throughout the country.

The violence reached the status of civil conflict between 1992 and 1998 as fighting intensified between the military-backed regime and an armed opposition composed of a number of growing, sometimes conflicting, clandestine groups (ICG 2000). During the height of the crisis, some 1,200 persons were reportedly killed each month in Algeria, victim to barbarous massacres, indiscriminate armed attacks and assassinations (ICG October 2000, Executive Summary). Another 4,000 persons are documented to have "disappeared" during this period (HRW 2000, Human Rights Developments). Women were often the most vulnerable targets of ruthless violence. During the course of attacks, women were reportedly abducted, enslaved, raped and later executed (HRW 2000). The region south of Algiers on the Blida plain was the site of some of the most heinous crimes against civilian populations and was, thus, termed the "triangle of death" (Dammers 1998). By April 2001, thousands of hamlets were said to have been deserted as a result of generalized violence in the Blida and Medea regions (Tlemcani 11 April 2001).

Since the darkest days of the conflict, the situation in Algeria has improved, albeit not to the level observers might have hoped. Although the AIS has generally respected a cease-fire since 1997 and security has returned to the larger metropolitan centers, killings and the violation of human rights continue unabated and unpunished in rural areas (HRW 2000). The election of Abdelaziz Bouteflika as president in 1999 raised hopes that the violence would diminish and that justice would be served for past violations. However, President Bouteflika's government has made little effort to bring justice to the thousands of victims of the Algerian conflict and its Civil Concord amnesty law has failed to encourage guerillas to lay down their arms (ICG 9 July 2001; HRW 2000; AI November 2000). Perpetrators of crimes, both members of government security forces and armed groups, continue to enjoy impunity in the face of the most criminal actions (AI 28 November 2000).

Since April 2001, the International Federation for Human Rights has noted that state-pressure has decreased, allowing Algerians some space to demonstrate their grievances against the government, as done in Kabylia in April 2001 and May 2002 (FIDH November 2001). However, the country is still rife with insecurity, and the atmosphere in Algeria remains one of violence and fear.

(Updated February 2003)

CAUSES AND BACKGROUND OF DISPLACEMENT

Background

Factional conflict has been driving force in Algerian politics since independence (1962-2000)

- Power struggles between national factions began immediately after independence
- Political violence spiraled out of control by 1991
- Violence reached status of civil war between 1992 and 1998

"The first municipal and provincial elections held in 1990 were won by the Front islamique du salut (FIS), an Islamic party, while the Front de liberation national (FLN), previously the ruling party, obtained only 28 per cent of the votes. In December 1991, the FIS obtained 47 per cent of the votes in the first round of the first free parliamentary elections held since independence in 1962. Shocked by this result, the military subsequently cancelled the second round of the elections and arrested thousands of FIS supporters and their leaders.

[...]

Although observers disagree in their analyses about the causes of the outbreak of hostilities or place differing emphases on particular factors, the main reason for the conflict can perhaps best be summarised by pointing out the deficiencies of political institutionalisation since 1962. In the words of one observer, Hugh Roberts, post-independence Algeria has been marked by the fact that the 'formal distribution' of political responsibility does not correspond to the actual distribution of power.

The failure of state-building had its roots in the political set-up which emerged immediately after independence when the historical leadership of the resistance against French colonial rule was outmanoeuvred by the military. The latter formed a coalition with state bureaucrats and the remains of the FLN which became Algeria's sole political party. Rampant corruption and conflicts between different clans rendered state institutions practically dysfunctional, contributing to the failure of development policies. This problem became particularly acute with the fall in gas- and oil prices in 1986 as hydrocarbons accounted for 57 per cent of government revenues. The collapse of the oil price and ineffective measures to remedy the crisis caused a dramatic fall in living standards, increasing unemployment (it was estimated that by 1990, seventy per cent of the labour force under thirty years was out of work), and shortages in adequate and affordable housing. A package of economic reform policies to relieve the state's debt burden, initiated in collaboration with the IMF in 1989, disproportionately hit the poor and exacerbated the atmosphere of general crisis. In these circumstances, another issue that was left unresolved by the country's ruling coalition, the role of Islam, gained political significance.

Islam had played an important factor in the struggle for independence against the French as witnessed by the close relationship between the FLN and the Association of Reformist Ulama, a grouping of Muslim clerics founded in 1931. Following independence, the FLN disassociated itself from this Islamic-nationalist current and began advocating a largely secularist and 'socialist' state ideology. When the revolutionary legitimacy of the ruling elite began to fade, many began to feel alienated from the political system. The slowly emerging fault line between a secularist elite and under-privileged groups was accentuated by a school and university system that, in terms of job opportunities and social status, privileged those educated in French and deprived others who were educated in Arabic from real prospects of social mobility.

In the late 1980s, the FIS effectively capitalised on all of these different sources of discontent with the regime. Operating a network of mosques and Islamic centres, the FIS also increased its popularity by providing an alternative to cash-starved state institutions in offering social services. However, the rising power of the FIS, and symbolic concessions made by the regime such as the Arabisation of the education system, alarmed the Berber minority that forms about 20 to 25 per cent of the total population and is concentrated in the Kabylia region. Berber political and cultural organisations have subsequently stepped up their campaigns for the recognition of their main language, Tamazight, and opposed the Islamic movement that has explicitly linked its drive for Islamisation to further Arabisation." (EPCPT October 1999, Introduction)

"Algeria finally won its struggle to achieve independence from France on 5 July 1962 after a bloody war that lasted more than seven years. In the ensuing disorder the country immediately faced a power struggle between the various nationalist factions. Indeed, the ceasefire had hardly been declared before the provisional government under Benyoucef Benkhedda was challenged by the leadership of the 'frontier army' headed by Colonel Houari Boumédiène. Although the military were the victors in this 'fratricidal' confrontation that cost the lives of thousands, they put a civilian, Ahmed Ben Bella, in charge of the government. This inaugurated the practice of government by shadow figures working in the background. It was also the beginning of an anti-democratic and multi-faceted regime that has succeeded in adapting to the various-and sometimes dramatic-upheavals that have shaken the country.

After aborted elections in December 1991, the country was caught up in a spiral of instability and violence that resulted in tens of thousands of deaths. However, Algerian hopes were raised with the election of Liamine Zéroual to the presidency on 16 November 1995. Despite widespread electoral fraud, the new head of state succeeded in reinstating the country's legitimate institutions.

Algerians were therefore taken by surprise at President Zéroual's announcement three years later that he intended to resign in order to 'ensure the changeover of power'. This represents something new in the Algerian political tradition. He is the first elected president since independence and the first to leave office by preparing for a successor to replace him through the ballot box. The elections, planned for April 1999, have already attracted several candidates, and will represent a first test of the stability of the institutional framework set up three years ago." (ICG 16 February 1999, Introduction)

"Since December 1991, Algeria has been seized by a wave of violence, which achieved, between 1992 and 1998, the status of virtual civil war. That war was fought between, on the one hand, a military-backed regime and, on the other, a complex, clandestine opposition derived from the country's banned umbrella Islamist movement, the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS – Jabha Islamiyya li'l-Inqadh). It was triggered by an army-backed coup that blocked the electoral victory of the FIS in the 1991 legislative elections. Official figures put the number of people killed during this period at some 100,000 – or 1,200 deaths a month." (ICG 20 October 2000, Executive Summary)

The political landscape in Algeria includes a number of "nationalist", "Islamic" and "democratic" groups (1999)

- "Nationalist" movements include the Front de liberation national (FLN) and the Rassemblement national démocratique (RND)
- Mouvement de la société pour la paix (MSP/Hamas) and Nahdha comprise the "Islamist" movements
- "Democratic" movements represented by the Front des forces socialistes (FFS), the Rassemblement pour la culture et la démocratie (RCD) and the Parti des travailleurs (PT)

According to a February 1999 ICG report, the following political groups were represented in the People's National Assembly:

"The 'nationalist' movement

This movement is represented by the FLN and the RND.

The FLN

The FLN, which rose out of the independence struggle and was formerly the only party permitted, has had great difficulty in adapting to the way the cards are now dealt. The party's platform, based on 'national independence and national unity', remains nostalgic for an antiquated epoch, and is often out of step with the social and political realities of the country.

Divided into two main groups, the 'reformers' and the 'conservatives', the FLN changes its alliances according to the balance of power within the party and what best serves its own interests at the time. In January 1992 the FLN became a 'fellow traveller' with the FIS and found itself in opposition. However, in February 1996 the party returned to power following a 'palace revolution' among its leaders who preferred a change of tactic. However, the brief spell of virtual opposition to a government of which it was the architect has allowed the FLN to present an image of itself as being open to democracy in a way that it could not have hoped for previously.

The RND

Regarded as an FLN 'clone', the RND developed the same line of overall thinking and the same reflexes as the former single party, of which it was an extension. The leadership of the RND, created in February 1997 to support President Z roual, is composed of members of the administration and former FLN staff.

If this fortuitous recruitment pattern relies on the RND's proximity to power and the privileges that it therefore has to offer, its position in the political field leaves the door open to all sorts of alliances, as much with the 'Islamists' as with the 'democrats'. The internal balance of power within the party is constantly fluctuating between the 'democratic nationalists' and the 'Islamic nationalists'.

Set up to provide backing for President Z roual's policies, the RND has been going through turbulent times since the announcement of his 'resignation' on 11 September 1998, and there is a risk that it may eventually implode. This situation is caused by the lack of any new personality of calibre emerging from the ranks capable of winning the consensual support of the party. As a result, the different factions are lining up behind the presidential candidates of the other parties, particularly the FLN.

The 'Islamist' movement

The MSP/Hamas and Nahdha are the registered representatives of the Islamist movement. Although presenting themselves as 'moderate' in regard to tactics, their objective does not differ from that of the FIS: to impose an Islamic state based on application of the Chari' a (Koranic law), but in a gradual manner. However, the strategy of violence and murderous madness employed by the FIS served as a lesson to them in how not to go about achieving this objective. Their progress, and that of the FIS a short while ago, stems in great part from the way they have successfully fostered confusion between 'Islam', the religion professed by almost all Algerians, and an intolerant 'Islamism' based on a fundamentalist interpretation of the Koran.

MSP/Hamas

By a policy of 'one step at a time' and a gradual 'infiltration' into state institutions, the Mouvement de la soci t  pour la paix (MSP/Hamas) has achieved unexpected results. In the presidential elections of 16 November 1995, its leader, Mahfoud Nahnah gained 25% of the votes and came in second place behind Liamine Z roual. Despite fraud during the legislative elections of 5 June 1997, the party gained second

place behind the RND. The RND still describes itself as an 'opposition party' even though it entered the government with 7 ministerial portfolios.

Thanks to its links with a very large number of 'charitable and humanitarian associations, Hamas has woven a veritable spider's web through Algerian society. As the main party to benefit from the dissolution of the FIS and heir to a significant number of its former voters, Hamas is developing ambiguous tactical positions, and often acts opportunistically. While it denounces terrorism in order to guard its links with the government, it is calling for a general amnesty during the election period so as to win support from the FIS grassroots.

Nahdha

Less widespread than Hamas, Nahdha is mainly implanted in the east of the country. The sometimes virulent speeches given by Abdellah Djaballah, its leader, are tempered by those of his associates, who are attracted by the 'participationist' strategy used by Hamas. Negotiations began with the RND and the FLN in spring 1998. However, just when it seemed that Nahdha was about to join the government, an internal crisis created a split between the radical supporters of Abdellah Djaballah and the leaders of the party's political bureau. Although negotiations were suspended on news of President Z  roual's resignation and the announcement of early presidential elections in April 1999, the crisis that shook the party is still lying latent.

The balance of power does not presently favour the 'moderate' Islamist parties. They are therefore obliged to provide reassurances and professions of good faith, but these promulgations should not be allowed to delude. Their strategic objective remains unchanged: to succeed by the ballot box where the FIS failed by armed force, and then to impose an Islamic state.

During the years of one-party dictatorship, they were happy to criticise 'the government's socialist option', and to demand a greater 'Islamisation' of society, but without ever repudiating democracy or the multi-party system without which could have no legal existence. Nonetheless, their vision of society remains stamped with the unicity of Arab-Islamic ideology: one nation, one language, one religion, one leader and one party. When Nahdha was set up in 1990 its leader declared: 'democracy and a secular state are the inventions of the Judeo-Christian west, contrary to our Arab-Islamic values. We are presently subject to a constitution, which we respect. When we reach power we will adopt an Islamic constitution based on the Chari'  a (Koranic law). Secular parties and communists, that do not conform to this constitution, that is to the principles of Islam, will not be tolerated.'

The 'democratic' movement

The movement in favour of democracy is represented by the FFS, the RCD and the PT. Despite relatively limited support in the centre of the country and among the middle-classes, these parties are developing a platform described as 'modernist'. They support political, cultural and linguistic pluralism, respect for human rights, equal rights for men and women, rejection of the existing code of family law, and the separation of politics and religion.

Contrary to the Islamists, the main themes of their programmes are an extension of the ideas they fought for clandestinely during the years of one-party dictatorship; they are not the result of constraints arising from the political evolution of the past ten years. However, because they each have their own interpretation of the Islamist phenomenon, they remain divided, which considerably reduces their influence.

The RCD 'eradicators'

The RCD supported the cancellation of the legislative elections of 26 December 1991 and the subsequent interruption of the electoral process, but is opposed to any dialogue with the FIS. The RCD believes that the only way to counter the armed Islamist groups is to employ legally-sanctioned anti-terrorism measures.

Described by the Islamists as the 'Rassemblement contre Dieu' ('Assembly Against God') because of their secular stand, the RCD has been the particular target of the FIS since well before terrorist tactics began to be used. Between 1990 and 1991 public meetings held by the RCD were disturbed time and again by FIS militants using axes and swords, and a number of people were wounded. Since 1992 armed Islamist groups have assassinated scores of RCD activists. Finally, in February 1994, the RCD felt forced to call for armed 'resistance' to the GIA, and a large number of RCD activists and sympathisers have now joined Groupes de légitimes défense (legitimate defence groups), with the support of the authorities.

The FFS and PT 'conciliators'

Both these parties have taken part in the 'national reconciliation' process and share the belief that peace lies in dialogue with the FIS.

Under the sponsorship of the Catholic community of Sant'Egidio the FFS and PT, together with the FIS, Nahdha and the FLN signed a contrat national pour la paix et la réconciliation nationale (national contract for peace and national reconciliation) in Rome on 13 January 1995. However, despite this apparent opening, the proposed political solution for ending the crisis in the country soon showed its limits. The FFS and the PT claimed that the FIS had agreed under the terms of the contract to abide by the rules of the democratic game and reject violence. But the Islamists had a different interpretation and claimed that the democrats had accepted their arguments by signing for the primacy of the Law (la loi légitime) above all other laws.

The FFS and the PT found themselves caught in a trap. While intending to insist on the supremacy of a legal system adopted by an elected parliament, they used the same expression that translates from Arabic to mean the application of 'the Chari'âa' (Koranic law)" as opposed to any institutionally composed body of law.

Rejected by the government and by a large section of the political community, this deal was never likely to succeed. The final straw was the explosion of a booby-trapped car in the center of Algiers resulting in several civilian casualties only the day after the agreement was announced. Anouar Haddam, one of the leaders of the GIA, claimed responsibility for the attack on behalf of that group. Anouar Haddam, living in refuge in the US, had previously signed the peace agreement in Rome on behalf of the FIS.

This split in the 'democrats' between 'eradicators' and 'conciliators' has been sharpened by the multi-faceted manipulations of the government, which succeeded in infiltrating its agents into the highest reaches of the 'democratic' parties. The emergence of a current of democratic thought, which might have constituted a credible alternative to both the government and the Islamists, remained a pious hope." (ICG 16 February 1999, The Multi-Party Assembly)

Also mentioned about political parties is the following:

"Apart from the FLN, political parties with some significant following include the Front des forces socialistes (FFS), a secularist and mainly Berber-supported party revived in 1989 and led by Hocine Ait Ahmed, the Mouvement pour la Démocratie en Algérie (MDA), created in 1985 by exiled FLN-leader and former President Ahmed Ben Bella, and the Rassemblement pour la culture et la démocratie (RCD), a Berber party with minor support led by Said Saadi and legalised in 1989, and two legalised Islamic parties that are more or less loyal to the regime." (EPCPT October 1999, Introduction)

For more information about the political scene in Algeria, see ICG report "The People's National Assembly: The past 18 months" of 16 February 1999 [\[Internet link\]](#).

Various different armed groups have been involved in the conflict (1999-2000)

- Two of the largest armed groups are the GIA and the AIS
- GIA is known to be the most ruthless, allegedly killing thousands of civilians
- AIS has respected a cease-fire since 1997

"The main adversaries in the armed conflict are, on the one hand, numerous armed Islamic groups and, on the other hand, the security forces and armed civilian groups allied with them. The two most powerful men in the military are believed to be Lt. General Mohammad Lamari and the head of the military security forces, Mohammad Mediene. The FIS has been increasingly marginalised following the arrest of its long-time leaders Abbasi Madani and Ali Belhadj in June 1991. Armed Islamic groups include the Armee islamique du salut (AIS), the military wing of the FIS comprising an estimated 10,000 men, and a loose organisation of different militant and armed groups known as the Groupes islamiques armes (GIA), comprising an estimated 2,500 to 10,000 men. The groups falling under the umbrella of the GIA are usually headed by an 'Emir', a military commander, and a 'Caliph', his political guide. They target state officials, journalists, artists, musicians and other civilians. The GIA are reported to engage in black-market operations and mafia practices which enable them to sustain their military activities. Armed groups are also believed to be involved in private corporations that replaced privatised and/or destroyed state-run enterprises, in order to finance their operations. Some of the armed groups' members, the 'Mudjahedin', are believed to have received military training during the war in Afghanistan. They have also reportedly been involved in armed operations in Morocco, Bosnia and Yemen." (EU Platform October 1999, Introduction)

"Islamists are not a homogenous group, though their goal may be apparently the same, i.e., to establish rule according to the shari'a (Islamic law). However, it should be noted that there are two basic opposing lines of thought, one which espouses the belief that Islamic law cannot be imposed until the majority are ready to accept such a law, having accepted the call to Islam (in imitation of the Prophet in Medina). These are not the ones that make up the following groups.

The two largest and best known Islamist armed groups in Algeria are the GIA and the AIS, which have also been rivals. Below is a description of the groups. Each of these is labeled 'terrorist' by the US government although the designation has been omitted below. The term 'terrorist' is over-used and has a legal-political function. The guidelines for defining a terrorist group in the United States are very vague, but ultimately a terrorist group is one defined as such by the Secretary of State. Though there are many organizations that are involved in terrorist activities, only a handful are officially recognized as such because it is a political decision.

Note: In 1997, the AIS put down its arms, and it accepted President Bouteflika's amnesty call in 1999.

Armed Islamic Groups (GIA)

The *Groupe islamique armé* (GIA), according to the US State Department profile on the group, is an 'extremist' organization, aimed at overthrowing the secular Algerian regime and replace it with an Islamic state. The GIA began its violent activities in early 1992, after the legislative elections, won by the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), were cancelled. Its targets have included civilians, journalists, teachers, and foreign residents. About 100 expatriates, men and women, were killed by the GIA after it announced in September 1993 its campaign against foreigners living in Algeria. The GIA opposes foreigners because it believes that they are part of a plan to colonize Algeria with non-Muslims.

The GIA uses guns, knives, and bombs. It is known to have set off car bombs in the streets of Algiers and to kidnap and slit the throats of its victims. It hijacked an Air France flight to Algiers in December 1994. It is also suspected that they were responsible for the series of bombings in France in 1995.

The number of members in the GIA is not known, and the estimate is several hundred to several thousand. Financial and logistic support is forthcoming from Algerian expatriates, many residing in western Europe.

The Algerian government accused Iran and Sudan of supporting the GIA, and as a result, diplomatic relations with Iran was severed in March 1993.

Allegedly, Antar Zouabri leads the GIA. Early in 1997, he stated, 'There is no neutrality in the war we lead. Except for those who are with us, all the others are renegade.' The GIA has violently opposed Islamists who favor dialogue with the government.

A problem with the designation of 'GIA' is that there appears to be many different groups, perhaps fighting each other, which are designated in the newspapers and by people in general under the umbrella name of 'GIA.' For this reason, even though this group was originally referred to in the singular--Islamic Armed Group--it is sometimes now referred to in the plural, which is the preferred usage in WAAC news updates. For example, the group under Hassan Hattab, considered one of the leaders of the GIA, based in Kabylia, actually separated from the GIA formerly in September 1998 due to differences with another leader, Antar Zouabri, whom he criticized for attacking civilians. His group is now called *Mouvement salafiste pour la daawa et le djihad* (Salafy Movement for the Call and Struggle). He has his own seal, while other leaders have theirs, although all seals have a definite similarity, based on the use of the Qur'an and weapons (rifles or swords) as the central images, and these seals are used very rarely. However, it should be noted that whether or not these groups are related or under one leadership, they are still referred to only as 'GIA.'

Since 1996, the GIA has been held responsible for the massacre and mutilation of innocents--babies, pregnant women, the elderly, etc. While since the fall of 1998, most of the attacks have been against those associated with the military or the militia, many of these have been families (children, wives, parents, grandparents) of government or militia forces or military personnel on leave in plain clothes.

Islamic Salvation Army (AIS)

The *Armée islamique du salut* (AIS) is the second largest armed Islamist group in Algeria. It was founded in 1994 by the FIS as its "fighting wing" in order to counterbalance the GIA, from which the FIS desired to alienate itself. However, the AIS is autonomous and does not necessarily take orders from the FIS, and the AIS has been known to collaborate with the GIA.

Most of the AIS followers were allegedly young, ardent, and driven by the belief that they had little to lose in fighting the government. The AIS differed from the GIA in that it claimed it was innocent of the indiscriminate killing of civilians or bombings and that they focused on fighting the Algerian security forces.

In response to criticism over the actions of the AIS, the FIS stated that its illegal status tied its hands, and it could not 'gain control over the guerrillas until it is restored to legality...and is allowed to rebuild its dismembered party organization.' (see Andrew Bilski, "A Reign of Terror: Muslim Fundamentalists Battle for Power," *Maclean's*, March 21, 1994).

The AIS, however, recognized a cease fire since 1997, and accepted the amnesty call by President Bouteflika in 1999.

Islamic Front for Armed Jihad (FIDA)

A lesser known group, the *Front islamique pour le Djihad armé* (FIDA) claimed responsibility for the assassination of the General Union of Algerian Workers' (UGTA) leader, Abd al-Haq bin-Hamouda on January 28, 1997. It is believed that FIDA is the armed wing of al-Djazaraa, an Islamist group, and that its members are from the educated elite.

Islamic League for Preaching and Jihad (LIDD)

Little is known about the *Ligue islamique de la daawa et le djihad* (LIDD) other than it has issued dire statements prophesizing that more blood will be shed and accusing the Algerian regime of tyranny.

NOTE:

The above is a description of the armed Islamist groups which have been mentioned at one time or another in the papers concerning the violence in Algeria. There may be many others, and splits do occur over disagreements. Descriptions are based on several sources, including official US reports (i.e., CIA information), international news reports, Algerian sources, and academic research material, where available." (WAAC 2000, Algeria's Armed Islamist Groups)

Hopes for peace were on rise with election of Abdelaziz Bouteflika as president in 1999

- Bouteflika elected amidst talk of electoral fraud
- Despite dubious election process, Algerians hopeful for peace
- Violence receded with Bouteflika's announcement of limited amnesty for perpetrators of violence

"Bouteflika, a former foreign minister, was elected to a five-year term April 15 [1999] in a vote marred by the last-minute withdrawal of the other six candidates, who charged the outcome was being engineered in his favor by the military establishment. This turn of events disappointed many who had been encouraged by the vigor and pluralism of the race, in which important issues were debated on television, in the print media, and in public meetings and rallies." (HRW 2000, Human Rights Developments)

"In April 1999, a page was turned in Algeria's lengthy political crisis with the election as President of Abdelaziz Bouteflika, the military's preferred candidate and the country's veteran Foreign Minister under President Boumediène in the 1970s. Following Bouteflika's election, hopes rose and violence receded, as the new President introduced a limited amnesty for the perpetrators of violence – the Law on Civil Concord – and promised further fundamental reforms designed to bring the crisis of violence in the country to an end.

[...]

In April 1999, a new era in Algeria's lengthy political crisis opened with the election as President of the country's veteran Foreign Minister under President Boumediène in the 1970s, Abdelaziz Bouteflika. The expected lustre associated with the presidential elections – the outgoing President, Liamine Zeroual,² had promised that they would be free of government interference – was seriously dimmed, however, when six candidates withdrew because of electoral fraud designed to ensure victory for Bouteflika, the army's preferred candidate. Nonetheless, the early signs were encouraging. After over seven years of bloody civil conflict – in which, according to official figures, some 100,000 people lost their lives – violence declined. The new President introduced a limited amnesty for the Islamists – the Law on Civil Concord – and promised further fundamental reforms aimed at bringing an end to violence. Over the past few years, there has been increasing awareness that the army's total war and eradication tactics have had limited success." (ICG 20 October 2000, Executive Summary and sect. I)

Bouteflika made unprecedented admissions about violence in Algeria but falls short of demanding justice for its victims (2000)

- Bouteflika recognizes the death of 100,000 Algerians since 1992
- He speaks with sympathy about thousands of disappearances in Algeria
- However, he accords low priority to investigating past violations

"Inaugurated April 27 [1999], Bouteflika moved quickly on his plan for peace. He unveiled a draft 'Civil Harmony law' after the AIS offered to make its 1997 cease-fire permanent. The law, which developed the terms of a 1995 clemency decree, was adopted by parliament in July and overwhelmingly endorsed in a

national referendum September 16. Bouteflika also freed some persons imprisoned in connection with the conflict and shed the official discourse that sought to minimize the devastation it had wrought. On June 27, he announced that 100,000 Algerians had died since the strife began in 1992, a number more than three times greater than the last official figure to be issued. He also spoke with sympathy about the thousands of Algerians who had 'disappeared', and abandoned the official line that denied a security-force role in the phenomenon.

But if more candid than his predecessors, Bouteflika accorded low priority to investigating the grave violations of the recent past and pursuing some form of justice for the victims. Explaining in a July 7 Radio France Internationale interview why relatives of the 'disappeared' had to be patient, he declared, ' We must first try to establish peace and security....If we try to attack all the problems at once we shall lose our way.' When advocates of the 'disappeared' continued to press their case he betrayed exasperation, chiding them at a public appearance in Algiers on September 15, 'I have no interest in keeping [the 'disappeared'] in my pocket!....How are you going to leave this war behind if you don't forget?'

While there were few reports of persons 'disappearing' in 1998 and 1999, almost no Algerians who had 'disappeared' in earlier years reappeared, nor was their fate or location revealed. Bureaus that the Interior Ministry had established in 1998 to receive and investigate complaints of 'disappearances' closed quietly without, in the vast majority of cases, producing information." (HRW 2000, Human Rights Developments)

Reports indicated that conflict in Algeria was far from over (July-November 2000)

- Upsurge in violence since beginning of 2000
- 300 persons killed per month in Algeria
- Growing dissatisfaction with President Bouteflika among Algerian elite
- Fundamental political issues have not been properly addressed
- GIA continues indiscriminate policy of civilian massacres

ICG remarks in its October 2000 report:

"Today, however, those hopes [after election of Bouteflika] have been largely dashed. Violence is, once again, on the rise. The amnesty decreed last year has been only partially successful; the Civil Concord Law was denounced by the Islamists as a police measure rather than a reconciliation policy. Eighteen months after Bouteflika's election, there is a growing sense of dissatisfaction with the President's performance among members of the Algerian elite and the Algerian military.

In short, the country's crisis is far from over and the fundamental issues that caused it have not yet been properly addressed. In particular, no attention has been paid by the authorities in Algiers to addressing the key issues around which violence erupted in 1992-93: the need to fundamentally restructure and re-legitimise the Algerian state, accept the failure of the strategy of eradication of the Islamists and open up the political process. For the Islamists, there must be legitimate means for them to express themselves within the formal political arena. For the legal political parties, there must be an opportunity to participate meaningfully in political life, and to make the government and institutions of the state accountable to elected politicians – something that would mark a significant new departure in Algerian politics.

[...]

Violence has been on the rise since the start of 2000, after a six month-long amnesty which led to some 2,000 submissions and the voluntary dissolution of one armed group, the *Armée Islamique du Salut* (AIS, *Jaysh Islamiyya li'l-Inqadh*). While recent killings have not been on the scale of the massive violence that occurred between 1992 and 1998, when deaths averaged some 1,200 persons per month, there has been a marked upsurge of violence in recent months. Official figures put the number of people killed at approximately 300 a month, though the true level could be even higher. Even more disturbing is the fact

that the death rate is accelerating: at the beginning of the year, the death toll was between one- and two-thirds of this level. Blame for the violence was pinned on clandestine armed groups which had rejected the amnesty – the revived remnants of the original Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA, Jamiyy'a Islamiyya Muslaha), under the command of Antar Zouabri and based around Blida, and a new group, the Groupe Salafiyyste de Daw'a et Djihad (GSDJ, Jamiyy'a Salafiyya li'l-Daw'a wa-'l Jihād), led by Hassan Hattab and located to the east of Algiers.

The GIA continues its indiscriminate policy of civilian massacres, whilst the GSDJ focuses its attacks on security force personnel. The area in which these groups operate is widening, too, and has reached as far as the Tunisian border to the east and to the coastal resort of Tipaza in the west. Outside major urban areas, where the security forces now ensure public order through their massive presence, security is uncertain, partly because of the activities of the 200,000-strong paramilitary militias, which were created in the mid-1990s to support the security forces but which are under local control and have, in some cases, been used for personal advantage." (ICG October 2000, Executive Summary and sects. I and IIA)

HRW observed in its 2000 annual report:

"If the number of arrests, killings, and 'disappearances' were down, Algeria remained the most violent country in the Middle East and North Africa. While the Islamic Salvation Army (Armée Islamique du Salut, AIS) generally respected a cease-fire it declared in 1997, others, particularly the groups known under the Armed Islamic Group rubric (Groupe islamique armé, GIA), continued to target civilians indiscriminately. Hundreds of unarmed men, women, and children were slaughtered in brutal fashion in attacks, particularly in rural areas, that were officially blamed on 'terrorists'. Scores of teenage and adult women were abducted in these attacks. According to the testimony of women who had survived captivity, some abducted women were enslaved, raped, and later executed.

The GIA generally did not claim responsibility or explain motives for particular attacks on civilians, although communiqués issued in its name were occasionally received by foreign media. There was speculation that in many instances families or villages were selected for indiscriminate slaughter because members were suspected of opposing or withdrawing assistance from the armed groups.

Within the framework of fighting 'terrorism' and 'subversion,' the security forces continued to employ brutal methods. Accounts of army and police operations carried by the Algerian press, which was constrained to rely heavily on security sources, continued to depict raids that resulted in the deaths of unnamed 'terrorists' but almost never their capture. But reports of torture, which had become systematic since 1992 in the interrogation of security suspects, declined along with the number of confirmed new arrests.

Algeria's conflict continued to be characterised by an extreme lack of accountability for abuses. Tens of thousands of persons were killed, 'disappeared,' or abducted since 1992, without, in the vast majority of cases, law enforcement authorities formally investigating and elucidating what happened. Nor did trials serve often as a venue for carefully weighing evidence that linked deeds to particular individuals." (HRW 2000, Human Rights Developments)

Also from FIDH in July 2000:

"Si la sécurité est revenue dans les grandes villes, si la vague de disparitions massives a cessé, si l'ampleur des massacres est moindre, une violence intolérable faisant au moins cinquante morts par semaine persiste en Algérie. Ainsi, de nouvelles victimes s'ajoutent chaque jour aux dizaines de milliers de victimes des huit années écolées, alourdissant encore l'insupportable catalogue d'atrocités, souffrances et traumatismes. C'est le cri de douleur de ces victimes de leur famille qu'il convient d'abord d'entendre, de toutes les victimes, celle des groupes armés islamistes comme des forces de l'ordre ou des groupes d'autodéfense, ou encore du simple banditisme.

[...]

La violence politique demeure constante et importante. Si le terrorisme semble avoir été maîtrisé dans les grandes villes, il n'en va pas de même dans de nombreuses zones du pays: quotidiennement, des civils, des militaires, des agents des divers corps de sécurité sont assassinés dans des conditions atroces." (FIDH July 2000, "Justice et paix pour l'Algérie" et "Vérité, justice: entendre les victimes")

And published by Amnesty International in November 2000:

"[A]lthough the level of killing and human rights abuses has fallen significantly over the last two years, it remains very high. Since early 1999, some 200 people have been killed every month. Hundreds have been civilians killed in attacks carried out by armed groups calling themselves 'Islamic groups.' Some have been deliberately targeted; others have been the unfortunate victims of an indiscriminate bomb or mortar attack. Others have been members of the security forces, paramilitary militias and armed groups killed in attacks, ambushes and armed confrontations." (AI 8 November 2000, The Need to Conduct Investigations)

See ICG report "The Algerian Crisis: Not Over Yet" for more information on the current political situation in Algeria [[Internet link](#)].

Civil Concord Law has failed to convince guerrillas to give up arms (July 2001)

- The Civil Concord Law proposed in April 1999 has failed to convince guerrillas to give up arms
- Islamists are not considered as political interlocutors
- Algerian Government urged to accept political liberalism needed to bring peace to country

"The civil war between the Algerian army and Islamist guerrillas, sparked by the refusal of the military to recognise the electoral victory of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in 1991, is not over. The Civil Concord Law, proposed by President Bouteflika in April 1999, approved by referendum in September the same year, and supported by the leaders of the FIS, has failed to convince the majority of the guerrillas to give up their arms and Islamist-military conflict has been found and the crisis threatens to spread to other parts of the community.

The Civil Concord law did create a genuine dynamic for peace in 1999. At first, the leaders of the FIS gave their public support to the President's initiative, in exchange for certain promises by the military regime, notably the release of prisoners and the possibility of creating a new political party in accordance with the 1996 constitution. But in November 1999, Abdelkader Hachani, number three in the FIS leadership, was assassinated and two other FIS leaders were put under house arrest. To date the regime continues to refuse to legalise the Wafa party, regarded as the political heir to the FIS.

Despite their military superiority and the evolution of the Islamist position, Algeria's rulers have not altered their security strategy and continue to regard the Islamists more as defeated enemies than political interlocutors. For the regime, however, the rehabilitation of a popular Islamist party would be the best strategy for combating the radicalism of armed groups such as the GIA (Armed Islamic Group) and the GSPC (Groupe salafiste pour la prédication et le combat), while also regaining a little legitimacy by playing the democratic game. If it did so, the last of the armed Islamist groups would likely progressively lose support from the ex-FIS electorate and could be gradually alienated with the possibility, like the Shining Path Movement in Peru, head towards self-destruction. In exchange for the regime's acceptance of the Islamists' return to the political scene, the leaders of the ex-FIS would have to engage in public debate, playing by democratic rules.

There are few options for the international community to pressure the Algerian government to accept the political liberalisation needed to bring peace to the country. Comfortably supported by oil industry income, the elite leadership is almost impervious to economic or political pressure. Fiercely protective of their sovereignty, they reject any external interference in their affairs. Moreover, international institutions have stated that Algeria's recent economic performance corresponds surprisingly well to their financial criteria.

Yet the political, economic and social crisis is omnipresent, and the status quo cannot continue. Long defined as an 'Islamist-military' problem, the violence now threatens to take other forms. The recent riots in Kabylia (Berber dominated area) show that there is a risk of resurgence of ethnic conflict which could exacerbate the socioeconomic turmoil, and which could in turn lead to regional instability. In this context, it is clear that the security rhetoric of anti-Islamist repression by the army cannot function, and popular dissatisfaction with the inability of the regime to face its other political, economic and social responsibilities will do nothing but improve conditions for the armed groups. If the problems posed by the armed Islamist groups cannot be solved soon with courageous political choices by both sides, the 'sub-conflicts' stemming from the apparent lack of political prospects will be even more difficult to resolve.

The international community must abandon the illusion that an authoritarian regime can, successfully, respond to the desire for change expressed by the population, with repression. A lasting solution to the crisis must be found urgently. Algeria is a social and economic timebomb, capable of generating huge waves of migration and regional destabilisation." (ICG 9 July 2001)

For more information on the Civil Concord, see ICG report "The Civil Concord: A Peace Initiative Wasted" dated 9 July 2001 [\[External link\]](#).

Crisis in Algeria is an economic as well as political one (October 2001)

- Same parties who struggled over control of state are also plundering Algeria's resources
- Leaders manipulate atmosphere of fear and violence to accumulate funds

"The crisis in Algeria, now a decade old, is not merely a consequence of the interruption of the December 1991 elections by an army-backed coup to keep the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS: Islamic Salvation Front) from power. It is also an economic crisis. The same parties who have struggled over the control of the state are also plundering Algeria's resources. The military leaders manipulate the atmosphere of fear and violence to accumulate funds, especially through commissions on trade, which they use to support an extensive political patronage system that buttresses their hold on power. The Islamists use the state of emergency to fund their activities through extortion and the black market. In between, both private and public sector interests exploit the gaps in an officially sanctioned culture of corruption and profiteering to make personal gains from the privatisation process and prevent genuine competition in key sectors such as construction and pharmaceuticals. The mass of the population continues to be excluded from the benefits that market liberalisation promised.

Pressures to open up politics and the economy are mounting but the authorities have failed to respond. The continuing violence financially benefits them, and their survival depends on avoiding the kind of settlement that would expose their arbitrary political and economic power. Especially in the current period of international resolve against terrorism, few serious demands have been placed on the Algerian regime to negotiate with the Islamists or engage in genuine democratic and economic reform.

Paradoxically, Algeria has never been better placed in macro-economic terms to promote the structural and fiscal reforms the IMF among others has recommended for years. Even at the height of violence in northern Algeria, the hydrocarbon sector of the southern Sahara continued to attract capital from international oil companies, compensating for the dearth of local and foreign direct investment in other sectors.

Because the Saharan oil fields are far from populated centres, exploration and exploitation deals have been sheltered from the conflict, almost as if they were offshore. Southern European demand for Algerian gas has substantially increased over the past decade, making this as much a strategic resource for European neighbours as for Algeria's military authorities. Via pipelines, Spain imports 75 per cent of its natural gas from Algeria, Portugal (through Spain) 100 per cent and Italy 54 per cent. All three states - and France for complex historical reasons - are reluctant to disrupt established relations with the Algerian authorities.

However, the macro-economic picture disguises a much grimmer micro-economic reality. In Algeria's Economy: The Vicious Circle of Oil and Violence ICG Africa Report N° 36, 26 October 2001 Page ii contrast to the booming hydrocarbon sector, which generates 97 per cent of foreign export earnings, the domestic economy is stagnating under a lack of both private and public sector investment, leading to official unemployment of nearly 30 per cent. Under the influence of plans promoted by the IMF, World Bank and European Union (EU), thousands of workers have been laid off as a consequence of restructuring industries for privatisation. Yet few investors have taken over inefficient heavy industry plants running at around 40 per cent of capacity for more than a decade. Social investment in housing, welfare, infrastructure and transport has been neglected in favour of importing basic goods. The access of newcomers to the market, which, under agreements with the international financial institutions and the EU is being prepared for full trade liberalisation by 2012,¹ is severely restricted.

Popular discontent has been visibly rising since Spring 2001, but not, this time, because of Islamist-inspired violence. Though armed Islamists remain active in rural areas, the rallying cry of protestors from the Berber region of Kabylia has been directed against 'hogra' - the neglect and contempt with which Algeria's rulers respond to the needs of the general population. There is growing realisation that the continuation of violence has actually bolstered concentration of economic and political power in the hands of the military elite. Algeria's rulers have engineered their own enrichment not only during the last decade's crisis, but because of it.

In the wake of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the U.S., the international community can no longer ignore the demands of the Algerian population for full participation in a stable economy and democracy. Turning a blind eye to the country's continuing violence could foster renewed recruitment to radical Islamist organisations. The dearth of political and economic alternatives could also add weight to the Islamists' cause. It has already encouraged criminality close to the EU's southern borders and illegal migration northwards to Europe, often in conditions of hostility and desperation. Where Western governments and international financial institutions have sought to promote stability, a mafia-style regime has come to constitute a factor of instability in itself." (ICG 26 October 2001)

For more on the economic aspect of the crisis in Algeria, see ICG report "The Vicious Circle of Oil and Violence dated 26 October 2001 [External link].

Despite language victory, violence erupted in Kabylia during elections (May 2002)

- In March 2002, Tamazight was recognised as a national language
- Despite this concession, the elections were characterised by violence in Kabylia
- Demonstrators insisted that they were fighting for democracy, justice and jobs, not only for the recognition of their culture and their Berber language, Tamazight

"The language spoken by Algeria's main ethnic minority, the Berbers of Kabylie, is finally to be given recognition by the state.

Tamazight will be recognised as a national language, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika announced in a speech to the nation on Tuesday.

The move comes just days after Berber leaders called for a boycott of the parliamentary election in May [2002], saying the state had failed to address the community's concerns." (BBC News 12 March 2002)

These concessions did not stop violence from erupting during elections:

"Violence has marred the Algerian parliamentary elections in the Berber-speaking region of Kabylie, about 62 miles (100km) east of the capital Algiers.

[...]

The clashes erupted on Thursday morning when election officials tried to open polling stations.

[...]

The authorities have accused demonstrators in Kabylie of using violence and intimidation to prevent potential voters from casting their ballots.

[...]

Most protesters insist that they are Algerians before being Kabyles.

But the authorities have been trying to portray the current turmoil as a purely Kabyle issue.

Demonstrators insist that they are fighting for democracy, for justice and for jobs, not only for the recognition of their culture and their Berber language, Tamazight." (BBC News 31 May 2002)

Causes

Civilian massacres in Algeria lead to culture of terror in 1997 and 1998

- Massacres concentrated in west of country
- The Islamic Armed Group (GIA) said to be responsible for most of the violence
- Individuals singled out for defying Islamist demands
- Attackers exhibit exceptional cruelty

HRW describes a situation of generalized terror in Algeria in late 1997 and 1998:

"Most civilian casualties in 1998 occurred not in the massacres that grabbed headlines but rather in smaller-scale attacks, including bomb explosions in markets and other public places, and assaults on cars and buses traveling the country's roads. In most of these cases the responsibility of Islamist armed groups was not questioned.

There was overwhelming evidence, including the testimony of survivors, that Islamist armed groups had since 1992 carried out the murder of thousands of individuals singled out for opposing or defying Islamist demands – from refusing to contribute money or provisions to armed groups, to refusing, in the case of women, to adhere to a dress code – or merely because they were related to members of targeted categories, such as security force members. Islamist groups killed whole families, sometimes abducting young women to be held in sexual servitude in guerrilla camps; survivors who escaped some attacks of this kind told Human Rights Watch of religious harangues preceding the murder of their families.

The string of large-scale massacres that began in August 1997 continued into the new year. Massacres in mostly isolated villages in the west of the country claimed at least 800 lives in late December 1997 and early January 1998. An attack on the night of January 11-12 on Sidi Hamed, thirty kilometers south of Algiers, left at least one hundred dead. In Chouardia, a village in Medea province, more than forty persons were reported killed during three hours of carnage on April 27.

The Islamic Salvation Front (Front Islamique du Salut, FIS), the now-outlawed political movement that was on the verge of winning the 1992 parliamentary elections before they were halted, condemned the massacres of civilians through its spokespersons in exile. Its own armed wing, the Islamic Salvation Army (Armée Islamique du Salut, AIS), was said to have largely observed a truce it began on October 1, 1997, although occasional clashes between the AIS and certain other armed groups reportedly continued.

Domestic and international outrage at the massacres was directed both at the shadowy perpetrators—initially identified as the Islamic Armed Group (Groupe Islamique Armé, GIA)— and at the security forces' failure to protect civilians. In some instances, massacres occurred within a few hundred meters of security force barracks and posts. Even though the slaughter lasted for hours, generating fire, smoke, explosions, and cries for help, no effort was made by the authorities to intervene to halt the attack or to apprehend the attackers as they withdrew, according to interviews with survivors.

The GIA, a group or groups with a record of brutal attacks on security personnel and terror attacks on civilians, had no visible political structure that commented authoritatively on its program or actions. Increasingly extreme edicts were issued in its name, which authorities permitted to be published in the press despite a strict censorship regime that encompassed statements by FIS leaders. Since the killing in 1994 and 1995 of the GIA's original leaders, mass killings increasingly became part of the pattern of atrocities attributed to it.

Nearly all of the massacres occurred in isolated or semi-rural communities that had voted for the FIS in the elections of 1990 and 1991 and some of whose residents had provided support to the armed groups since 1992. The attacks were in some cases explained as retaliation by the GIA for communities having withdrawn support from the more extremist group.

The attackers exhibited spectacular cruelty. In addition to guns, they used crude weapons such as knives and saws to behead or disembowel men, women, and children. The attackers sometimes abducted women, raping and enslaving them. The extent of the practice was difficult to gauge. According to interior ministry sources cited in the August 5 issue of the Algerian daily al-Khabar , 2,884 women had reported being raped by armed Islamist groups between 1993 and 1998. Among women who were kidnapped, 319 were still missing.

The succession of massacres between August 1997 and January 1998 were concentrated near the heavily militarized outskirts of Algiers and in the province of Relizane near the western oil port of Arzew. The precinct of Beni Massous on the outskirts of Algiers, where about eighty persons were killed, according to press reports, on September 5, 1997, was virtually surrounded by military installations. Survivors told Algerian reporters the day after the Chouardia massacre that even though a paramilitary gendarme post was located only one kilometer away, security forces did not arrive until four and one-half hours after the killing ended." (HRW 1999, Human Rights Developments)

Reasons for massacres were often unclear, as explained in October 1999 article by EU Platform for Conflict Prevention and Transformation:

"Although individual killings by both government forces and armed groups have been responsible for most of the casualties, since the beginning of 1997 massacres of innocent civilians have become systematic, thereby transforming the conflict into one of indiscriminate and self-perpetuating violence. Most of the massacres were committed in a systematic and organised manner in villages in areas around the capital, in the Algiers, Blida and Medeain regions. The largest massacres occurred in Sidi Rais, south of Algiers, in August 1997, claiming the lives of up to 300 people, and in Relizane, in December 1997, claiming the lives of over 400 people. Little is known about the reasons for these acts of violence, or the identity of their perpetrators. They may have resulted from GIA members' frustration at their inability to continue hitting state targets. Others have explained the massacres as being land grabs, banditry, local vendettas or the settling of old scores. Often the massacres took place in close proximity to government forces who failed to intervene and let the perpetrators leave the scene after they committed their crimes. This has fed suspicions that security forces, for one reason or another, were actually actively involved in the killings. In another development, armed groups have started to fight each other, possibly in bids to control certain areas and to raise illegal 'taxes' and generate other economic gains. The proliferation of Islamic armed factions and sub-factions, armed gangs, and paramilitary 'self-defence units' has further contributed to a situation where it is no longer clear which aims are being pursued or for what reasons groups have fallen out amongst each other." (EPCPT October 1999, Conflict Dynamics)

Massacres were described as follows by Hijra International in October 1997 report:

"Les circonstances de ces massacres sont répétitivement les mêmes. Les assaillants, dont le nombre varie de quelques dizaines à une centaine selon les témoignages, investissent des villages la nuit et s'acharnent pendant plusieurs heures à décimer des familles ciblées, sans distinction d'âge ou de sexe: hommes, femmes, bébés, enfants et vieillards. Le plus souvent ils égorgent ou massacrent leurs victimes à l'arme blanche (haches, sabres, pioches, pelles, ou bêches), mais les témoignages rapportent aussi des cas de victimes tuées par armes à feu ou brûlées vives. Les témoignages rapportent que les biens des victimes sont souvent pillés et leurs maisons brûlées.

[...]

Les massacres ont principalement touché le sud-est de la wilaya d'Alger, les wilayat avoisinantes de la wilaya d'Alger (Boumerdes, Blida, Bouira, Tipaza) et celles de Medea, Ain-Defla, Djelfa et Biskra." (Hijra International October 1997, Des Massacres and La Géographie des Massacres)

For a list of massacres, dates and number of victims for the period from August 1996 to October 1997, please see Hijra International report "Halte aux Massacres en Algérie" [\[Internet link\]](#).

Government security forces reportedly involved in attacks on civilians (1999)

- Former security officials claim Algerian military involved in civilian attacks
- Survivor testimony points to military collusion in civilian massacres
- Military continually absent in intervention efforts to protect civilians

HRW notes in its 1999 annual report:

"Doubts that all of the killings attributed to the GIA were the responsibility of a single organization acting alone were fueled by the posture of the security forces towards the perpetrators of the massacres in 1997 and 1998 and by a series of statements by former security officials in exile claiming Algeria's military

intelligence apparatus, the Sécurité Militaire, had both deployed forces masquerading as Islamists and manipulated GIA groups through infiltration.

The questions surrounding the massacres received no conclusive answers. Through September [1998], no independent Algerian body had conducted a thorough inquiry. The government allowed no international human rights organization or U.N. human rights rapporteur to investigate the violence.

The suspicions, however, were reinforced by interviews conducted by Human Rights Watch outside of Algeria and by others on the ground with survivors, witnesses from neighboring communities, rescue workers, journalists, and former security personnel. The attackers, numbering sometimes 200 or more, were found to have moved in and killed and departed freely through militarized areas, without any effort on the spot by the security forces to protect civilians or make arrests. At Rais, where the death toll on the night of August 29, 1997 reportedly reached 335, the killings began when men in military uniforms brazenly arrived in two open-backed trucks, firing on men playing dominoes at the entrance to the community, according to accounts that survivors gave to a rescue worker who arrived shortly after the attackers withdrew.

The attackers who killed over 250 people at Bentalha on the night of September 23, 1997 entered the community on foot through orange groves, but according to at least one account, some also arrived in open-backed trucks. Even after the arrival of the army, police, and communal guard on the perimeter of village, the killers were reportedly able to load spoils into trucks before departing unchallenged.

In Bentalha, as elsewhere, the attackers acted with apparent confidence that the security forces on the scene would not attack them. One of the survivors, who had fled to a rooftop with other residents, told Human Rights Watch he saw two military armored-personnel carriers arrive: "They came up to about one hundred meters away from where we were being attacked. Then they turned on their floodlights—I don't know why, since they didn't rescue us. The people started to shout that the military had come to their rescue, but the [leaders] responded by saying - 'work calmly, the military will not come, don't worry.'

At about 11:30pm on August 29, 1997, about the time that the first shots were fired in Rais, rescue workers who regularly recovered the bodies after massacres were ordered to stand by for work. A rescue worker told us his Algiers team was instructed to drive twenty ambulances to a staging point near Rais, but was then held there for up to two hours by the gendarmerie, before proceeding into the devastated community at about 2 a.m. Although official sources often cited the danger of mines and ambushes laid by the armed groups to explain the lack of response to massacres in progress, the rescue team's police escort showed no concern for mines or booby traps as they entered Rais, and no interest in identifying or preserving evidence of the crimes committed there. By the rescue worker's account, there was no military presence when they arrived, although the army brought in the press at dawn. He said the gendarmerie intervened to prevent the few survivors from speaking to rescue workers and afterwards, to outsiders. He added that he and his colleagues removed 335 bodies from the scene and identified all but some 40 of the dead, more than three times the official death toll of 98 that was announced.

The massacres in Relizane took place in villages located near a junction of the principal oil and gas pipelines leading from the production areas of the far south to the port of Arzew and the spur pipelines to Algiers. The armed wing of the FIS, the AIS, had reportedly been operating in this strategically sensitive area since 1993, and AIS troops reportedly assisted survivors to bury their slain kin in the massacre's aftermath.

Survivors from Relizane—one of whom had been forced to guide the attackers before escaping into a ravine—told Algerian interviewers that the attackers were strangers to the area, most of whom did not speak the local dialect, and included some men wearing military uniforms. Villagers who were interviewed by an Algerian human rights activist stated that on the morning of one of the massacres, communal guards and gendarmes at the regional market warned them to leave their homes that very day; otherwise, said one, "You will count the lives of your children tonight in front of us."

(HRW 1999, Human Rights Developments)

Land appropriation also plays a role

"The fact that the army and security forces have frequently failed to intervene to stop the attacks on civilians (up to 100,000 have reportedly been killed) has led some to believe that members of the security forces are directly involved with the armed groups. Government land appropriation schemes, about which little is known, have also been cited as a cause of displacement." (Cohen in FMR 6 December 1999, Introduction and Algeria: the information void)

Thousands of persons displaced from "triangle of death" at height of crisis (1998)

- "Triangle of death" south of Algiers site of massive violence and abuses
- Land appropriation by army often followed attacks of shanty towns in this region

"Displacement caused by fear of attack would be still greater if the timing and location of massacres were predictable. Displacement has been greatest from some of the worst affected areas, notably the 'triangle of death' on the Blida plain south of Algiers, a region including villages and shanty towns politically hostile to the government, and from which migration to Algiers has been significant. Some reports have claimed that displacement, eventually to be followed by land appropriation by officials or army officers, may even be a motive for the atrocities. Bulldozing of shanty towns has also reportedly displaced thousands." (Dammers 1998, p. 180)

"Violence sharply escalated in the mid-1990s as massacres intensified in the so-called 'triangle of death' located south of the capital, Algiers. Insurgents typically slit the throats of their victims. Many victims were residents of remote villages. Government counterinsurgency tactics also caused many deaths, according to analysts." (USCR 2000, p. 62)

Floods add to misery of Algerian people (November 2001)

- Torrential rains hit Algeria after months of drought
- Over 700 persons dead and 30,000 left homeless
- Disaster collapsed buildings, overturned vehicles and destroyed homes

"After several months of drought, torrential rain and strong winds of up to 211 kph caused huge mudslides and floods on Saturday 10 November in the capital Algiers and other villages, particularly in the coastal zones. The effects are still being felt. The Algerian Red Crescent Society (ARCS) was at the forefront of essential relief operations in areas where assistance was most needed.

The death toll has been estimated at 729 and thousands have been injured. The number of homeless is about 30,000." (IFRC 20 November 2001)

"Algerian residents and rescuers continue to dig through mounds of mud and wade through murky floodwaters to find survivors of a deadly weekend rainstorm. The torrential rains, accompanied by gale-force winds, fell for days, triggering a mudslide that roared through working-class neighborhoods in the capital Algiers, leaving at least 579 people dead, according to the Associated Press.

The 36-hour downpour - the country's worst in decades - left some 1,000 people injured, overwhelming hospital emergency rooms in Algiers. Another 24,000 were left homeless, according to a report from the International

Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. An unknown number of people remain missing, Interior Minister Nourredine Yazid Zerhouni told state-run radio.

The disaster collapsed buildings, overturned vehicles and destroyed homes. It also left roads blocked by walls of mud and debris, making it difficult for rescuers to access some neighborhoods. In parts of the city, mounds of mud rose up to 6 feet high." (DisasterRelief.org 13 November 2001)

"Of the 48 existing Wilaya in Algeria (1,541 communes), 12 were particularly affected by floods...."

These communes are then listed by OCHA as: Chlef, Tlemcen, Tizi-Ouzou, Algiers, Saida, Mostaganem, Mascara, Oran, Boumerdes, Tipasa, Ain Defly, Relizane.

(OCHA 26 November 2001)

Human rights violations and displacement continued during the year 2001 (March 2002)

- Despite improvements, the human rights situation in Algeria remained poor
- Security forces were responsible for numerous abuses
- Armed groups committed numerous serious abuses and killed hundreds of civilians, including infants.
- After massacres that took place in their villages, numerous civilians fled their homes

"Despite continued improvements, particularly in addressing problems of torture and arbitrary detention, the human rights situation remained generally poor, and serious problems persisted, including the excessive use of force, increased restrictions on freedom of expression, and failure to account for past disappearances. The massacre of civilians by armed terrorist groups also continued. There are significant limitations on citizens' right to change their government.

The security forces committed extrajudicial killings, tortured, beat or otherwise abused detainees, and arbitrarily arrested and detained, or held incommunicado, individuals; however, in general such abuses continued to decline. Most such cases were committed against suspected members of armed groups in the context of the Government's continued battle with terrorism. Security forces also committed serious abuses in connection with riots and demonstrations in the Kabylie region during the spring and summer [of 2001]. Security forces killed more than 50 civilians and injured hundreds while attempting to suppress the disturbances, during which many demonstrators burned and looted government buildings, political party offices, and public and private property.

[...]

Armed groups committed numerous serious abuses and killed hundreds of civilians, including infants. There was a significant decrease in such violence compared with 2000. Armed terrorists continued their widespread campaign of insurgency, targeting government officials, families of security-force members, and civilians. The killing of civilians during the year often was the result of rivalry between terrorist groups and to facilitate the theft of goods needed by the armed groups. Violence by terrorist groups is also used to extort money.

Armed groups left small bombs in cars, cafes, and markets, which killed and maimed indiscriminately. Some killings, including massacres, also were attributed to revenge, banditry, and land grabs. Press reports estimated that approximately 1,980 civilians, terrorists, and security force members died during the year in the ongoing domestic turmoil. The violence appears to have occurred primarily in the countryside, as the security forces largely forced the insurgents out of the cities. There were numerous instances in which

armed groups kidnapped women and girls, raped them, and forced them into servitude.” (US DOS 4 March 2002, Introduction)

[...]

Armed terrorists entered private homes either to kill or kidnap residents or to steal weapons, valuables, or food. After massacres that took place in their villages, numerous civilians fled their homes. Armed terrorist groups consistently used threats of violence to extort money from businesses and families across the country. (US DOS, 4 March 2002, sect.1f)

Summary of major massacres during 2002 (February-October 2002)

February 2002

“Suspected Islamic rebels have killed 22 people in western Algeria, government security sources say.

The killings took place in two separate overnight incidents and are part of a recent flare-up of violence.

In one attack, in a village near Sidi Lakhdar about 130 kilometres (81 miles) west of Algiers, the rebels used explosives to blast their way into a home, before killing 13 members of the same family.

Nine people died and three were injured in a second attack in the same area at a fake roadblock, a method favoured by rebels for extorting money from motorists.

The family members had either been shot dead or had their throats slit, Algeria's APS news agency said.

It added that the family's father was a pro-government militiaman.

[...]

The attacks follow the killings of 11 people in central Algeria on Saturday, and bring the total killed in five weeks of violence to more than 60.” (BBC News 5 February 2002, “Algeria attack kills 22”)

“Six people have been killed in an armed attack a day after the Algerian security forces killed a top Islamic militant, the official news agency APS has said.

The victims of the attack by suspected Islamic rebels were reported all to be members of the same family.

Another relative was injured in the violence at a hamlet in Bougara, about 24 kilometres (15 miles) from the town of Boufarik where Antar Zouabri, who led the extremist Armed Islamic Group (GIA), was shot dead late on Friday.

[...]

The leader of hardline Group for Salafist Preaching and Combat, Hassan Hattab, is now thought to be the only other major rebel leader still alive in Algeria.” (BBC News 10 February 2002, “Six killed after Algeria's rebel's death”)

April 2002

“Suspected Islamic rebels are reported to have killed seven people and wounded four others - all members of the same family - in an overnight attack at a village 160 kilometres west of the capital, Algiers.

The Algerian news agency APS quoted a security source as saying that the father of the family in the village of Hai Maarouf was a pro-government militiaman, although it did not say if he was among the dead or injured.” (BBC News 20 April 2002, “Seven killed in Algeria”)

May 2002

“Armed extremists have killed 31 people in two separate massacres in the Tiaret region of western Algeria, officials said on Thursday.

Twenty people were killed and five wounded in an attack at Ksar Chellala - the worst single attack in Algeria this year.

Another 11 people were killed in Sidi Khaled, on the outskirts of the town of Tiaret itself, which is 340 kilometres (210 miles) west of Algiers.

[...]

There has been an upsurge in violence in the Tiaret region in recent weeks, in the run-up to legislative elections on 30 May.

Sixteen people, including eight children and four women, were killed last week during another attack in the region.

The hardline Armed Islamic Group (GIA) - one of two main rebel groups fighting the secular government - is known to operate in the area.

The GIA has stepped up its attacks since appointing Rachid Abou Tourab as its new leader in March after his predecessor Antar Zouabri was killed by security forces.

Mr Tourab said in a statement shortly after his appointment that he would pursue the movement's radical policies until Algeria was an Islamic state.

Since the beginning of the year more than 450 people, including about 150 Islamic fundamentalists, have been killed in Algeria's brutal civil war.” (BBC News 2 May 2002, “Algeria hit by two massacres”)

“The elections come as Algeria's decade-long civil war continues to ravage the country.

Hours before the voting began, suspected Islamic rebels killed 23 civilians in Sendjas village, 180 kilometres (112 miles) west of the capital Algiers.

The massacre was the latest in a series of killings of civilians and members of government forces by groups such as the Armed Islamic Group over the past few weeks, which have added to election tensions.” (BBC News 30 May 2002, “Protesters boycott Algerian polls”)

June 2002

“Eleven villagers, including two children, have been killed and several others injured in attacks by suspected Islamic rebels in Algeria.

A single group is reported to have carried out two separate attacks on Thursday near the slum village of Douera, about 20 kilometres (12.5 miles) south-west of the capital, Algiers.

[...]

About 90 minutes later, six people - reportedly young men - were killed in another attack which residents and the APS said was by the same group.

[...]

The attacks were initially reported to have taken place in Khraicia, another village to the south of Algiers.

[...]

Official figures say at least 45 people have been killed in the violence in this month alone, and nearly 670 this year.” (BBC News 14 June 2002, “Algeria village attack kills 11”)

“At least 107 people have been killed this month, and more than 100 wounded, according to official and press figures.

Around 730 have been killed since the start of the year.” (BBC News 28 June 2002, “Thirteen killed in Algeria bus attack”)

August 2002

“According to a communique issued by the security services through the Algerian Press Agency, 26 people were killed in one of the bloodiest massacres since the beginning of the year.

The rebels have stepped up their attacks recently, killing thousands of people this year alone.

The killings happened in the early hours of Friday morning in Bokaat Laakakcha, in the Chlef region, some 200 kilometres west of Algiers.

The victims were members of three families and most of them were women and children.

The location of the massacre was significant because the village where it took place is located in a dense and mountainous forest between the volatile regions of Chlef, Ain Defla, Tissemsilt and Relizane in the west.

This forest is seen as one of the key strongholds of armed Islamic militants and the army has dropped bombs and sent troops into the area over the last six months.” (BBC News 16 August 2002, “Dozens dead in Algeria massacre”)

October 2002

“The Algerian news agency says suspected Islamic extremists have killed 21 people from the same family, including a three-month-old baby.

The attack took place in the north-western province of Chlef.

[...]

The attack came in the early hours of Friday local time in a remote village about 125 miles (200 km) west of the capital, Algiers.

[...]

The Algerian government says the Armed Islamic Group - or GIA - is known to be active in the area.” (BBC News 25 October 2002, “Algeria gunmen kill 21 family members”)

January 2003

Suspected militants have killed more than 40 soldiers and local militiamen in Algeria's remote Aures mountains, local press reports say.

In another attack blamed on militants 13 members of two families were killed in a village near the capital Algiers, the reports said. [...] the dead came from two families, targeted in the town of Zabana.

The country's two main hardline Islamist groups have been blamed for the attacks.

The Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), which has been linked to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network, is accused of attacking the military convoy, and the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) has been blamed for the Zabana killings. (BBC News 6 January 2003)

Fifteen people have been killed by suspected Islamic militants in various parts of Algeria.

One of the attacks took place in a mountainous area where the radical Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) is active.

The Algerian Government says the group has links with the Al-Qaeda network.

[...]

Also on Tuesday, a family of five were killed in the province of Chlef, 200km west of Algiers. (BBC News, 9 January 2003)

Massacre was last drop for inhabitants of Draâ El-Rich, leading many to flee (July 2002)

- A massacre in Draâ El-Rich was the cause of the displacement of many civilians, who left to seek shelter in Annaba
- Many expressed their wish to be armed so that they can fight off terrorists

"La population de Draâ El-Rich n'en peut plus. L'assassinat, il y a quelques jours, des 3 frères de la famille Dedradji a jeté l'effroi dans le village, devenu une proie facile pour les tueurs des sinistres émirs Camillos et son lieutenant Mégata. Beaucoup d'habitants ont commencé à fuir cet «enfer» pour aller trouver refuge dans des endroits plus sûrs. Abandonnant leur maison, les autochtones, qui se sentent menacés de mort, ne cachent pas aussi leur colère: «On est livrés à nous-mêmes face à la terreur qui règne depuis bientôt 2 ans», disent-ils.

Certains affirment avoir reçu des avertissements qu'il ne veulent pas prendre pour des paroles en l'air. L'exécution de l'ex-gardien de but de l'équipe locale et le meurtre récent des 3 frères ont marqué les esprits. Bref, un climat de terreur et de psychose s'est installé et personne ne se sent plus en sécurité.

Les personnes contraintes de prendre le chemin de la fuite et «l'exil intérieur» ne sont pas pour autant des lâches, nous dit-on. «On a, dès les premières apparitions des bourreaux de Draâ El-Rich, demandé des armes pour défendre nos vies et nos biens», nous a confié un ex-rescapé. «Donnez-nous des armes pour lutter contre ces bandits armés est devenu un leitmotiv»." (Le Quotidien d'Oran 10 July 2002)

"Implantée sur le territoire de la commune de Oued El Aneb (Berrahal), Draâ Errich est connue pour être un lieu de passage obligé des terroristes basés depuis plusieurs années dans la montagne de l'Edough. Désarmés et appréhendant d'autres incursions terroristes confirmées par des informations précisant des menaces, les habitants ont décidé d'abandonner leurs demeures pour un ciel plus clément de la commune du chef-lieu de la wilaya de Annaba." (El Watan 10 July 2002)

Relizane: crop theft led to massive displacement from rural villages (July 2002)

- The region of Mendès was victim of a terrorist group who extorted farmers and ransomed the harvests
- As a consequence of this, the farmers of Ouled Rafaâ massively fled their houses

"Mendès, le grenier de l'Afrique du Nord selon l'appellation coloniale, est une région céréalière par excellence. Mais cette année, elle est en proie à un groupe terroriste d'une quarantaine d'hommes dirigé par l'émir Fellouh, communément appelé «Ould Mahmoud», un natif des lieux, originaire de Ouled Rafaâ, une localité distante de 2 km au sud-ouest, théâtre voilà quelques mois du massacre de 13 gardes communaux. Connaissant parfaitement les spécificités sociales et géographiques de la région, les terroristes rackettent les

fellahs et rançonnent les récoltes à Mendès et Oued Essalem. Des citoyens de la région affirment que près de 300 hectares de bonnes terres n'ont pas été cultivés car les labours étaient soumis au diktat des terroristes qui ont exigé des dizaines de millions dès les premiers sillons des tracteurs et sont revenus à la charge au début des moissons à tel point que des dizaines d'hectares de blé et d'orge ont été abandonnés par les fellahs. Ainsi, les localités de Be ni Yssaâd, Ouled Boualem, Ouled Smaïn, Ouled Ameer et Taâssalt ont connu épisodiquement des incursions terroristes où les habitants ont été délestés de leurs biens. A Ouled Boualem, par exemple, la famille des Belarbi a abandonné une vingtaine d'hectares de blé, justement rançonnés par les terroristes. A Sidi Lazreg, un fellah qui a cultivé près de 15 ha de blé est tombé dans un guet-apens dressé par les terroristes dans la région de Garboussa. Il y a laissé une remorque entière chargée de blé. Voilà une semaine, des fellahs de Ouled Rafaâ ont fui massivement leur douar, menacés par les terroristes qui n'ont pas épargné le vieux Boukhatem, un homme pieux qui s'occupe du mausolée de Sidi M'hamed, le délestant de tous ses biens, estimés selon ses voisins à près de 300 millions. Les terroristes ont emmené des tracteurs, des ovins et des bovins et leur action se fait de plus en plus menaçante, à tel point qu'ils n'ont pas hésité à s'attaquer au cantonnement de la garde communale situé à quelques encablures de Mendès et à sévir régulièrement sur le chemin de wilaya n°2, citent des citoyens de la région." (Le Quotidien d'Oran 31 July 2002)

Chlef : massacre and subsequent insecurity led to massive displacement (August 2002)

- The village of Harchoune, Chlef, was the site of a massacre of 26 persons
- Villagers demanded authorisation to arm themselves, but due to the absence of a response, many inhabitants fled the region

"Les habitants de Harchoune, wilaya de Chlef, sont encore sous le choc après l'horrible attentat terroriste qui a coûté la vie à 26 personnes dans la soirée du jeudi 15 août 2002.

Ils ne réalisent pas ce qui venait d'arriver à trois familles démunies du douar El Khoudr, à 2 km du chef-lieu de la commune. Bien que située au pied des monts de l'Ouarsenis, la région, de l'avis de tous, n'a jamais connu pareil massacre, hormis l'assassinat en 1993 du président de la DEC de Harchoune, Bouthiba Abdelkader. Avec ce drame, elle perd sa réputation de zone tranquille. Qu'est-ce qui a bien pu se passer cette nuit-là ? Démobilisation, excès de confiance après la concorde civile ou inefficacité du système de protection ? Le mystère demeure entier. Le sujet monopolise toujours les discussions dans les foyers et les rares cafés demeurés ouverts après la tuerie. Les rues sont pratiquement désertes. Un climat d'insécurité y règne. Les gens ont visiblement peur après la recrudescence des attentats terroristes, particulièrement dans la partie sud de la wilaya. Paradoxalement, de part et d'autre de la route menant au douar meurtri, des cultivateurs vaquent normalement à leurs activités agricoles de même que les travaux de réalisation d'un barrage hydraulique se poursuivent comme si de rien n'était. Le chantier n'est distant que de quelques mètres du lieu du drame mais, semble-t-il, «on n'a rien vu ni entendu ce soir-là». C'est la même version avancée par les membres d'un Groupe de légitime défense (GLD) éparpillé à travers le village. Ils sont une vingtaine d'éléments armés depuis plusieurs années. L'un d'eux habite à moins d'une centaine de mètres de la première maison ciblée par les tueurs, mais il affirme n'avoir pas entendu les cris des victimes ni observé des mouvements suspects. «Il y avait un incessant va-et-vient d'invités à l'occasion d'une fête de mariage organisé de l'autre côté du village. Par conséquent, on ne pouvait se rendre compte de ce qui allait se passer d'anormal», dira-t-il. Pourtant, à en croire certaines sources, à l'heure de l'effroyable massacre, des chiens ont commencé à aboyer sans arrêt au point de réveiller brusquement une autre famille voisine, qui a réussi à prendre la fuite à temps.

Le laisser-faire A-t-on laissé faire et pourquoi ? C'est la question que se posent les citoyens à propos des circonstances troublantes dans lesquelles s'est produit le carnage. Autre fait mystérieux : l'unique poste de surveillance des services de sécurité existant dans le douar depuis l'apparition du terrorisme a été, dit-on, délocalisé il y a à peine six mois pour une autre destination. Apparemment, aux yeux des décideurs, la sécurité des lieux devait revenir aux seuls citoyens armés, dont le nombre est jugé en deçà des exigences de

la conjoncture difficile que vit la région. Même la nouvelle demande d'armement introduite par les habitants au lendemain de ce carnage est restée sans suite. D'où l'exode massif des populations locales qui ont déjà déserté leur douar pour s'installer à Chlef, El Khoudr et Harchoune. A El Khoudr, par exemple, il ne reste plus qu'une vingtaine de familles appartenant aux éléments du GLD. Une fois les victimes enterrées, le village endeuillé a vite replongé dans l'oubli et l'isolement. Les habitants évoquent avec amertume les promesses non tenues quant au remplacement du dispositif sécuritaire et l'amélioration de l'éclairage public. «Le ministre délégué, M. Dahou Ould Kablia, et les responsables locaux ont promis de remédier à cette situation catastrophique, mais le moins qu'on puisse dire est que les mesures annoncées sont restées lettre morte», avouent certains d'entre eux. «Plus grave encore, au lieu d'agir dans ce sens, le président de l'APC a préféré s'en prendre aux villageois meurtris en les traitant de terroristes», signale un autre groupe de citoyens." (El Watan 26 August 2002)

For the first time, the Algerian army spoke about its fight against terrorists (December 2002)

- After twelve years, the army talked about its fight against the terrorists
- It stated that there are some 700 active terrorists and brought the death toll after ten years of conflict at 50,000 instead of 100,000
- Over ten years, some 15,200 terrorists have been neutralised, while 6,386 have repented

"La grande muette a choisi l'année 2002 pour rompre définitivement son silence au sujet de l'arrêt du processus électoral et de la déferlante terroriste de cette dernière décennie. Les généraux algériens ont accusé directement, pour la première fois, le parti dissous et parlé clairement de terrorisme islamiste. Mieux, ils ont pu voyager librement sans qu'ils soient inquiétés par les défenseurs du «qui tue qui ?» qui espéraient les voir confrontés à de graves ennuis judiciaires dans les capitales européennes, y compris leur arrestation.

Ainsi, pour sa première sortie publique depuis douze ans, le premier responsable de l'ANP, le général de corps d'armée Mohamed Lamari a tenu des propos sans détour. Profitant d'une cérémonie de sortie de promotion de l'Ecole interarmes de Cherchell, il a surpris en tenant une conférence de presse au cours de laquelle il a répondu sans démagogie aux multiples questions des journalistes. Le chef d'état-major a alerté l'opinion publique sur le danger de l'intégrisme qui, selon lui, n'a pas été vaincu. Pour la première fois, l'ANP a levé le voile sur le nombre de terroristes, affirmant qu'ils étaient en 1992 près de 27 000, alors qu'aujourd'hui et d'après les plus fortes estimations, ils sont «près de 700 éléments encore en activité». Le général a réfuté le nombre de 100 000 morts durant cette décennie de terrorisme. Son bilan fait état de 50 000 morts, qu'il a d'ailleurs qualifié d'«énorme». Trois mois plus tard, de nombreux autres officiers supérieurs de l'ANP se sont succédé à la tribune du Palais des nations, à Club des Pins, Alger, pour faire état de la situation sécuritaire, à l'occasion d'un colloque international sur le terrorisme. La plus détaillée des communications a été celle du général Maïza, chef d'état-major de la 1re région militaire. Son constat chiffré a laissé perplexes de nombreux observateurs et contribué à faire comprendre plus ou moins le phénomène du terrorisme islamiste et la complexité de la lutte pour son éradication. Du 30 septembre 1992 jusque vers la fin de 1996, les forces de sécurité ont neutralisé 13 848 bombes et 144 véhicules piégés. Cependant, a-t-il précisé, les 5 575 bombes et 95 véhicules piégés ayant explosé ont occasionné 3335 morts et 12 414 blessés. Il a déclaré publiquement que l'embargo sur les armes qui frappe l'Algérie depuis des années n'a pas permis d'équiper les unités de l'ANP pour être plus efficaces sur le terrain et réduire au maximum le nombre de victimes. L'officier supérieur a noté que le terrorisme a fait en dix ans (jusqu' à 2000) 37 000 morts et 30 700 blessés et poussé des régions entières à se vider de leurs populations, citant comme exemple édifiant les wilayas de Médéa, avec un exode massif de 29 000 personnes, et Aïn Defla, avec 10 700 personnes déplacées. Avec des moyens humains insignifiants devant l'ampleur des dégâts, «il a fallu répondre au plus pressé ; c'est-à-dire contenir les actions terroristes et réduire le nombre important des assassinats, des destructions et des sabotages». De nombreuses mesures ont été prises, notamment dans

le domaine juridique afin de permettre la création de la garde communale ainsi que des sociétés de gardiennage, de protection et de transport des fonds. La lutte contre le terrorisme a été concentrée jusqu'en 1996 dans les grands centres urbains, tant le terrorisme y était important. «Dès 1997-1998, devant les pertes subies, les terroristes se sont réfugiés dans les zones montagneuses et boisées très difficiles d'accès, et à partir desquelles ils lançaient des raids sur les zones semi-urbaines (attaques à la bombe, véhicules piégés et massacres collectifs)». Pour le général Maïza, la bataille des villes était gagnée, ce qui a poussé les forces de sécurité à se redéployer dès 1999-2000 vers la neutralisation des sanctuaires implantés en zones montagneuses. En dix ans, a déclaré le général, 15 200 terroristes ont été neutralisés, 6 386 se sont repentis ou rendus aux services de sécurité. Durant la même période, plus de 30 000 personnes ont été présentées à la justice pour leurs activités terroristes ou pour soutien aux groupes armés. Pour ce qui reste de ces groupes, l'intervenant précise que «bien que très réduits, ils jouissent d'une grande mobilité qui les rend de ce fait difficilement repérables.» Le lieutenant-colonel et magistrat militaire Zerrouk a, pour sa part, fait état des différents groupes islamistes armés activant en Algérie, leur fonctionnement et leur répartition géographique. Selon lui, le GIA de Abou Tourab, composé de 70 éléments, est implanté au centre du pays, dans les zones montagneuses de Blida, Médéa, Tipaza, Aïn Defla, et une partie de l'Ouarsenis. La katibat Errahmane, dirigée par Tachtah, plus connu sous le pseudonyme de Lyès, évolue avec sa vingtaine de terroristes dans les maquis de Chlef, Relizane, Tissemsilt et Tiaret. La katibat El Feth, composée d'une dizaine de criminels, active au niveau de Djelfa, alors que la katibat El Ghoraba, dirigée par Bouchi Boualem, évolue à djebel Grouz, à Béchar. A l'est du pays, une dizaine de terroristes active entre Annaba, Mila, Skikda et les monts Babors. Le GSPC, dirigé par Hassan Hattab, est aujourd'hui composé de 370 terroristes. Parmi ces derniers, 180 sévissent dans les maquis de Boumerdès, Bouira, Tizi Ouzou, 150 évoluent dans les monts de Sétif, Batna, Tébessa Annaba et Constantine et 40 autres activent à Djelfa et à l'extrême sud. Ce dernier groupe sert en fait pour l'approvisionnement du GSPC en armes, grâce à la contrebande frontalière. Les autres groupes armés, tels que Houmat Edaâwa Essalafiya et Hidjra Oua Tekfir, opèrent de façon intermittente au centre du pays. Toutes ces organisations proviennent de l'éclatement du GIA, après la crise de légitimité de sa direction." (El Watan 31 December 2002)

Probably no survivors among the disappeared (January 2003)

- During the nineties, at least 7,000 persons have disappeared in Algeria
- Families still do not know where these are and what happened to them
- Farouk Ksentini, who heads the 'Commission nationale consultative de promotion et de protection des droits de l'homme' stated that there are no clandestine prisoners in Algeria, which means all disappeared have died

Dans les années 1990, au moins 7 000 personnes ont été enlevées en Algérie. En janvier 2002, le président Abdelaziz Bouteflika nommait Farouk Ksentini à la tête d'une commission nationale chargée de régler le dossier avant fin 2002. Aujourd'hui les familles des victimes ne savent toujours pas si les leurs sont morts ou vivants. M. Ksentini prône une amnistie générale qui "profiterait à un certain nombre de criminels" mais permettrait à l'Algérie "de tourner la page et d'aller de l'avant". Le pouvoir algérien propose des indemnisations aux familles, mais élude la question cruciale de la vérité et de la justice. A Relizane, un enlèvement a encore eu lieu en novembre. Dans cette ville meurtrie, un militant des droits de l'homme, Mohammed Smaïn, est poursuivi par la justice pour avoir dénoncé les agissements de la sécurité militaire.

[...]

Parler des disparus n'est toutefois plus un tabou en Algérie, et les familles ne sont plus accusées d'être des islamistes du FIS (Front islamique de salut), "*complices des terroristes*", comme elles l'étaient il y a quelques années. Depuis trois ans, un certain nombre de pas ont été franchis. Il est à présent question que l'Etat verse des indemnisations à ces familles - nombre d'entre elles vivent dans la plus grande misère -, mais leurs deux revendications de fond, "*vérité et justice*", semblent loin d'obtenir satisfaction.

L'espoir suscité, il y a un an, par la nomination de Farouk Ksentini à la tête de la Commission nationale consultative de promotion et de protection des droits de l'homme (CNCPPDH), par le président Bouteflika, s'est transformé en dépit. Si les familles reconnaissent à cet avocat de Blida "*honnêteté, sincérité et intégrité*", si elles admettent que "*son discours est étonnamment humain*", elles lui reprochent de vouloir "*liquider le dossier*" plutôt que de faire la lumière sur les disparitions. On l'accuse de botter en touche sur le thème de l'Etat "*responsable mais pas coupable*".

Le 31 octobre 2002, Farouk Ksentini a remis à M. Bouteflika un rapport d'étape, fruit de ses "*réflexions et propositions*". Le 31 mars, il rendra son rapport définitif. En attendant, les familles les plus combatives, regroupées en associations - SOS disparus, l'Association nationale des familles de disparus (ANFD), notamment -, et les deux ligues algériennes des droits de l'homme (la Laddh d'Abdenmour Ali-Yahia et la LADH de Boudjema Ghechir), ainsi que certaines grandes figures, telles que l'avocat Mahmoud Khelili, s'épuisent à tenter d'en savoir plus. Une question les taraude tous : y a-t-il des survivants parmi les disparus ?

3 030 CORPS ENTERRÉS SOUS X

"Je vous réponds de manière très claire : il n'y a plus un seul détenu au secret, où que ce soit, dans un local sous contrôle de l'Etat, ni à Blida, ni ailleurs, ni dans le Sud -allusion aux camps de détention ouverts au Sahara à partir de 1992-. Je suis formel." Cette mise au point, émanant d'une source autorisée de l'armée, revient à dire, sans équivoque, qu'il n'y a plus un survivant. [...]

Au plus fort de la guerre civile, les victimes de tous bords ont été jetées dans des fosses communes ou des charniers. 3 030 corps ont été enterrés sous X, selon cette source autorisée de l'armée. Aura-t-on la volonté d'exhumer ces dépouilles et de procéder à leur identification ? Fait nouveau : la gendarmerie, chargée depuis 1995 de coordonner ce dossier, admet aujourd'hui (officieusement) avoir recensé 7 046 dépôts de plainte pour disparitions forcées au cours de la décennie 1990. Elle affirme avoir enquêté sur tous ces cas, et précise que pour 4 740 d'entre eux les recherches ont été "*infructueuses*". Pour tous les autres, elle détient une explication. Selon elle, la responsabilité des forces de sécurité n'a jamais été retenue. [...]

Y a-t-il un autre fichier que celui de la gendarmerie ? Si oui, qui le détient ? "*La sécurité militaire*", répond l'avocat Abdenmour Ali-Yahia. Quant aux centaines d'informations judiciaires en cours, rares sont ceux qui en attendent quelque chose, la justice étant soumise au pouvoir exécutif, en Algérie, de l'aveu même de nombreux magistrats.

"Le problème des disparus dépasse Farouk Ksentini, et même le président de la République. Personne ne pourra apporter de réponse à ce dossier tant qu'il n'y aura pas eu un changement radical dans le pays, tant que ceux qui sont responsables de la majorité de ces disparitions détiendront toujours le pouvoir", souligne l'avocat Mostefa Bouchachi, faisant allusion à la hiérarchie militaire. (Le Monde 7 January 2003)

POPULATION PROFILE AND FIGURES

General

Only the roughest of figures exist due to long-standing problems of access (1997-2001)

2001:

"Bloodshed continued during 2001, although the number of deaths and the scope of new population displacement remained unknown because the government blocked most journalists and international human rights experts from visiting the conflict area.

[...]

An estimated 100,000 to 200,000 people remained internally displaced in Algeria at the end of 2001." (USCR 2002, p.52)

2000:

"An estimated 100,000 to 200,000 people remained internally displaced in Algeria at the end of 2000." (USCR 2001, p. 56)

1999:

"Hundreds of thousands of Algerians have fled their country's domestic political violence during the past seven years, but the numbers remain uncounted and unknown.

[...]

Some 100,000 to 200,000 Algerians were believed to be internally displaced at the end of 1999, but more precise estimates of their numbers were virtually impossible because the international community had no access to the country's conflict zone." (USCR 2000, p. 62)

1997:

"Thousands of Algerians were internally displaced by the country's bloody conflict. Reliable estimates of their numbers were unavailable, however." (USCR 1998, p. 48)

During these same years, tens of thousands of Algerians reportedly sought official asylum in Europe. Hundreds of thousands more were said to have fled to Europe without filing for official asylum. For more information see USCR Annual Reports 1998-2001.

Geographical distribution

Algerian press gives fragmented figures, often relating to expulsions (January 2003)

El Harrach

Elles sont plus de 60 familles, entassées dans des bicoques construites en parpaing et en tôle ondulée, à attendre, la peur au ventre, l'arrivée des policiers pour les sommer de quitter les lieux.

Avant d'atterrir au début de la dernière décennie dans cette favela, ces dizaines de familles ont dû vivre plusieurs années sans feu ni lieu. Au départ, elles étaient 87 familles à quitter les hameaux reculés du sud d'Alger pour fuir la barbarie terroriste. Les uns ont installé des huttes sur la poche foncière contiguë à la station de bus de Boumaâti, les autres ont squatté les appartements réalisés dans le cadre du fameux projet des 234 logements qui a d'ailleurs donné son nom à ce bidonville. (El Watan 3 August 2002)

Ben Aknoun

Trois familles habitant le célibatorium de la cité Sonelgaz de Ben Aknoun ont reçu récemment des mises en demeure émanant de la justice, à la suite d'une plainte de la société précitée, les sommant de quitter ces bâtisses. Ces dernières seront ainsi rasées pour les besoins d'un «projet» prévu sur le site en question.

[...]

Par ailleurs, pas moins de 38 personnes habitent depuis plus d'une dizaine d'années ces «gîtes» construits en amiante. (El Watan 25 July 2002)

Beni Messous

Quatorze familles sinistrées ont trouvé refuge, faute de mieux, dans le stade de Beni Messous, dont douze sont victimes des inondations du 10 novembre 2001, les deux restantes y vivent depuis 1997. Elles comptent parmi les rescapées du massacre terroriste perpétré la même année au village Sidi Youcef. (El Watan 3 July 2002, Quatorze familles dans un stade)

Zaârta (wilaya de Aïn Defla)

Au douar Zaârta, dans la commune de Zeddine (wilaya de Aïn Defla), les 60 familles qui composent ce hameau se plaignent de l'absence totale d'eau potable, de l'état défectueux des routes et de l'inexistence d'un centre de santé. (El Watan 3 July 2002, Le calvaire des populations rurales)

Over past 10 years, some 40,000 have fled Médéa and Aïn Defla (December 2002)

- The army's general stated that in ten years time, terrorism claimed the lives of 37,000 people
- He also stated that it led to massive displacement, as for example in the Médéa and Aïn Defla regions, where some 40,000 people were displaced

"Ainsi, pour sa première sortie publique depuis douze ans, le premier responsable de l'ANP, le général de corps d'armée Mohamed Lamari a tenu des propos sans détour. Profitant d'une cérémonie de sortie de promotion de l'Ecole interarmes de Cherchell, il a surpris en tenant une conférence de presse au cours de laquelle il a répondu sans démagogie aux multiples questions des journalistes.

[...]

L'officier supérieur a noté que le terrorisme a fait en dix ans (jusqu' à 2000) 37 000 morts et 30 700 blessés et poussé des régions entières à se vider de leurs populations, citant comme exemple édifiant les wilayas de Médéa, avec un exode massif de 29 000 personnes, et Aïn Defla, avec 10 700 personnes déplacées." (El Watan 31 December 2002)

Some 30,000 displaced found refuge in Tiaret (November 2002)

"Tiaret, chef lieu de wilaya est une ville qui s'étale sur 2190 ha dont 1800 ha sont urbanisés. Limitée au Nord par le mont « Guezoul », au sud par les plaines du Sersou à l'est par la commune de Dahmouni et à l'ouest par celle de Tagdempt, elle compte aujourd'hui 179.000 habitants soit 7742/habitants/km2 et un taux d'urbanisation de 90%. Plus de 25% de la population totale de la wilaya y habitent.

Certaines sources parlent de 30.000 personnes qui se sont réfugiées du fait principalement du terrorisme." (El Watan 20 November 2002)

Chlef: some 5,000 IDPs having fled terrorism live in suburbs (November 2002)

"Chlef est livrée à elle-même, elle est au bord de l'effondrement, c'est du moins l'impression qui se dégage, en ce mois du Ramadhan, des discussions des habitants à propos de la situation dramatique que vit leur wilaya.

[...]

Plusieurs familles ont dû fuir la misère et le terrorisme pour s'installer dans les bidonvilles situés aux alentours des chefs-lieux de commune. Elles sont plus de 5000, selon une source officielle. Elles connaissent la faim en l'absence d'une prise en charge sociale effective. Les inondations enregistrées le 10 novembre 2001 ont aggravé davantage leur sort. Certains sinistrés demeurent encore sous les tentes, notamment au nord-ouest de la wilaya." (El Watan 12 November 2002)

Hundreds of families fled Ténès for fear of terrorism (November 2002)

- In November 2002, more than 650 families fled the Sidi Akkacha and Ténès regions
- They largely went to the nearest agglomerations
- Many civilians still claim their weapons for self-defense, which were taken away from them during 1993 to 1995

"Les douars isolés les plus retirés situés au nord-est des communes de Sidi Akkacha et Ténès sur la zone limitrophe entre les wilayas de Chlef, Tipaza et Aïn Defla, se vident de plus en plus de leurs populations suite aux attaques terroristes répétées du GIA. Leurs habitants, livrés à eux-mêmes depuis l'indépendance, restent sans moyens de défense face aux multiples incursions dont ils font l'objet. La topographie de la région rend leur sécurisation difficile. Face à cette situation, plus de 650 familles issues des neuf douars (Sidi Bouissi, Aïn Mellah, Sidi Ali, Boukhendak et Bissa relevant de la commune de Sidi Akkacha et de Tifela, Teramia, Sidi Merouane et Tizi dépendant de Ténès) ont pris le chemin de l'exode pour s'installer au niveau des quartiers périphériques des agglomérations leur procurant la sécurité.

Ainsi, selon des témoins, à l'entrée de Sidi Akkacha, de nombreuses tentes dressées à proximité de la RN 19, offrent une image de désolation alors que d'autres familles se sont installées dans des bidonvilles abandonnés, à moins de cent mètres du port de Ténès.

Les habitants ont été surpris par la présence massive de familles accompagnées de leurs enfants et de leur bétail, arpentant les rues en quête d'un lieu idoine. Dans le même registre, rappelons également que vendredi dernier, les populations de six douars dont, entre autres, Khelifia, Ouled Abdallah, H'Rief,

estimées à 1.200 personnes, ont déserté les lieux à l'approche du mois de ramadhan. D'autre part, de nombreux pères de familles continuent de réclamer les armes dont ils avaient été dépossédés durant la période allant de 1993 à 1995." (le Quotidien d'Oran 9 November 2002)

Over 30,000 displaced live on the periphery of Saïda (August 2002)

"Boukhors est le nom évocateur de ce quartier devenu populaire et surpeuplé à la faveur de la décennie noire. Situé à la périphérie nord de la ville de Saïda, abritant quelques 33.000 âmes, il s'est transformé au cours de ces dernières années en un véritable réceptacle de populations de différentes tribus, issues de couches sociales défavorisées : les Krermas, les Djâafras, les Rzaïnas, les Ouled Hanoun, les Kouacems et tutti quanti.

C'est le terrorisme aveugle qui, dans ses moments forts, a provoqué le déplacement de ces populations loin de leur lieu d'origine, pour former des ensembles agglomérés. Boukhors n'a en réalité rien d'un ensemble urbain." (El Watan 6 August 2002)

During decade of violence, hundreds of thousands of people fled to urban areas (January 2002)

- At the end of 2001, the total number of displaced was put at 100,000 to 200,000 civilians
- Thousands of them fled to urban areas, living with family and friends, in public buildings, makeshift shelters or in shanty neighbourhoods

"An estimated 100,000 to 200,000 people remained internally displaced in Algeria at the end of 2001.

[...]

"Bloodshed continued during 2001, although the number of deaths and the scope of new population displacement remained unknown because the government blocked most journalists and international human rights experts from visiting the conflict area.

Up to 800 persons were killed during the first four months of 2001, according to one news report. As many as 1,500 people were killed during the entire year, Human Rights Watch estimated. As in previous years, attacks reportedly occurred at several locations within 40 miles (60 km) of the capital, Algiers. Violence also struck the country's northwest region, about 200 miles (nearly 300 km) from Algiers.

Political discontent unrelated to the insurgency mounted during the year, leading to anti-government demonstrations and violence. An earthquake and widespread floods killed some 700 people, adding to the misery.

Thousands of families uprooted by the decade of violence have fled to urban areas, where they live with friends and relatives, in public buildings, in makeshift shelters, and in shanty neighborhoods." (USCR 2002, p.52)

New displacements due to generalized violence (April 2001)

- Well over 5,000 villages (douars) are said to have been deserted due to recent violence in Blida and Medea regions

"Il est important de signaler par exemple que la Kabylie reste l'une des rares régions qui n'apas connu d'exodes massifs comme cela a été le cas pour les nombreuses autres wilayas du Centre, en particulier celles de Médéa, Blida et Bouira.

Plus de 5,200 fractions (douars) se sont déplacées vers les villes uniquement dans la wilaya de Blida, alors qu'à Médéa près de trois cents villages ont été désertés à cause du terrorisme." (El Watan 11 April 2001, " Le racket ou les représailles)

Families displaced by terrorism live in difficult conditions in Ain Ben Beida (April 2001)

- Families that have found refuge in Ain Ben Beida (between Annaba and El Tarf wilayas) live in fear of further terrorism
- They also live without clean water, proper sanitation or electricity

C'est la douleur et la désolation à Aïn Ben Beïda, où beaucoup de familles sont venues se réfugier, la plupart dans un dénuement total. Aïn Ben Beïda est un bout de terre de Guelma qui s'incruste dans deux wilayas, Annaba et El Tarf. Le terrorisme active dans le triangle formé ou limité par les montagnes Zaâlania au nord, Ouest et au nord-est, et enfin djebel Houara au sud. On parle maintenant d'un groupe de quatre terroristes à Aïn Ben Beïda, dont le chef est le tristement célèbre Mégata, qui peut-être renforcé par 6 éléments d'El Tarf ou de Sraïdi . C'est ainsi qu'ils ont massacré les cinq citoyens.

[...]

En tout, on compte à ce jour 625 familles qui ont déserté les 12 importantes mechtas. Remarque : en 97, un commandant de l'ANP avait ordonné aux habitants de quitter les lieux, «car ils ravitaillent les terroristes», avait-on laissé entendre. La plupart de ces familles végètent actuellement dans un bidonville que nous avons visité, installées dans un coin de Aïn Ben Beïda appelé Bouhamra, du nom du gigantesque bidonville de Annaba, lequel avait été éradiqué. Les baraques en planches et en tôle de zinc ont dû être achetées ou construites. Ces familles vivent bien sûr sans même le strict minimum; pas d'eau potable, pas de réseau d'assainissement, pas d'électricité, etc. Bien entendu, dans cette misère, d'autres fléaux naissent, et sont nés. La famille Doualia par exemple a quitté sa ferme en juin 1998. Mohamed, la quarantaine, nous raconte : «Je suis marié et j'ai deux enfants. Je vivais avec mon père et ma mère, nous faisons de l'agriculture et de l'élevage. Quand la vie est devenue difficile, j'ai pris mes bagages et je suis venu à Aïn Ben Beïda, où j'ai acheté une baraque à 9000 DA. Une année après, mon père m'a rejoint et a acheté deux baraques. Nous avons 9 têtes de bovins et 16 têtes d'ovins. Une partie du cheptel a été vendue pour qu'on puisse s'installer à Aïn Ben Beïda.» Il vit dans le chômage et la misère. Ils ont huit hectares à Sidi Mansour. Les huit hectares évidemment ne sont plus travaillés. Les larmes aux yeux, son père, 70 ans, confirme la chose, et pour survivre, il est obligé de vendre à chaque fois une tête du cheptel, dont le nombre se réduit comme une peau de chagrin. Chose incroyable, dans la mechta Moahcha, quelques citoyens avaient demandé des armes, et comme celles-ci tardent à venir, ils n'habitent plus chez eux depuis deux mois. Ils vivent la peur au ventre d'être «vendus» aux terroristes. Personne ne connaît leurs souffrances. En 1998, quinze éléments ont fourni des dossiers pour avoir des armes, leur demande avait été refusée au niveau de Guelma. Deux écoles primaires de trois classes et de trois logements chacune sont abandonnées ou fermées depuis 1996 : l'école Khalfallah Med dans la mechta Ras Aïn, en allant sur djebel Houara à 21 km, et l'école Djemli Med Laïd dans la mechta de Sidi Djemil à 12 km en direction de djebel Houara. Les responsables de l'APC ont proposé dans une correspondance adressée au wali en date du 14 mars 2001 l'idée veule de l'installation dans ces deux écoles d'un détachement de gardes communaux ou de militaires. Si cela se concrétise, tous les fellahs et les bergers regagneront indubitablement leurs pénates. Car maintenant, ils n'y vont même pas pendant le jour, comme ils le faisaient il y a peu. Messieurs de l'APC, navré de vous le dire, mais dans la wilaya de Guelma seuls les morts vous répondront." (Boumaza 17 April 2001)

Figures on displacement during 1998

- During 1998, governmental restrictions on access prevented an accurate estimate of the extent of the displacement
- The Algerian Refugee Council gave indications of the scale and extent of the problem

"The full extent of population displacement remained unclear during 1998 because the government restricted access to conflict areas. One new study estimated that hundreds of thousands have become uprooted since 1992, primarily from small towns 25 to 50 miles south of Algiers. Additional displacement was reported in northwest Algeria, about 250 miles from the capital. Hundreds of people reportedly fled their homes in Bouira Province, about 50 miles east of Algiers, because of massacres in January 1998.

Many families uprooted from small villages and farms have fled to the capital, where some reportedly have settled into schools and mosques. Thousands lived in tents and cargo containers along busy roads. Others resided in shanty towns of corrugated iron that have sprung up in Algiers in recent years." (USCR 1999, p. 47)

"Though precise information is impossible to obtain, the following examples, cited by the Algerian Refugee Council, give some indication of the scale and extent of displacement.

- Médéa is believed to be an important base for the GIA. An estimated 200,000 people are said to have left for nearby Algiers, or to have fled abroad.
- Blida was the scene of some of the worst massacres. An estimated 50,000-100,000 people have fled, mainly to Algiers nearby.
- In Ouled Allel about 15,000 were evacuated – almost the whole town.
- In Larba about 5000 were displaced – 20 per cent of the population.
- In Telagh (between Sidi bel Abbès and Oran) 3000 people were displaced following government bombardments in 1993
- In Sidi Moussa town, Cheraga, near Algiers and Bouinane, 8000 people were displaced. In Les Eucalyptus, 500 people were displaced following a massacre attributed to GIA.
- Ouled Beni Messous (suburban Algiers) was the site of double displacement: many had sought refuge there, then fled again following further massacres." (Dammers 1998, p. 180)

PHYSICAL SECURITY & FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

General

Algerian NGO report: human rights in poor state (December 2002)

- The LADH published on 9 December 2002 a report on the human rights situation in Algeria
- It was very critical on the authorities and cited many human rights violations, such as forced disappearances, provisional detention, overpopulation in prisons, and the treatment of women.
- It was also mentioned that the freedom of expression, assembly, association, as well as social and cultural rights are severely limited

"La Ligue algérienne des droits de l'homme (LADH), que préside l'avocat Boudjemaâ Ghechir, a publié hier [9 December 2002] un rapport sur la situation des droits humains en Algérie, à la faveur de la Journée internationale des droits de l'homme célébrée chaque 10 décembre depuis 1948.

L'Algérie «a refusé et refuse encore la visite des rapporteurs spéciaux onusiens chargés des exécutions extrajudiciaires et de la torture», note le rapport. «Les autorités continuent à nier le phénomène répandu de la disparition forcée» et «les actes terroristes n'ont pas fait l'objet d'enquêtes», souligne ce document. La LADH estime que la conclusion des accords de juillet 1997 entre le pouvoir et l' AIS «dans des circonstances peu claires» et la concorde civile n'ont pas été exploitées par le pouvoir pour recouvrer la stabilité de la société. Le rapport fustige une justice «exercée comme fonction où s'entrecroisent des influences et des pressions directes ou indirectes faisant du juge un simple comptable de décisions rendues». Les juges, selon cette ONG, «semblent admettre couramment les aveux obtenus sous la contrainte même s'il existe des preuves médicales attestant des actes de torture». «La détention provisoire en Algérie est la règle alors que la liberté provisoire est une mesure exceptionnelle», indique le rapport. Le taux de surpopulation dans les prisons a atteint, selon la LADH, «des limites inhumaines». Les conditions de détention ont été la cause d'émeutes dans les pénitenciers au printemps dernier. [...] La crise en Kabylie, selon la LADH, est l'expression de «l'épuisement d'un mode de gestion, d'organisation et d'administration». Le rapport revient sur la situation de la femme algérienne. L'Algérie a signé et ratifié en 1996 la convention sur l'élimination des formes de discrimination à l'égard des femmes. «Mais l'Algérie avait émis des réserves découlant du code de la nationalité et surtout du code de la famille», rappelle la LADH. Dans les décrets relatifs à l'indemnisation des victimes du terrorisme, aucune clause n'aborde le cas des femmes violées. Le rapport énumère les différentes atteintes aux libertés d'expression, de réunion, d'association et les droits syndicaux. Les restrictions touchent la diffusion d'informations portant sur les affaires de corruption, de détournement de fonds et la critique des autorités. [...] L'état d'urgence, en vigueur depuis 1992, interdit toute manifestation, et une «large interdiction frappe des catégories particulières de partis politiques et d'associations». [...] Sur le plan des droits sociaux et culturels, le bilan est alarmant. Trois millions d'Algériens, 10 % de la population, vivent encore dans des bidonvilles. Le taux moyen d'occupation par habitation est environ de 8 personnes. Le rapport indique que «l'opération location-vente connaît d'énormes difficultés» et que les maladies «qu'on croyait éradiquées» frappent encore. Selon la LADH, les Algériens disposent de 75 litres d'eau potable par jour alors que la norme internationale est de 150 litres. Les importations de denrées alimentaires atteignent un tiers des importations annuelles. La LADH attire l'attention sur la déperdition scolaire précoce et un retour vers des taux importants d'illettrés. [...] Conclusion de la LADH : «La situation des droits de l'homme en Algérie est extrêmement délabrée.»" (El Watan 10 December 2002)

Citizens threatened to abandon village unless security forces were deployed (November 2002)

- In November 2002, Aïn Kechra was the scene of serious demonstrations
- Inhabitants of Hjar Mefrouche, scene of previous massacres, descended on the city to vent their anger at the lack of protection against terrorist attacks
- They threatened to abandon their village if immediate protection was not provided
- Two days later, the crisis was solved when the army assured the inhabitants that a detachment would be sent

"Hier, le vent de colère populaire a encore soufflé sur Aïn Kechra (massif de Collo), et aux environs de midi, la ville était carrément fermée.

Avant l'heure du f'tour, la ville semblait être encore sur un brasier, et le moindre incident risquait d'enflammer la situation. Aïn Kechra, qui s'est distinguée ces derniers temps par quelques barricades dressées et autres séquestrations, a vécu hier une situation toute différente. Ce n'étaient plus les habituelles réclamations de réfection des tronçons routiers, mais plutôt un appel de détresse lancé par les citoyens qui réclamaient le droit à la vie. Quelque 500 citoyens du village Hjar Mefrouche, une bourgade dépendant de la commune et qui a été le théâtre du massacre de neuf citoyens le 20 octobre dernier, sont revenus à la charge pour dénoncer les lenteurs constatées dans la mise en application des garanties sécuritaires promises au lendemain du massacre. Ils quitteront à cet effet leur village pour descendre au chef-lieu de la commune.

[...]

«Nous réclamons seulement le droit à la sécurité et à la vie, et nous exigeons la présence personnelle du wali.» [...] Les habitants de Hjar Mefrouche insistaient hier beaucoup plus sur la nécessité de sécuriser le chemin de wilaya n°7, reliant leur village à la commune de Aïn Kechra, celui-là même sur lequel les terroristes avaient dressé leur faux barrage. [...] Ils réclament également la présence d'un poste de la garde communale. [...] Les habitants, qui avaient menacé au lendemain du massacre du 20 octobre de quitter définitivement leur village, ont tenu hier à renouveler cette menace en faisant référence à l'éventualité d'occuper les écoles de Aïn Kechra. [...] Les manifestants ont, dans leur majorité, refusé de regagner leur village, situé à 17 km de Aïn Kechra, à l'heure du f'tour et ont rompu le jeûne sur place." (El Watan 12 November 2002)

After two days the crisis was solved after negotiation by the army:

"Il aura fallu l'engagement direct des responsables du secteur militaire de la wilaya de Skikda pour que les manifestants de Hjar Mefrouche qui assiégeaient la ville de Aïn Kechra reviennent à de meilleurs sentiments. Le dialogue entrepris par les autorités militaires a réussi à convaincre les manifestants de lever les barricades et regagner leur village. Les militaires, et d'après quelques habitants de Hjar Mefrouche, ont assuré les habitants de tout mettre en œuvre pour sécuriser les lieux et principalement la route menant à leur village. A cet effet, des militaires vont être détachés en attendant de mettre sur place un détachement de la garde communale au lieu-dit El Batha. Cet épilogue, il faut le reconnaître, est arrivé à temps évitant ainsi à toute une population de s'entredéchirer." (El Watan 14 November 2002, "Skikda, Aïn Kechra retrouve son calme")

General human rights record in Algeria remains extremely poor (2000-2001)

- Algerians submitted to veritable economic, social and political imprisonment
- Despite decrease in security incidents since 1998, hundreds of civilians continue to be killed by armed groups each month
- Torture and ill-treatment are reportedly commonplace

- Lack of investigations results in impunity for those responsible
- Women are at particular risk

"Ten years after the interruption of the elections, the Algerian society sees itself as a gagged, impoverished society, isolated from the rest of the world. According to CNES, over seven million people, out of a total population of 30 million, live below the poverty line, and the existence of close to 14 million is very precarious, victims of blatant and systematic violations of their fundamental rights.

Not only has the conflict that has been rife in Algeria for the last ten years contributed to increasing violations of economic, social and cultural rights, but it is patently clear that the authorities have used it to dampen these rights: they felt there was no cause to fear popular reaction, since people are terrorised. The result is growing insecurity. Algerian social rights have been declining for the last ten years, access to public services (healthcare, education) has been growing steadily worse, and housing conditions are deplorable. The atmosphere of violence, stoked by terrorist groups and State violence, and the unending state of emergency buttressed by emergency law have increased the violations and deprived the Algerians of the possibility to claim respect for their rights, as befalls citizens in a democratic society. Independent unions are subjected to tight restrictions, and freedom of the press is subordinated to economic constraints that can be traced to the State, which has a monopoly over paper, advertisement, etc. Last, the language question is a tool the authorities seek to use to contain social claims within exclusively linguistic boundaries.

In sum, the Algerians are submitted to veritable economic, social and political imprisonment resulting from systematic violations of Human Rights. They have been numbed into a sort of forced immobility, both in their tiny living areas, their district or city (which they find hard to leave because of security reasons) and their country, which they can only leave if they get one of those very few visas issued by countries of destination. Forced immobility also applies to ideas, culture, and leisure time.

Since women are viewed as minors by the law, practically rejected by the labour market, excluded from public life, and subjected to various types of discrimination, they are especially affected by violations of economic, social, cultural, civic and political rights, and are maintained in a position of inferiority." (FIDH November 2001)

"Reports of torture and ill-treatment by the security forces have substantially decreased in the last two years. However, dozens of people arrested during recent months on suspicion of being linked to armed groups have been subjected to torture or ill-treatment in custody. There continues to be a lack of investigations into these human rights violations and impunity is afforded to those allegedly responsible." (AI 8 November 2000, The Need to Conduct Investigations)

"Although the number of security incidents involving armed groups and terrorists decreased significantly and became more localized in the first several months of the year, compared with the same period in 1998, these opposition forces committed numerous serious abuses and killed thousands of civilians. Furthermore, such abuses and killings increased in the second half of the year. Armed terrorists continued their widespread campaign of insurgency, targeting government officials and families of security-force members, as well as those whose lifestyles they considered to be in conflict with Islamic values. Increasingly the killing appeared to be related to opposition to the amnesty program. Several hundred terrorists have availed themselves of the amnesty program so far, and the armed groups have become smaller, but a hard-core opposition force remains.

Armed groups killed numerous civilians, including infants, in massacres and with small-bombs. Bombs left in cars, cafes, and markets killed and maimed persons indiscriminately. Some killings also were attributed to revenge, banditry, and land grabs. There were estimates that as many as 3,000 civilians, terrorists, and security force members died during the year in domestic turmoil. After his election,

President Bouteflika acknowledged that a more accurate accounting of the number of persons killed during the past 8 years placed the total at about 100,000. Armed terrorists particularly targeted women; there were numerous instances of kidnapping and rape." (US DOS 25 February 2000, Introduction)

Individuals traditionally at risk include intellectuals, ethnic Berbers, journalists and women (1995-1998)

- Armed opposition has attacked those whose lifestyles are deemed to conflict with 'Islamic' values
- Prominent figures amongst the artistic and intellectual communities have been murdered
- Foreigners, judges, and state employees are targeted as a means to bring down the government

"The armed opposition has attacked those seen as instruments of the Algerian state or whose lifestyles deemed to conflict with 'Islamic' values. Women, particularly those leading western lifestyles, have disproportionately suffered, often becoming the victims of rape, kidnapping, and murder. Members of the Algerian government and security forces and their families, political activists, journalists, and artists have also been targeted. Armed 'Islamic' groups also have resorted to murdering young men of draft age simply because they were eligible for military service and could be deployed against the opposition cause." (USCR October 1998)

"Artists/Intellectuals

According to one observer, militant Islamist groups have targeted artists and intellectuals by murdering their most prominent figures (**Le Monde**, 23 April 1995). Among the victims are the director of the national theatre, Azzedine Medjoubi, killed in February 1994; the popular *rai* singer, Cheb Hasni, in September 1994; the playwright Abdelkader Alloula and the director of the Fine Arts school, Ahmed Asselah; the writer and journalist Tohar Djaout, and the architect and feminist Nabile Dialmine, in February 1995 (**Ibid.**). Film actors reportedly work in an atmosphere of terror which makes it difficult to assemble together for the production of films (**Le Monde**, 23 April 1995). Others have fled into exile (**International Herald Tribune**, 5 May 1995; **Le Monde**, 23 April 1995).

The Berbers

Algeria's Berbers comprise one-quarter of the total population of the country, with two-thirds of them inhabiting the Kabylia region east of Algiers (**The Economist**, 15 October 1994). Kabylie is said to be a "bastion of resistance, rebelling against the central government and the Islamists" (**Le Devoir**, 1-2 avril 1995). Their rebellion against the central government is said to have led to the formation of the Berber Cultural Renaissance Movement, which blossomed as a reaction against the forced Arabization of Algeria begun in 1968, a policy they claim produced generations of "intellectually broken" schoolchildren (**Ibid.**) The most important of their demands to the government is the recognition of their language, *Tamazigh*, as one of the official languages of Algeria, together with French and Arabic, an issue over which there have been multiple labour strikes and school boycottings (**Ibid.**; **Jeune Afrique**, 14 December 1994). At present, however, the Berbers find themselves caught in the larger conflict of Algeria, with entire villages in Kabylia taken hostage by Islamist armed groups in search of weapons, which in turn has led to the formation, under government auspices, of "self-defense" groups, composed of males over 17 years of age armed with hunting rifles and automatic pistols (**Le Journal de Geneve et Gazette de Lausanne**, 20 mars 1995; **Middle East Times**, 25-31 December 1994).

Foreigners

The tactic of killing foreigners in Algeria is said to have been started in 1993 by the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) and the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS) in an effort to bring down the government (**International Herald Tribune**, 6-7 May 1995). The 5 May 1995 killing of five foreign workers at a natural gas pipeline project has brought to 85 the number of foreigners assassinated, of whom 28 were French citizens, as well as teachers, priests, nuns, construction workers and diplomats of other nationalities (**Ibid.**).

Government Employees

According to the London-based daily **Al-Hayat**, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) ordered Algerian Government employees to quit their jobs or die, the second such statement since the appointment of Madani Mezrak as the group's new leader in Algeria (**Reuters**, 21 March 1995). The FIS statement allegedly stated that all attacks would target "all those who support the injustice of the regime and its tyranny, whether they are individuals holding posts like heads of local councils, or members of the transitional council (parliament), armed militias and informers, regardless of their ethnic or political affiliation" (**Ibid.**).

Journalists

Since the start of the conflict in 1992, approximately 50 Algerian journalists have reportedly been assassinated by armed Islamists (**International Herald Tribune**, 27 October 1995). On the one hand, journalists are said to be targeted by the Islamists who, angered at the government's apparent stranglehold over the media, accuse reporters of biased and distorted reporting leading to the failure of talks with the government (**The Middle East**, February 1995). On the other, journalists also claim to be "hounded by the government, which has closed or suspended a number of papers because of their reporting", and any paper sympathetic to, or even neutral towards the Islamic cause has been closed down (**Ibid.**). Most of them live in a special hotel and are taken to work with an armed escort, carrying no identification and hiding their faces (**Ibid.**).

Judges/Magistrates

Islamist militants are said to regard judges and magistrates as symbols of government repression, and reportedly have killed more than 20 magistrates since 1993 (**Reuters**, 7 May 1995). The latest such incident was reported in early May 1995, when Mr. Djamel Amar Assani, a state prosecutor at Medea court, situated about 70 kilometers southwest of Algiers, was killed in front of his children by a spray of bullets as he opened the door of his car (**Ibid.**) Many lawyers died or received death threats for their participation in the special courts [abolished in February 1995]: some at the hand of Islamic groups (**Index on Censorship**, April-May 1994). They had been warned not to plead in the special courts, and others were harassed, suspended or imprisoned by the authorities for defending Islamists or appealing their sentences in higher courts (**Ibid.**).

Police/Security Forces

Members of the Algerian police and security forces and their families have been the victims of car bomb attacks by armed groups: in March 1995, a car loaded with explosives went off beside a block of buildings housing police personnel and their families, wounding 63 people, eight of them children (**Libération**, 11-12 mars 1995). Early in the morning of 17 May 1995, another car bomb exploded near a police station in a town near Algiers, wounding 13 people, including two children (**Reuters**, 17 May 1995). In July 1995, an estimated 14 people were believed to have been killed when a car bomb exploded outside a building housing police families in the town of Boufarik, near Algiers (**Agence France Presse**, 17 July 1995). Young men of military age are also caught between two forces: threatened by the armed groups if they do not refuse to join the army or desert after having been conscripted, they also risk imprisonment if they desert the army or refuse to join (**Amnesty International**, October 1994). Another threat to army and police officers are the so-called "false checkpoints" along some roads where, believing they are dealing with colleagues, they show their identity badges, whereupon they are decapitated, their heads placed in plastic bags before being set on fire (**Index on Censorship**, April-May 1994).

Students/School Teachers

According to **Reuters**, in 1994 the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) ordered students at universities and schools to boycott classes because they hindered the "holy war" the GIA is waging to overthrow the government in order to replace it with an Islamic state (**Reuters**, 1 March 1995). On the other hand, **Amnesty International** has reported instances of teachers who, under threat by armed Islamist groups, have advised their female students to wear the *hidjab* (Islamic veil) and, as a result, have been arrested and imprisoned for encouraging civil disobedience (October 1994). Conversely, in an incident said not to have been

adequately explained by the government, the **U.S. Department of State** reports that in March 1994 nine students and their teacher from the El Oued area were allegedly arrested by police "to verify their military service status", released after several weeks in detention and were "immediately killed by unknown 'terrorists' after release" (**Country Reports 1994**, 1995).

Women

According to a statement published in the Arab-language newspaper *Al-Hayat*, on 10 March 1995 the GIA issued an ultimatum to the Government to free jailed "women believers" or suffer the deaths of "women police officers or the wives of members of the security forces" (**Agence France Presse**, 10 March 1995). The latter were allegedly targeted because "it is not legitimately allowed that a Moslem wife should remain with her husband if he becomes an apostate by supporting the tyrant" (**Ibid.**) On 13 March 1995, after the expiration of the GIA deadline, the Algerian Press Service reported that a group of six Islamists abducted a 15-year-old schoolgirl from her school near Algiers, slit her throat and left her body in the gutter in front of the school (**Agence France Presse**, 13 March 1995). That same day, the daily *Liberté* is said to have reported that two sisters, aged 18 and 21 (one of whom was engaged to marry a policeman), were assassinated in Reghaia by three armed men, in front of their parents and younger sister (**Ibid.**). In May 1995, the GIA allegedly expanded its threat to include the wives of government officials (**International Herald Tribune**, 4 May 1995). In addition, Islamists have forced the closure of traditional meeting places for women, such as the hairdressers' and public baths (*hammams*), which are considered by the fundamentalists to be places of "debauchery and corruption" (**L'Express International**, 30 March 1995). claim that at least 200 women have been killed since the start of the conflict in 1992 (**Ibid.**). Figures allegedly provided in August 1995 by the Algerian Security Forces indicate that 211 women were killed in 1994, and 160 had been assassinated so far in 1995 (**Liberté**, 5 August 1995). (Refworld October 1995, sect. 4.5)

SUBSISTENCE NEEDS (HEALTH NUTRITION AND SHELTER)

General

Chlef: terrorism and displacement aggravate serious socio-economic situation (November 2002)

- Chlef experiences a serious aggravation of its socio-economic situation, and is one of the worst hit regions
- This situation is aggravated by the presence of more than 5,000 internally displaced families who reside in the suburbs
- Civil unrest and demonstrations against the lack of a proper response are on the rise

"Chlef est livrée à elle-même, elle est au bord de l'effondrement, c'est du moins l'impression qui se dégage, en ce mois du Ramadhan, des discussions des habitants à propos de la situation dramatique que vit leur wilaya.

Le ras-le-bol est exprimé par l'ensemble des populations des villes et villages. Or, en ces journées de privation de nourriture, se mêlent l'angoisse, la peur, le dépit et le désespoir. Il est vrai que la région traverse des moments très difficiles, accentués par la persistance du terrorisme. Un malaise profond s'est installé dans tous les secteurs particulièrement depuis ces dix dernières années. Sur le plan socioéconomique, par exemple, le marasme a atteint son paroxysme avec l'aggravation du chômage et la dégradation continue des conditions de vie. Avec un taux de chômage des plus élevés du pays (35 %), la wilaya vient en tête des régions les plus touchées par les plans de réformes économiques mis en œuvre par les gouvernements successifs. Le secteur public a été totalement démembré et les rares investissements productifs, lancés et réalisés par des privés, se comptent sur les doigts d'une seule main. D'après une source syndicale, près de 6000 travailleurs ont été mis au chômage ces dernières années suite à la fermeture de pas moins de 25 entreprises publiques locales relevant en majorité du secteur du BTPH. Le terrorisme s'est mêlé à son tour à l'entreprise de liquidation en sabotant et en incendiant une partie de l'outil de production et de réalisation.

La pauvreté gagne du terrain et les maux sociaux prolifèrent à un rythme vertigineux. Il suffit de faire un tour au chef-lieu de wilaya ou dans les villages et douars pour constater de visu l'ampleur du désastre. Des victimes de l'exclusion sociale, dont des femmes et des enfants, sont de plus en plus nombreuses à envahir les rues et les lieux publics à la recherche de quoi nourrir leur famille. De nombreux enfants et adolescents sont obligés d'abandonner l'école pour se consacrer à des tâches similaires ou au travail au noir.

Plusieurs familles ont dû fuir la misère et le terrorisme pour s'installer dans les bidonvilles situés aux alentours des chefs-lieux de commune. Elles sont plus de 5000, selon une source officielle. Elles connaissent la faim en l'absence d'une prise en charge sociale effective. Les inondations enregistrées le 10 novembre 2001 ont aggravé davantage leur sort. Certains sinistrés demeurent encore sous les tentes, notamment au nord-ouest de la wilaya. Même si la wilaya a bénéficié de près de 2000 milliards de centimes tous programmes confondus depuis 2001, l'état des lieux demeure malheureusement inchangé au grand dam des habitants. Pis, la situation ne cesse de se dégrader au fil des jours, car les actions lancées jusque-là n'ont pas eu l'effet escompté sur le dur quotidien de la population locale. Les mouvements de protestation enregistrés dernièrement un peu partout à travers la wilaya témoignent de la précarité des conditions de vie dans les quartiers populaires et les zones rurales notamment. Les citoyens ont particulièrement dénoncé la manière dont est gérée leur wilaya et l'incapacité des responsables et élus locaux de prendre en charge leurs

préoccupations majeures. Devant la persistance du marasme et du statu quo, ils ont l'impression que leur région est oubliée, voire marginalisée, par les autorités centrales du pays. «C'est la wilaya la plus déshéritée du pays, malgré les multiples atouts qu'elle recèle dans les domaines essentiels du développement, tels que l'agriculture, l'industrie, la pêche et le tourisme», affirme-t-on ici et là. [...]

Rien d'étonnant dans ces conditions à ce que les forces du mal s'enracinent dans la région. Et comme un malheur n'arrive jamais seul, la violence terroriste continue à s'abattre sur les pauvres villageois même après la concorde civile du président de la République. La liste des victimes ne cesse de s'allonger au fil des mois et l'on redoute le pire durant le mois sacré du Ramadhan.

Un climat de peur et d'insécurité s'est déjà installé particulièrement dans les zones rurales où les derniers attentats ont fait plus de 120 morts. Plusieurs familles ont dû abandonner leur douar pour des destinations plus ou moins sécurisées, car rien n'a été fait, selon leurs dires, pour les rassurer ou les doter des moyens de protection nécessaires. Qu'attendent les autorités concernées pour prendre les mesures qui s'imposent ? La présence de GLD et de Patriotes ne peut suffire à elle seule, les habitants ont besoin d'être rassurés par des activités militaires plus fréquentes et plus efficaces." (El Watan 12 November 2002, "Ramadhan dans la wilaya de Chlef/ Chômage, terrorisme et misère")

Tiaret: return might be only remedy to solve problems (September 2002)

- Tiaret has been particularly hit by the bad socio-economic situation and terrorist attacks
- The result has been a massive exodus of civilians to Meghila, causing serious problems, which would only be solved by the return of the displaced

"La wilaya de Tiaret qui s'étend sur le 1/5e du territoire national avec 2.008.664 ha et nonobstant sa position stratégique, caractérisée par son implantation au cœur de l'Algérie (centre-ouest des hauts plateaux occidentaux) et bordée par huit wilayas: Relizane, Mascara, Saïda, El-Bayadh, Laghouat, Djelfa, Médéa et Tissemsilt.

Elle reste durement marquée par les effets de la crise socio-économique et politique ainsi que des séquelles du terrorisme, qui avait plongé une grande majorité de la population (7 communes de la zone Nord, entre autres), dans la précarité qu'accentuèrent les données liées à la géophysique, l'hydrographie et le relief du terrain.

Exode et misère humaine

Résultat : un exode massif s'est déclenché, initialement, vers les grandes zones urbaines puis retour sur Meghila, une daïra issue du dernier découpage qui n'arrive plus à assumer ses fonctions, liées aux besoins immédiats d'une population qui a grossi démesurément. Elle est devenue, malgré elle, le centre de gravitation de toute la zone nord de la wilaya. [...]

Le terrorisme a ravagé la région

Une chose est au moins sûre, dans cette historique contrée, le terrorisme a été ravageur et a trouvé le terreau propice à sa propagation. La délégation officielle conduite par Ibrahimi Merad, wali de Tiaret en foulant le sol de la commune de Meghila (ex Keria), a été, littéralement submergée par la foule, dont de nombreux jeunes venus conter les dures conditions de vie, accentuées depuis l'afflux en masse de tous les villageois des douars environnants (El Henaich El Annacer El Aich, Shaouria, Guettar...). Le wali, venu essentiellement, pour visiter les travaux d'aménagement urbains, le rééquilibrage de l'affluent de « l'Oued Rhiou » et d'autres équipements, a été amené à annuler la réalisation d'un CSP (complexe sportif de proximité) et orienta les projections sur certains autres problèmes plus préoccupants pour la population. Les gens de Meghila ne paient plus les factures de Sonelgaz et par conséquent, la fourniture d'énergie leur fut

coupée, beaucoup de jeunes en proie au chômage n'arrivaient pas à contenir leur colère et doivent encore prendre leur mal en patience, car la solution ne pourra provenir, qu'après leur retour vers leurs douars. D'autres, logés dans le cadre de la résorption de l'habitat précaire (une centaine) au quartier Zabor, n'étaient mus que par la quête d'un toit." (El Watan 23 September 2002, Tiaret : Option retour au nord)

Displaced face social and economic hardship in overcrowded cities (August 2002)

- The suburb Boukhors on the periphery of Saïda has become a magnet for displaced seeking a safer place
- The inhabitants of the suburb have to endure serious social problems, such as unemployment, delinquency, violence, prostitution, problems of transport, and serious health threats caused by poor sanitary conditions

"Boukhors est le nom évocateur de ce quartier devenu populaire et surpeuplé à la faveur de la décennie noire. Situé à la périphérie nord de la ville de Saïda, abritant quelques 33.000 âmes, il s'est transformé au cours de ces dernières années en un véritable réceptacle de populations de différentes tribus, issues de couches sociales défavorisées : les Krermas, les Djâafras, les Rzâinas, les Ouled Hanoun, les Kouacems et tutti quanti.

C'est le terrorisme aveugle qui, dans ses moments forts, a provoqué le déplacement de ces populations loin de leur lieu d'origine, pour former des ensembles agglomérés. Boukhors n'a en réalité rien d'un ensemble urbain. Son tissu urbain est une entorse aux normes urbanistiques. Les habitants endurent les pires difficultés au quotidien : la misère, le chômage et la souffrance sont partout présents, ceux-ci ayant entraîné l'émergence de la délinquance, de la violence et de la prostitution. La gestion des problèmes des jeunes chômeurs c'est la croix et la bannière, malgré les efforts consentis par les élus en matière d'emplois. Le problème du transport est devenu épineux : les quelques mini-bus privés assurant la desserte du quartier sont vétustes, leur nombre s'avère insuffisant surtout pour ceux qui sont assujettis au rythme de la migration pendulaire. Les taxieurs se refusent souvent à tort ou à raison, à assurer des courses dans cette localité où les chemins sont délabrés. L'émanation des odeurs pestilentielles provenant des bouches d'égout et des conduites d'évacuation des eaux usées empoisonne la vie des riverains, les risques des maladies à transmission hydrique (M.T.H.), hante encore les esprits. Boukhors est en passe de devenir la cité de tous les maux.

Il y a urgence dans la prise en charge de ses problèmes complexes." (El Watan 6 August 2002)

Health

Displaced living in a stadium face serious health threats (November 2002)

- Three families displaced in 1997 by massacres have found refuge in the cloakrooms of the stadium of Beni Messous
- They feel abandoned and suffer from serious health conditions
- The cloakrooms are in a bad sanitary state and are very cold in winter time

"Quatorze familles, dont onze victimes des inondations du 10 novembre 2001, ont saisi le chef du gouvernement, Ali Benflis, lui demandant de leur trouver une solution.

Ces familles, qui ont adressé une correspondance similaire au président de l'APN, M.Krim Younés, sont actuellement réfugiées dans les vestiaires du stade communal de Beni Messous. Auparavant, elles occupaient des maisons de fortune à Ain Ferran, Cheni et aux carrières. Trois familles occupent les lieux,

bien avant celles qui ont été victimes des inondations. Leur installation dans ces locaux remonte à 1997, après le massacre de Sidi-Youcef. Ces familles se disent être des laissés pour compte, puisque 26 autres familles rescapées du massacre, ont été relogées. Au moment de l'évacuation, elles se trouvaient, disent-elles aujourd'hui, disséminées auprès de proches parents. Certains recasés du stade de Beni Messous, ou pour être plus précis, des vestiaires du stade de Beni Messous, souffrent aujourd'hui de maladies respiratoires, certains sont atteints d'une épidémie de gale. Les vestiaires du stade ne disposent que d'une seule prise d'eau potable, qui se trouve à proximité d'un égout éventré, et d'une cuvette sanitaire collective obstruée. Leurs conditions de vie dans ces vestiaires sont déplorable : Trois baraques de 32 m², faites en bois les abritent. Dans chacune d'entre elles, il y a 3 à 4 familles, et les pièces sont séparées entre elles à l'aide de couvertures et de draps. Il fait un temps glacial durant l'hiver, en absence de vitres sur les soi-disant fenêtres, avec un degré d'humidité qui « transperce » les os.

Les familles pleurent leur sort, « nous sommes originaires de Beni Messous, et la seule faute que nous ayons commise, est de ne pas avoir volé, pour nous enrichir et nous permettre un logement », dira furieusement une dame. Un jeune rescapé du massacre de Sidi Youcef nous dira à son tour, « Nous ne demandons pas de l'aumône, nous sollicitons seulement de l'aide et l'assistance de l'Etat." (Le Quotidien d'Oran 21 November 2002)

Internal displacement aggravates the problem of child abuse (2002)

"Child abuse is a problem. Hospitals treat numerous child-abuse cases every year, but many cases go unreported. Laws against child abuse have not led to notable numbers of prosecutions against offenders. Legal experts maintain that the Penal and Family Codes do not offer children sufficient protection. NGO's that specialize in care of children cite an increase in domestic violence aimed at children, which they attribute to the "culture of violence" developed during the years since 1992 and the social dislocations caused by the movement of rural families to the cities to escape terrorist violence. Such NGO's have educational programs aimed at reducing the level of violence, but lack funding. Children often are the victims of terrorist attacks." (US DOS 4 March 2002, sect.5)

Nutrition

More than 5,000 displaced in Chlef suffer from hunger (November 2002)

"Chlef est livrée à elle-même, elle est au bord de l'effondrement, c'est du moins l'impression qui se dégage, en ce mois du Ramadhan, des discussions des habitants à propos de la situation dramatique que vit leur wilaya.

[...]

Plusieurs familles ont dû fuir la misère et le terrorisme pour s'installer dans les bidonvilles situés aux alentours des chefs-lieux de commune. Elles sont plus de 5000, selon une source officielle. Elles connaissent la faim en l'absence d'une prise en charge sociale effective. Les inondations enregistrées le 10 novembre 2001 ont aggravé davantage leur sort. Certains sinistrés demeurent encore sous les tentes, notamment au nord-ouest de la wilaya." (El Watan 12 November 2002)

Shelter

Displaced were expelled during eradication of shanty towns (September-December 2002)

- Around one hundred families living in Douar Flélis were relocated in September 2002, while some 80 displaced families were expelled and their property destroyed
- Some 50 families re-occupied the site after having been expelled, hoping to be relocated elsewhere
- However, in December 2002, these displaced families were again expelled by the authorities

Some hundred families were relocated

"Une centaine de familles, occupant des habitations précaires à «Douar Flélis» seront relogées, aujourd'hui [9 September 2002], à Hassi Ben Okba, apprend-on auprès du chef de la daïra d'Oran. Cette opération, qui entre dans le cadre de l'éradication des bidonvilles [...]
«Cette opération de relogement fait suite à celle effectuée auparavant pour les citoyens mal logés de Douar Belgaid, Haï Bouâmama, El Kerma et Sidi El Bachir, et qui a vu le relogement de 253 familles», explique le chef de daïra.

But some 80 displaced families were expelled and their property was destroyed

Parallèlement au relogement de ces familles, d'autres seront expulsées de la même cité, durant la même journée. En effet, quelque 80 familles qui avaient depuis quelque temps squatté les lieux seront expulsées, pour «mettre un terme aux occupations illicites de certains sites et à la prolifération des bidonvilles à Oran», souligne le chef de daïra.

Dans ce cadre, les habitations de fortune seront démantelées immédiatement après l'expulsion de ces familles." (Le Quotidien d'Oran 9 September 2002)

"[...] un important dispositif de sécurité a été mis en place pour éviter tout débordement de la part des familles expulsées.

Ces dernières, apprend-on sur place, ont occupé les lieux depuis quelques mois seulement et viennent de quelques wilayas limitrophes. [...] Les effets des familles expulsées, qui refusaient de quitter les lieux, ont été embarqués à bord des véhicules pour être acheminés vers la fourrière.

Le souci des responsables était que ces familles ne devaient en aucun cas rester sur les lieux, afin de les empêcher de reconstruire leurs baraques. En effet, pendant que les expulsions étaient notifiées aux habitants, plusieurs bulldozers étaient occupés à raser les quelques dizaines de baraques qui servaient d'habitations à ces familles." (Le Quotidien d'Oran 10 September 2002)

Some expelled families reoccupied the site

"Après l'opération d'expulsion menée par les services techniques de la daïra d'Oran, ces derniers ont été surpris de voir le site du douar Flélis réoccupé. Une cinquantaine de familles ont réinvesti le site malgré la démolition des habitations de fortune qu'elles occupaient sur place." (Le Quotidien d'Oran 18 September 2002)

But these were again expelled in December 2002

"Plus de trente familles ayant squatté, depuis plusieurs semaines, le site de «Douar Flélis» seront expulsées, aujourd'hui, par les services de la daïra et de l'APC d'Oran, en collaboration avec les services de sécurité. Ces familles, apprend-on, ont déjà fait l'objet, en septembre dernier, de la même mesure d'expulsion.

Cependant, à la faveur des dernières élections locales et du mois de Ramadhan, certaines de ces familles sont revenues sur le site, espérant un hypothétique relogement." (Le Quotidien d'Oran 14 December 2002)

Some officials stated that reason for the families' presence was to join the list of housing beneficiaries (September 2002)

"Après l'opération d'expulsion menée par les services techniques de la daïra d'Oran, ces derniers ont été surpris de voir le site du douar Flélis réoccupé. Une cinquantaine de familles ont réinvesti le site malgré la démolition des habitations de fortune qu'elles occupaient sur place. Selon un responsable des services techniques de la daïra, «ces familles sont venues, récemment, dans le but de bénéficier de relogement. Lors d'une opération de recensement menée par nos services, il a été établi que la grande majorité de ces familles provenait d'autres wilayas. Les squatters auraient, selon leurs déclarations, fui l'insécurité et le terrorisme». Et d'ajouter: «Il faut savoir aussi que d'autres familles sont venues des quartiers de la ville, tels Les Planteurs et El-Hamri. Leur seul but est de faire partie des listes des bénéficiaires de logements, ignorant que nos services avaient déjà effectué une opération de recensement des vrais occupants du site en question». Une nouvelle opération d'expulsion des squatters est en préparation au niveau des services techniques de la daïra et de la commune d'Oran. «L'expulsion des familles sera probablement programmée pour la semaine prochaine», confie le responsable des services techniques de la daïra d'Oran." (Le Quotidien d'Oran 18 September 2002)

Displaced were expelled twice after floods destroyed their homes (September 2002)

- Thirteen families, having fled terrorist attacks, were rendered homeless after the November 2001 floodings
- Five families, all consisting of widows with children, sought shelter by squatting new appartements, but were expelled from these
- They then sought refuge in school buildings, but were expelled from these as well, after which they set up tents made out of bedsheets

"Cinq familles se trouvent sans toit. Jusque-là, l'affaire est banale « puisque des dizaines de familles algériennes se trouvent dans ce même cas (ou sont menacées de l'être) ». Mais quand on sait qu'il s'agit de familles des victimes de terrorisme, on est en droit de se demander quelle place attribue t-on à ceux qui ont donné ce qu'ils avaient de plus cher à ce pays ?

L'affaire remonte à plus d'un mois lorsque, sinistrées des suites des inondations de novembre dernier, treize familles de victimes de terrorisme se sont retrouvées sans le moindre toit. Leur cas est vite pris en charge par l'organisation des familles des victimes de terrorisme présidée par madame Flici, qui a, des dires de l'un des membres du conseil national Bouhajeb H. « saisi toutes les autorités ». Cependant, pour cinq d'entre elles, le cas est très délicat, puisqu'il s'agit de femmes veuves ayant à leur charge des enfants. Elles décident, devant l'indifférence qu'on leur a signifiée, de squatter cinq logements du tout nouveau quartier d'Essabah. Quelques semaines plus tard, elles ont été chassées de ces habitations (de type F1 selon les précisions des responsables de l'organisation des victimes de terrorisme), attribuées à d'autres bénéficiaires venus du douar Flallis nous signale t-on. Humiliées et touchées dans leur amour propre, les familles décident alors d'élire refuge au seul centre de formation existant dans le quartier. Elles vivent pendant quelques jours dans la cour dudit centre avant qu'elles ne soient chassées une seconde fois. Elles se réfugient alors sous des tentes confectionnées à partir de bouts de tissus formés essentiellement de draps et autres couvertures en guise de toit. Pourtant, elles n'ont rien demandé. Sauf un toit qui les protège elles et leurs enfants. Elles, qui ont donné leurs maris durant les années noires. L'une d'entre elles a sept enfants à sa charge. Contactée à propos de cette affaire, madame Flici présidente de l'organisation nous dira :« On ne comprend pas comment on fait dans la discrimination ! Des terroristes qui bénéficient de logements alors

que leurs victimes restent sous les étoiles et sans toit ». On ne peut être plus clair. Les cinq familles qui se trouvent à la rue, ne demandent qu'un toit. Et elles y ont le droit." (El Watan 23 September 2002, Victimes du terrorisme; cinq familles dans la rue)

Weakened by illness and poverty, displaced faced expulsion (August 2002)

- Over 60 displaced families, having fled terrorism at the end of the nineties, faced expulsion by the police forces
- Besides this fear, the displaced have to cope with poverty, unhealthiness, and the absence of public services, water, gas, electricity and drainage

"Elles sont plus de 60 familles, entassées dans des bicoques construites en parpaing et en tôle ondulée, à attendre, la peur au ventre, l'arrivée des policiers pour les sommer de quitter les lieux.

Avant d'atterrir au début de la dernière décennie dans cette favela, ces dizaines de familles ont dû vivre plusieurs années sans feu ni lieu. Au départ, elles étaient 87 familles à quitter les hameaux reculés du sud d'Alger pour fuir la barbarie terroriste. Les uns ont installé des huttes sur la poche foncière contiguë à la station de bus de Boumaâti, les autres ont squatté les appartements réalisés dans le cadre du fameux projet des 234 logements qui a d'ailleurs donné son nom à ce bidonville. Entamé en 1990, ce projet n'arrive pas à voir le bout du tunnel puisque 13 ans plus tard, seuls 120 logements sont achevés de construction. Présentement, des «bourdonnements courent dans la ville» : les indus occupants de cette «cité» vont être expulsés incessamment à la suite d'une plainte déposée par l'APC d'El Harrach en 1993. Cette information a été confirmée par l'administrateur de la commune d'EL Harrach, en l'occurrence M. Sangui, qui déclare : «Ces gens sont des squatters, des indus occupants. De ce fait, ils vont faire l'objet d'une expulsion en application d'un jugement prononcé par les autorités judiciaires.» Les nuits de ces familles indigentes doivent être impitoyablement longues. La mort dans l'âme, elles craignent les foudres des policiers qui débarqueront sous peu sur le site et traumatiser encore une fois leurs enfants chétifs déjà profondément rongés par la typhoïde et autres maladies des pauvres. Subitement, le syndrome de l'année 1999 refait surface dans les esprits. Tout le monde ici se souvient de cette triste journée d'hiver quand des policiers, matraques à la main, ont expulsé 17 familles. «Les policiers ont terrorisé nos enfants en tirant des coups de sommation dans l'air et en proférant des propos obscènes à l'égard de nos femmes», raconte un témoin de la scène. Au-delà de la pauvreté, de l'insalubrité, de l'absence du service public et de l'inexistence des commodités les plus élémentaires (eau, gaz, électricité et assainissement), c'est la peur de se retrouver dans la rue qui taraude les esprits et qui ronge la chair de ces exclus." (El Watan 3 August 2002)

Ben Aknoun: displaced were to be expelled from houses (July 2002)

"Trois familles habitant le célibatorium de la cité Sonelgaz de Ben Aknoun ont reçu récemment des mises en demeure émanant de la justice, à la suite d'une plainte de la société précitée, les sommant de quitter ces bâtisses. Ces dernières seront ainsi rasées pour les besoins d'un «projet» prévu sur le site en question.

«Avant-hier, un huissier de justice accompagné des forces de l'ordre nous a signifié l'injonction de Sonelgaz», racontent les concernés. Par ailleurs, pas moins de 38 personnes habitent depuis plus d'une dizaine d'années ces «gîtes» construits en amiante, et à la vue des journalistes de la presse nationale, une femme enceinte pleurait au seuil de sa «maison» et se lamentait sur son sort et celui de ses enfants traumatisés. «Pourquoi nous et toujours nous ? Nous sommes de pauvres gens ! Ou devrions-nous aller ?», visiblement bouleversée par la décision de la justice. Leur ribambelle d'enfants autant que leurs minces bagages traînent par-ci par-là dans la courette de cette cité qu'ils doivent désormais quitter après y avoir passé plus de 18 ans. Parmi les concernés figurent des employés de Sonelgaz qui ont légalement occupé ces constructions et aussi des victimes du terrorisme, ayant fui leurs régions, infestées par les hordes

sanguinaires, durant la décennie écoulée. Il est vrai que ces derniers occupent illégalement les logements en question, mais les autorités se doivent de caser ces familles menacées d'expulsion." (El Watan 25 July 2002)

Displaced living in a stadium since 1997 rejected government relocation plans (July 2002)

- Displaced families have been living in a stadium since 1997, when they escaped a massacre perpetrated in the village of Sidi Youcef
- Relocation proposals have been rejected because of the unsuitability of the proposed terrains

"Quatorze familles sinistrées ont trouvé refuge, faute de mieux, dans le stade de Beni Messous, dont douze sont victimes des inondations du 10 novembre 2001, les deux restantes y vivent depuis 1997. Elles comptent parmi les rescapées du massacre terroriste perpétré la même année au village Sidi Youcef.

Hier, le président de l'APC de Beni Messous a convoqué douze de ces familles. Selon des membres de ces familles, le responsable en question leur a proposé, comme solution à leur relogement, des parcelles de terrain. Solution, selon les mêmes interlocuteurs, qui n'a pas été acceptée par l'ensemble de ces familles. «La plupart ont rejeté cette solution, car les parcelles proposées sont situées dans un ravin et au bord d'un oued, près de Sidi Youcef. En outre, ces terrains sont accidentés. Il est ainsi impossible d'y construire un toit. Cela dit, nous sommes tous des démunis. Nous n'avons pas les moyens de construire nos maisons», expliquent certains des sinistrés. Et de poursuivre : «Nous avons demandé des logements sociaux. Les réponses des responsables locaux se contredisent quant à la suite à donner à cette option. Les uns disent que l'APC ne dispose pas de logements sociaux, d'autres disent qu'elle en compte une soixantaine mais ils ne nous sont pas destinés.» «Je suis un rescapé des massacres perpétrés en 1997 à Sidi Youcef. Le P/APC de Beni Messous ne m'a pas convoqué comme il l'a fait avec les autres familles. Mon sort est inconnu. J'habite dans ce stade depuis cinq ans», explique un père de famille. [...] Les 14 familles habitent dans des chalets en préfabriqué. Chacune y a aménagé son espace en improvisant des cloisons avec des couvertures et des bâches. Pour les toilettes, une latrine collective est installée à côté d'un semblant de fontaine, pour s'approvisionner en eau. Les compteurs électriques sont en partie endommagés. En ces lieux, on a enregistré, il y a quelques jours, 10 cas de gale et 15 cas d'asthme. Ce sont pour la plupart des enfants. Nous nous sommes présentés, en vain, au siège de l'APC de Beni Messous pour avoir l'avis des responsables locaux quant à la suite à donner au problème de relogement de ces familles." (El Watan 3 July 2002, Quatorze familles dans un stade)

Severe housing crisis in Algeria affects the whole of society (October 2000-November 2001)

- Recent recovery plan falls short by an estimated 1.2 million homes
- Average occupancy rate is 7.5 persons per household
- 52% of households include as many as 15 to 20 persons in one house

"The number of new housing units being produced is insignificant, given the real scale of the needs. Funding for the housing sector has always been too low. The recent recovery plan is also proving to be inadequate. The shortfall is estimated at more than 1.2 million homes, yet only 80,000 new homes are made available every year. The average occupancy rate is 7.5 persons per household, but the facts are that, for 52% of households, families of 15 to 20 are still crowded into small, dilapidated homes. 30% of households are at a critical level of overcrowding, with a further 28% having an unacceptably high number of residents. One of the hidden side-effects of this

overcrowding has been the increase in the average age for marriage, reaching 31 for men and 29 for women, as anyone wishing to marry needs both employment and accommodation, two increasingly rare commodities in Algeria today. Despite all the campaigns to eliminate slums by bringing in bulldozers, the CNES still calculates that some 518,000 homes are unfit for housing, adding that the real figure is probably much higher; in other words, more than 2.5 million people today live in 'hovels'.

In the summer of 2001, a campaign was launched for rental/sale of publicly subsidised housing. In just a few weeks, more than 350,000 applications were filed, for a programme of only 20,000 homes for which no specifications were given as to the sites, the companies involved or the dates for occupancy. Reasonable doubt may therefore be cast on the statement by authorities that 750,000 dwellings were to be made available by end 2000 (§110 of the Algerian Report to the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Committee).

Further, given the uncertainty of property rights that limits access to credit and guarantees for transactions, the housing shortage problems cannot be fully solved through a public recovery programme." (FIDH November 2001)

"Economic and political mismanagement in the past has created a severe social crisis in Algeria. Housing provision is seriously inadequate both in terms of quality and quantity; at least 2 million new housing units are needed and much of the existing stock is in very poor condition. The physical infrastructure needs considerable attention and social provision – largely because of the economic restructuring programme and violence – has undergone serious declines in the fields of education and health. Urban service provision is inadequate and administration is poor. All these circumstances, alongside economic hardship, political exclusion and deficient security, are ideal breeding grounds for renewed anger against government and for a regeneration of violence amongst those who feel excluded and marginalised.

[...]

Housing: There is a desperate need for adequate housing, given population growth rates of in excess of 3 per cent per annum until the 1980s and of 2.6 per cent since 1985 alongside urbanisation growth rates of 4.5 per cent per year. In 1996, 28 million people lived in 3.6 million housing units - an occupancy ratio of 7.8 - in which 55 per cent of the housing stock had been built before independence in 1962 and 10 per cent is considered to be unsanitary. There is an estimated shortage of at least 2 million units and the current construction rate of 100,000 per year is only slightly in excess of the annual growth in demand. This should be a high priority area for state intervention, whether direct or through public-private partnership." (ICG October 2000, sect. II, D, 4 and sect. V, D, 2)

Water and Sanitation

IDPs living in countryside deprived of drinking water (July 2002)

- Sixty displaced families living in the douar Zaârta (wilaya of Aïn Defla) voiced complaints about the lack of water, the bad state of the roads, and the absence of a health centre

"Au douar Zaârta, dans la commune de Zeddine (wilaya de Aïn Defla), les 60 familles qui composent ce hameau se plaignent de l'absence totale d'eau potable, de l'état défectueux des routes et de l'inexistence d'un centre de santé.

Selon le vice-président de l'APC, «la commune alimente une fois par semaine l'école mais ne peut satisfaire tous les habitants du fait que nous manquons de moyens». Les citoyens s'approvisionnent en ce liquide précieux d'une source distante de sept kilomètres. Ce douar, qui a subi les affres du terrorisme et

qui continue à vivre dans la peur, est dépourvu d'armes. «Nous n'avons pas de quoi nous défendre alors que les terroristes rôdent autour de la commune de Zeddine», relève un citoyen. Les habitants s'en prennent à leurs élus «qui ne font rien» pour leur rendre la vie plus supportable. «Les élus passent leur temps à badigeonner l'entrée du village.» Les habitants du Fonal et de haï Mazouni crient à l'exclusion. «Nous ne sommes pas les vrais bénéficiaires de ces logements», dira le président de l'association du quartier qui compare ces habitations à des cages à poules. La plupart de ces citoyens, qui sont venus de Bathia, El Hassania, Zeddine et El Mayène, affirmeront avoir mis toutes leurs économies dans l'achat de ces logements. «Nous avons fui le terrorisme pour nous installer ici», dira l'un deux." (El Watan 3 July 2002, Le calvaire des populations rurales)

PATTERNS OF RETURN AND RESETTLEMENT

General

Return is slow and problematic; the example of Lekouassem in the 'Triangle of Death' (July 2002)

- Lekouassem (wilaya of Tissemsilt) has been deserted since 1996, and since one and a half year an organised return could be noted
- In reality, the return programme does not seem to be structural or viable, since half of the apartments have not been finished yet, and all lack water and electricity
- Only 12 out of 70 returned farmers have applied for aid

"A l'ouest, c'est Remka, que vous connaissez. Au nord, c'est Tadjdit que vous connaissez aussi. Ici, c'est Lekouassem, que vous ne connaissez pas, car personne n'habite là depuis 1996.

Nous sommes à 20 km de l'ouest de Lardjem, une petite commune elle-même située à 30 km du chef-lieu de la wilaya de Tissemsilt. Le territoire de la wilaya de Relizane et son fameux maquis de Remka, infesté encore des groupes armés islamistes, ne sont qu'à une portée de fusil de chasse. Cette contrée montagneuse de l'extrême ouest de Tissemsilt est encore sous le choc des années noires du terrorisme et sous la menace persistante des troupes du GIA qui sévissent dans la partie est de Relizane et dont on dit qu'elles ont pris la nouvelle appellation de Houmat daâwa salafia (HDS). Jusqu'en 1996, 2400 personnes habitaient le douar Lekouassem, sur les berges de l'oued qui porte le même nom, serpentant entre les flancs des massifs montagneux séparant les deux wilayas voisines. Depuis un an et demi, un retour des populations dans ces régions a été enclenché sous l'impulsion des pouvoirs publics, qui ont déployé le dispositif sécuritaire nécessaire à l'opération de repeuplement ainsi que la construction de nouveaux logements sur les lieux mêmes des haouchs détruits par les terroristes. 300 habitants ont jusqu'ici regagné leurs demeures, représentant quelque 70 foyers. 42 logements seulement ont été mis à leur disposition, dont la moitié n'a pas encore été totalement achevée. Toutes les familles réimplantées ont immédiatement entrepris de redonner vie à leurs terres agricoles situées sur les berges de oued Lekouassem, dont les vignobles approvisionnaient autrefois en raisin de table des communes de 4 wilayas (Tissemsilt, Tiaret, Chlef et Relizane). Des hectares de vignes ont été détruits par les groupes terroristes, lorsqu'ils se sont rendus maîtres des lieux. A présent, c'est le maraîchage qui prime dans les travaux agricoles. Pour rejoindre Lekouassem, il n'y a qu'un seul moyen : posséder un véhicule. La ligne de transport public n'a pas encore été ouverte. Les agriculteurs réinstallés comptent sur leurs propres moyens pour descendre à Lardjem pour faire leurs emplettes, hors produits alimentaires, qui sont totalement produits dans leur propre village. Sous les sièges de chacune de ces vieilles 404 parcourant cette route accidentée est dissimulée une arme de guerre avec un ou deux chargeurs. Les autres véhicules empruntant ce tronçon de 20 km sont ceux des services de sécurité. Une compagnie de l'ANP et deux détachements de la garde communale ont été installés sur les hauteurs du douar. La route s'arrête à Lekouassem. Impossible d'aller plus loin, bien que la chaussée existe. L'Etat ne répond de la sécurité d'aucun voyageur empruntant cet axe qui est, pourtant, le plus court chemin entre Tissemsilt et Relizane. Comme la localité de Tadjdit, sur le versant nord de la montagne, le territoire liant Lekouassem au chef-lieu de la commune limitrophe de Remka est resté sous l'empire de la terreur des GIA.

RIDJAL WAQIFOUN

S'étant initialement proposés de nous conduire sur les lieux où a été lancée cette «opération pilote de repeuplement» tant vantée par les autorités de wilaya, les responsables de l'APC de Lardjem se sont dérobés au dernier moment. Alors que nous nous sommes présentés au siège de l'APC comme convenu la veille, le président et le vice-président de l'APC sont partis l'un après l'autre à la recherche d'un mystérieux Poclain, nous a-t-on expliqué. Cette lamentable défection des élus a été rattrapée par un simple et vieux fonctionnaire de l'APC, aâmi Abdelkader, la soixantaine, un ancien chef Patriote qui a croisé le fer avec le GIA pendant des années. Lui-même habitant à mi-chemin entre le chef-lieu de la commune et Lekouassem. Il se chargera de nous conduire dans le douar reconquis. Dans le véhicule que nous empruntons, conduit par un Patriote travaillant à mi-temps comme transporteur public, aâmi Abdelkader plaisante : «Ne t'inquiète pas. Nous allons uniquement à Remka. Pas plus !» Il éclate de rire. A quelques kilomètres de la sortie de la ville, à Mechta Farès, il nous indique le lieu où il y a quelques années, a explosé une bombe au passage d'un groupe de fellahs à bord d'un véhicule. Trois personnes avaient été tuées. Le chauffeur, grièvement blessé, a pu conduire le véhicule sur quelques centaines de mètres. «C'est chez moi qu'ils ont rendu l'âme. Les terroristes ne se sont pas approchés. J'ai monté la garde jusqu'à l'arrivée de l'armée. C'était un jour de Ramadhan.» Arrivés à hauteur d'un petit douar en bordure de la route, notre véhicule s'arrête. Aâmi Abdelkader descend. Il rentre chez lui pour déposer trois pastèques et ressort avec une kalachnikov en bandoulière. Le torse bombé, la démarche sûre, des lunettes cachant un regard brouillé par des éclats, cet ancien caporal de l'ANP à l'Académie interarmes de Cherchel donne tout son sens à l'expression «ridjal waqifoun» que d'aucuns croyaient vide de sens. A haouch Tagrara, il se rappellera du jour de l'élection présidentielle de novembre 1995, lorsqu'un groupe terroriste, de quatorze éléments, s'appêtant à tendre une embuscade, a été broyé par les forces combinées des services de sécurité. «Le capitaine de l'ANP à l'époque était d'une grande compétence. Le groupe terroriste a été décimé avant d'avoir pu s'embusquer», nous dit le chef patriote. Nous traversons le douar M'Khaldia, où résidaient autrefois une trentaine de familles, vivant de la culture des céréales. Les maisons sont aujourd'hui vides.

RETOUR DIFFICILE

Aucun signe de vie, ni enfant ni adulte, autour des masures abandonnées. Aucune famille n'est revenue malgré l'installation d'une section de la garde communale. Certains agriculteurs tentent de relancer leurs cultures, mais rentrent le soir à Lardjem. «Ici commence Lekouassem», lance aâmi Abdelkader. A l'entrée, un détachement de la garde communale. Il y'en a un autre à l'autre extrémité du douar. Au milieu, une compagnie de l'ANP. Tout autour, disséminés sur les monticules surplombant le lit de l'oued ruisselant et gorgé de verdure, on entrevoit les nouveaux logements construits par l'Etat. On les appelle également des houachs, malgré la couleur vive de la peinture et la toiture en tuiles rouges. C'est l'effort déployé par l'Etat pour faire revenir les citoyens dans leur milieu rural naturel. La première tranche représente 42 haouchs, d'autres opérations suivront, nous a-t-on affirmé. On ne tarit pas d'éloges du côté des autorités sur ces maisons construites par l'Etat, mais sur place, le discours est quelque peu nuancé par les premiers concernés. Une maison sur deux n'est pas entièrement finie. Toutes sont sans eau ni électricité. Pour éclairer les deux-pièces, les habitants ont recours à des branchements illicites. L'eau, il faut aller la chercher dans les sources qui ne manquent pas autour de l'oued. «L'AEP, l'électricité..., c'est une question de réalisation. On attend la venue des entreprises de réalisation», nous disent les citoyens interrogés. Le ralentissement des travaux serait dû à des problèmes de financement dont souffriraient les entrepreneurs, dont quelques-uns montrent un manque d'empressement à engager les travaux de finition. Les bénéficiaires n'insistent pas sur ces lacunes. Mohamed, garde communal, installé dans son nouveau haouch avec sa famille, résume la situation et la patience de ses concitoyens : «Qui a vu la mort accepte la fièvre», dit-il. Joutant les sièges de la garde communale, deux écoles primaires ont été réalisées. Deux classes ont accompli la première année scolaire. Des élèves de 1re et de 3e années fondamentales ont été encadrés par un enseignant. A la prochaine rentrée, d'autres classes seront ouvertes, nous a-t-on indiqué. Cela répondra aux vœux des nouveaux arrivants, qui attachent une importance primordiale à la scolarité de leurs enfants. Les infrastructures scolaires étant réalisées, même si, à l'exemple des haouchs, elles ne sont pas alimentées en eau et en électricité, il suffit de créer de nouveaux postes d'enseignants. A noter que les deux écoles ont été reconstruites sur les ruines d'anciennes structures incendiées par les terroristes. Une maison de jeunes a

été également livrée récemment. Elle sera équipée et mise en fonction dès que les jeunes seront suffisamment nombreux, conviennent les gens de Lekouassem. L'unité de soins est actuellement sous la responsabilité de l'ANP, mais elle reçoit la population civile.

EN ATTENDANT LES PROMESSES...

Au chapitre de l'agriculture, qui est l'élément vital de cette opération qui tient en haleine tout le staff de la wilaya, les aides publiques ne sont pas encore arrivées aux bénéficiaires potentiels, en vertu des engagements pris par les autorités. Là aussi, la machine devrait être relancée avec une meilleure information en direction des agriculteurs installés. Ils sont arrivés l'esprit plein de promesses fermes, mais ils n'ont que très vaguement ou pas du tout entendu parler des programmes de soutien à l'agriculture, comme le PNDA. Au service de l'agriculture de la daïra de Lardjem, on nous signale uniquement douze dossiers entrant dans le cadre de ce fonds de soutien. Six demandes ont été avalisées (2 pépinières et 4 dossiers d'arboriculture), a-t-on appris au niveau de l'administration. Pourquoi seulement 12 demandes sur 70 agriculteurs installés ? Le chef de service évoque les appréhensions des fellahs autour des crédits bancaires et affirme que l'absence des titres de propriété des terrains ne constitue pas un écueil pour l'aboutissement des demandes d'aide. Les agriculteurs de Lekouassem, qui continuent d'utiliser dans leurs exploitations ce qu'ils ont pu sauver comme matériel, ignorent les facilités mises en place par les pouvoirs publics. La plupart ne sont pas entrés en contact avec les services concernés. Pourtant, les citoyens attendent beaucoup de l'Etat et n'oublient pas les engagements fermes pris au tout début. Kaddour, 54 ans, nous dit que le retour sur ses terres se fait laborieusement. «Si j'avais les moyens de creuser un puits et d'installer un moteur et un bassin pour l'irrigation, je pourrais faire revivre mon vignoble et lancer de nombreuses cultures.» A l'ombre d'un important dispositif de sécurité, on finit par tenir le même discours, à exprimer les mêmes craintes et les mêmes espoirs. «Autrefois, on était de paisibles agriculteurs qui vivaient bien. On ne dépendait pas des aides de l'Etat, qui nous avait d'ailleurs délaissés. On produisait notre alimentation, on buvait l'eau des sources, et l'électricité n'est arrivée qu'en 1988. Mais on était prospères. On fournissait en fruits toutes la région. Le terrorisme est venu réclamer nos biens. Nous avons abandonné notre patrimoine pour sauver nos familles. En revenant, on a trouvé nos terres asséchées. On a entrepris de les faire revivre, mais sans l'aide de l'Etat, il nous sera difficile de rester.» (El Watan 14 July 2002)

HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

General

Visit of UN SR on Freedom of Religion/ Authorities state that other Rapporteurs will be invited (September 2002)

- In September 2002, the head of the government indicated that the Special Rapporteurs of the UN will be invited to visit Algeria
- A member of an Algerian human rights body stated that the only way to reach progress was through international institutions

"« Le chef du gouvernement a indiqué solennellement aux lords anglais, en visite récemment en Algérie, que des rapporteurs spéciaux de l'ONU seront invités à visiter l'Algérie », c'est par cette phrase qu'a conclu Ali Yahia Abdennour, président de la LADDH, sa conférence de presse tenue, hier [24 September 2002], au siège de «SOS disparus».

[...]

Quant à savoir si des rapporteurs spéciaux ou même une commission d'enquête sont à même d'impulser une nouvelle dynamique aux questions des droits de l'homme en Algérie, Ali Yahia Abdennour a indiqué qu'il avait milité longtemps - depuis 1988 en fait - pour que des commissions nationales statuent sur les situations et les plaintes.

Le président de la LADDH avait été également interpellé pour un commentaire sur la venue d'un rapporteur spécial de l'ONU - le premier d'une longue série apparemment -, en visite en Algérie, concernant la liberté du culte.

A ce sujet, Salima Ghezali, membre de la ligue, a indiqué qu'il y a là une confusion dans les priorités. « Avant de s'intéresser aux problèmes de liberté du culte, il y a des cas de tortures, de disparitions, de violations quotidiennes des droits de la défense. Ces questions méritent aussi que des rapporteurs de l'ONU s'y intéressent ».

Elle ajoutera que la seule manière de faire bouger les autorités, c'est le recours aux instances étrangères. Ali Yahia Abdennour avait indiqué aussi que le rapport établi par sa ligue sur les dépassements enregistrés en Kabylie a été transmis aux pouvoirs publics algériens par le biais de la FIDH à laquelle est affiliée la LADDH. « Nous n'avons aucun contact avec les responsables algériens de manière directe », a déclaré Ali Yahia Abdennour." (Le Quotidien d'Oran 25 September 2002)

Information void in Algeria due to lack of access (1997-2001)

- Entry denied to human rights organizations and UN special rapporteurs
- Information about human rights conditions heavily restricted by government
- Witnesses reluctant to testify for fear of reprisal
- An estimated 100,000 to 200,000 people remained internally displaced in Algeria at the end of 2001

"Information about human rights conditions was heavily restricted by government policies on information and access. Major international human rights organizations were prohibited from visiting the country. Foreign journalists were granted visas selectively and then assigned armed escorts, ostensibly for their own protection, who often got in the way of interviewing ordinary people. Censorship prevented the Algerian

press from reporting independently on security force operations. The U.N. rapporteurs on torture and on extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions were again unable to secure invitations to visit Algeria, despite long-standing requests to do so. (HRW 2000, Defending Human Rights)

"Leading examples of governments that successfully bar international involvement with their displaced populations are Turkey, Burma, and Algeria. The situations in the three countries are, of course, quite different . . . In Algeria, displacement is a by-product of conflict, primarily between the government and Islamist insurgent groups.

[...]

Outside efforts to influence the three governments are made difficult by their failure to request international assistance and by their shielding themselves behind the 'sanctity' of sovereignty...In the case of Algeria, outside intervention would contradict the government's assertions that it is adequately caring for its population and that the violence is under control.

[...]

"The scale of internal displacement in Algeria and the conditions of the displaced are largely unknown because entry has generally been denied to human rights and refugee organizations, especially since 1997, and to many journalists. Moreover, those who manage to make site visits are limited by lack of access and security risks and have not tended to collect information about those forcibly displaced as a result of the violence." (Cohen in FMR 6 December 1999, para. 2 and Algeria: the information void)

"The biggest impediments to human rights work were not so much acts of repression directed at activists as obstacles placed in the way of information. These included restrictions on access to the scenes of mass killings, and intimidation that dissuaded persons from speaking to outsiders. The reluctance of witnesses to testify was prompted sometimes by fear of the security services or of armed groups, or both. The government provided little or no information in response to démarches from human rights organizations and lawyers concerning the whereabouts of 'disappeared' persons and other human rights matters.

[...]

During 1998, the government continued to deny requests to visit from Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the International Federation of Human Rights, and from the U.N. special rapporteurs on torture and summary executions. (HRW 1999, Defending Human Rights)

"An estimated 100,000 to 200,000 people remained internally displaced in Algeria at the end of 2001.

[...]

"Bloodshed continued during 2001, although the number of deaths and the scope of new population displacement remained unknown because the government blocked most journalists and international human rights experts from visiting the conflict area." (USCR 2002, p.52)

No entry granted to International Federation for Human Rights in 2001 (November 2001)

- Government of Algeria does not respond to requests for entry by human rights organisation

"Since its fact-finding mission to Algeria in May 2000, FIDH has thrice applied for permission to return to the country, viz. in February, April and August 2001. As of 20 October 2001, there has been no response to any of these requests." (FIDH November 2001)

Entry to country finally granted to a few human rights/humanitarian organizations in late 1999/2000

- ICRC able to resume visits to prisoners in Algeria in October 1999

- Amnesty International able to visit Algeria in May and November 2000 after four years of refused entry
- International Federation of Human Rights makes visit to Algeria in June 2000 albeit with strict surveillance

"On October 10 [1999], the International Committee of the Red Cross resumed visits to prisoners in Algeria, seven years after such visits were suspended. The government agreed to allow access to all persons held in facilities under ministry of justice auspices, a program that would provide outside, albeit discreet, monitoring of the treatment of inmates.

[...]

"In September [1999], President Bouteflika declared on more than one occasion that Amnesty International, and human rights organizations generally, were welcome in Algeria. However, as of this writing, no major international organization had been issued entry visas for its representatives. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the International Federation of Human Rights, and Reporters sans Frontières all had been unable to enter Algeria since at least early 1998, despite having submitted requests to visit." (HRW 2000, Defending Human Rights)

"After four years of being refused access to Algeria by the authorities, Amnesty International was able to visit the country in May 2000. Amnesty International's delegates met with officials, human rights organizations, victims and families of victims, human rights lawyers and activists, and with associations and groups working on a variety of issues including women's rights and rehabilitation of victims of human rights abuses. During their visit, the delegation heard first-hand concerns expressed by hundreds of victims and their families, concerns which all too often have fallen on deaf ears, inside and outside the country." (AI 8 November 2000, Introduction)

"Une mission internationale de la FIDH, composée de Patrick Baudouin, avocat, président de la FIDH, Driss El Yazami, secrétaire général adjoint de la FIDH, vice-président de la Ligue française des droits de l'Homme, Siobhan Ni Chulachain, avocate, vice-présidente du Irish council for civil liberties, et Luis Guillermo Perez Casas, avocat, responsable du Colectivo de Abogados de Colombie, s'est rendue en Algérie à l'invitation du président Bouteflika, du 29 mai au 9 juin 2000, aux fins de s'informer sur la situation générale des droits de l'Homme dans ce pays.

C'est la première fois que la FIDH était ainsi autorisée, après plusieurs demandes demeurées vaines, à effectuer une telle mission depuis celle qu'elle avait réalisée fin avril 1997.

"La mission de la FIDH se félicite de l'invitation des autorités algériennes et du dialogue que a pu être développé à cette occasion. En revanche, elle déplore vivement la surveillance permanente et étroite dont elle a été l'objet malgré les engagements pris, et qui ne se justifient en aucun cas par des seules raisons 'sécuritaires'. La mission déplore également la désinformation et les attaques infondées qu'elle a eu à subir constamment de la part de certains organes de la presse privée dite 'indépendante', tout en saluant le traitement objectif réservé à son déplacement par quelques journalistes algériens." (FIDH July 2000, "Vérité, justice: entendre les victimes")

Only mission allowed entry in 1998 was a UN "panel of eminent persons" that did not focus on human rights abuses (1998-1999)

- UN mission charged with collecting general information on the situation in Algeria
- Delegation's report offered no direct criticism of Algerian human rights record
- Mission focused its report on denouncing terrorism

"Algeria, did, however, agree to receive a 'panel of eminent persons' appointed by U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan and headed by Mario Soares, the former president of Portugal, which visited Algeria from July 22 to August 4 [1998]. The secretary general was careful not to describe the mission of the panel in terms of human rights. Rather its charge was to 'gather information on the situation of Algeria and present a report to him, which he will make public.' According to Annan's spokesperson, 'The government of Algeria has assured the secretary-general that it will ensure free and complete access to all sources of information necessary for the panel to exercise its functions in order to have a clear vision and a precise perception of the reality of the situation in all its dimensions in Algeria today.'" (HRW August 1998, Summary and Recommendations)

"Aside from a government-imposed ban on meeting leaders of the outlawed Islamic Salvation Front, the delegation [U.N. 'panel of eminent persons'] enjoyed considerable freedom of movement during their July 22–August 4 visit. They met with a wide range of people, including human rights lawyers and victims, visited a prison, and traveled to two villages where massacres had occurred.

The delegation's report, issued September 16, vehemently denounced terrorism but offered no direct criticism of the authorities responsible for torture, 'disappearances,' and other abuses. It urged the government to strengthen the rule of law and handle abuse complaints expeditiously, but these recommendations were quite general and seemed secondary to the plea to the international community to support Algeria in fighting terrorism and 'consolidating democracy.' By soft-pedaling the concerns expressed by the U.N.'s Human Rights Committee, the report exemplified the frequent failure by U.N. political bodies to incorporate into their analysis the findings of U.N. human rights institutions and mechanisms.

Before and during the delegation's visit, Algerian authorities had insisted that Soares and his colleagues had no investigative mandate. The delegation itself acknowledged this. But upon seeing the report, Foreign Minister Ahmed Attaf spoke as if the delegation had conducted a definitive fact-finding investigation. The report, he said on September 16, has 'refuted any doubt about the sources of terrorism' and 'reaffirmed the Algerian government's assertions that there is no human rights crisis in Algeria, only a number of isolated abuses and individual cases which have been dealt with in accordance with the stipulations of Algerian law.'

At the March-April session of the Commission on Human Rights, no member state introduced a resolution on Algeria, and no formal discussion took place of the need to investigate human rights conditions there. This despite Annan's remarking to reporters during the session that he hoped Algeria would admit the rapporteurs and Robinson telling the press she would favor a resolution to that effect. At the human rights sub-commission session in August, a resolution urging Algeria to accept rapporteurs was defeated." (HRW 1999, The Role of the International Community)

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES

National response

Governmental attitude regarding human rights organizations (March 2002)

- The LADDH and the LADH are two of the most important independent human rights groups in Algeria
- Since the beginning of 2000, the Algerian government has welcomed a variety of international NGO's, unlike in previous years, when such visits were banned
- The U.N. Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, which asked in 2000 to visit the country, had not been granted access by the end of 2000
- In October 2000, a new Human Rights Commission was created to replace the ONDH and the national Human Rights Ombudsman
- Domestic NGO's must be licensed by the government and are prohibited from receiving funding from abroad

"The most active independent human rights group is the Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights (LADDH), an independent organization that has members throughout the country. The LADDH is not permitted access to government officials or to prisons, except as under the normal consultations allowed between a lawyer and a client. The less-active Algerian League for Human Rights (LADH) is an independent organization based in Constantine. The LADH has members throughout the country who follow individual cases. Human rights groups report occasional harassment by government authorities in the form of obvious surveillance and cutting off of telephone service.

Unlike in previous years, when such visits were banned, since the beginning of 2000 the Government has welcomed a variety of international NGO's. The Rights Consortium, a combined effort of Freedom House, the International Center for Journalists, and the American Bar Association, visited the country in January, February, and May [2001]. An additional trip scheduled for the fall was postponed due to uncertainty in the region due to flooding. Similarly, the National Democratic Institute has been active, and visited the country eight times during the year. NDI has brought in international political experts from around the world to work with the local groups. [...]

Doctors Without Borders requested visas to visit the Kabylie region in June. Their requests were denied because the Government maintained that the Algerian medical system was sufficiently handling the demand for medical care.

Delegations from Amnesty International, the ICRC, Human Rights Watch, Freedom House, the FIDH, and Reporters Without Borders visited the country in 2000 at the Government's invitation. Amnesty International visited in May 2000 and again in October 2000, and, after its May visit, claimed that the delegation had been "able to move around the country freely" and that "no restrictions were imposed" on its activities. Amnesty International did not seek meetings with members of the FIS in prison or under house arrest. The organization stated that there had been "a significant drop in the level of violence and killings, and the reports of arbitrary arrests, prolonged incommunicado detention, torture, disappearances, and unfair trials have also diminished significantly." However, Amnesty International maintained that many serious concerns had not been addressed, including resolving past abuses such as disappearances and extrajudicial killings. Moreover, during its October visit, Amnesty International claimed that the Government was not

cooperating adequately or providing the organization with quality information. The organization also claimed that the Government was staging demonstrations opposing the Amnesty International visit. Despite requests to visit, Amnesty International claims that it has not been allowed entry into the country since 2000. The ICRC began visiting the country to observe prison conditions in 1999, and has continued such visits twice yearly.

A delegation from Human Rights Watch met with government officials in May 2000. The delegation stated that it was "allowed to travel freely and meet with officials, lawyers, nongovernmental organizations, and victims and families of victims of abuses by the Government and armed groups."

The U.N. Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, which asked in 2000 to visit the country, had not been granted access by year's end. The Government had also not responded positively to requests to visit from the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Torture and the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Executions.

The National Observatory for Human Rights (ONDH) was established by the Government in 1992 to report human rights violations to the authorities; however, in February President Bouteflika announced the creation of a new Human Rights Commission to replace the ONDH and the national Human Rights Ombudsman.

The new National Consultative Commission for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights was formally established on October 9, and it held an initial meeting on October 24. The Commission is made up of 45 members, 22 of whom belong to governmental bodies and 23 of whom come from civil society and NGO's. The nongovernmental members include representatives of Islamic religious organizations, the Red Crescent Society, and women's rights advocacy groups. The President approves nominees, and the Commission's budget and secretariat (which the Government says will be "independent") come from his office.

The Commission's mandate includes: Reporting on human rights issues; coordinating with police and justice officials; advocating domestic and international human rights causes; mediating between the Government and the population; and providing expertise on human rights issues to the Government.

Domestic NGO's must be licensed by the Government and are prohibited from receiving funding from abroad. Some unlicensed groups operate openly." (US DOS 4 March 2002, sect.4)

Algerian government response to human rights abuses has been one of denial; issue of displacement not even on agenda (1998-2000)

- Algeria has denied there was a "crisis of human rights" in the country
- Government has ignored requests to cooperate with international human rights bodies and has refused visits of UN rapporteurs
- Government has failed to show concern for victims of human rights abuses, censoring information on the number and circumstances of violations through 1999
- New government has not initiated any investigations into alleged abuses
- Arab League supported Algeria's right to handle its internal affairs without interference in 1998

"On July 20-21, 1998, an Algerian government delegation met with the United Nations Human Rights Committee to discuss Algeria's second periodic report regarding its implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). In its oral presentation to the committee on July 20, the Algerian delegation insisted that 'there was no crisis of human rights in Algeria' but rather 'a terrorist

phenomenon which violated human rights.' After its review, the committee, in unusually strong language, characterized the Algerian situation precisely as a 'widespread human rights crisis.'

[...]

The committee's report comes as the Algerian government continues to resist independent scrutiny of this 'widespread human rights crisis.' The authorities have stoutly refused to accede to the request of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, that they cooperate with expert U.N. bodies such as the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions. The government has similarly ignored requests by independent international human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International to conduct fact-finding missions relating to the most severe abuses. Such credible investigations are critical to ensure that the perpetrators of atrocities and human rights abuses do not continue to enjoy impunity and the victims are not compelled to live in a climate of fear." (HRW August 1998, Summary and Recommendations)

Algerian government not forthright in offering information on alleged abuses:

"In Algeria the authorities have also for the most part failed to show due concern for the victims and their families. Throughout the worst years of the conflict, up to the middle of 1999, the Algerian authorities systematically censored the information about the real number of victims, giving artificially lower figures – less than half – and accusing those who provided accurate figures of deliberately exaggerating the seriousness of the situation. This was seen by the families of the victims as the ultimate denial of their loss and of their grief.

Since the middle of 1999, the authorities have radically changed their discourse about the tragedy which has befallen the country, recognizing the magnitude of its scale and pledging to address the outstanding concerns which result from it. It might have been hoped that, more than a year after these promises were made and more than eight years after the killings began, some concrete action might have been taken to begin to address the multitude of unresolved cases.

Yet to date the Algerian authorities have not taken the necessary measures to convince victims and their families that serious efforts are being made to establish the truth in as many cases as possible and to identify those responsible for the crimes and bring them to justice. No thorough investigation is known to have been carried out by the Algerian authorities to establish the facts and uncover the truth about the killings of thousands of civilians in Algeria. Serious questions raised about the failure of the state to protect the civilian population, particularly at the time of the large-scale massacres of 1997 and 1998, have not been answered.

[...]

Extrajudicial executions have been widespread in Algeria since early 1994 after judicial executions were suspended by the authorities, yet for not one of the hundreds of cases of which Amnesty International is aware have the perpetrators been brought before a court and tried. Although reports of cases have substantially decreased in the last two years, dozens of people suspected of being members of, or of being linked to, armed groups have reportedly been extrajudicially executed during recent months and no investigations into these deaths, let alone judicial proceedings against those allegedly responsible, are known to have been carried out." (AI 8 November 2000, The Need to Conduct Investigations)

"The vast majority of human rights violations went unpunished in Algeria. Despite numerous requests, authorities never provided specific information to human rights organizations about how alleged abuses were handled; such information appeared only rarely in Algerian media. Algeria's report to the U.N. Human Rights Committee said that through December 1997, the courts had punished 128 members of the security forces and self-defense groups for "excesses in the performance of their duties," but provided no verifiable details. A U.N. delegation reported receiving official lists of such cases; these lists had not been reviewed by Human Rights Watch at the time this report went to press.

[...]

Algerians continued to 'disappear' during 1998. Despite official denials, evidence pointed to government responsibility in the many cases in which witnesses saw the victims being seized by groups of armed men they took to be security-force members, or in which family members heard unofficially that the missing person had been sighted in a detention facility." (HRW 1999, Human Rights Developments)

In 1998, Algeria was supported by the Arab League in its refusal to cooperate with international bodies on the subject of human rights:

"The Arab League denounced what it called biased campaigns launched by some international non-governmental human rights organizations against Algeria.

Moreover Arab League Secretary-General Esmat Abdul Meguid confirmed that all the Arab states are supporting Algeria in its refusal of interference in its interior affairs.

Abdul Meguid asserted that Algeria has the necessary organizations and democratic movements to solve its internal problems by itself." (ArabicNews 8 November 1998)

Algeria is party to all of the major human rights/humanitarian law treaties (2000)

Algeria has ratified the principal human rights treaties:

Treaty	Acronym	Date of accession/ratification
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	ICCPR	12 September 1989
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	ICESCR	12 September 1989
Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	CAT	12 September 1989
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	CERD	14 February 1972
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	CEDAW	22 May 1996
Convention on the Rights of the Child	CRC	16 April 1993
International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families	MWC	--
Optional Protocol to the ICCPR (Individual claims mechanism)	OPT	12 September 1989
Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR (Abolition of the death penalty)	OPT2	--

(UN HCHR 16 November 2000)

Algeria has also ratified the main humanitarian law instruments:

Treaty ratifications/accessions
Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948)
Geneva Conventions (1949)
Protocol I Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (1977)
Protocol II Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (1977)

(ICRC 2000)

For more information on Algeria's compliance with the ICCPR, see Human Rights Watch report of July 1998 [\[Internet link\]](#) and the UN Committee for Human Rights Concluding Observations of August 1998 following the submission of Algeria's report [\[Internet link\]](#).

National human rights defenders face obstacles in conduct of their work (1999-2000)

- Approximately 55 NGOs and associations working on different issues at national and local level
- Organizations which criticize government policy or actions face obstacles and restrictions
- Organizations concerned with human rights are particular targets of the government

"According to figures provided by officials in the Ministry of the Interior to Amnesty International there are about 55 NGOs and associations working on different issues at the national and local level. However, the 10 or so NGOs and associations or groups which have criticized or opposed the policies and actions of the government have faced and continue to face a range of problems and restrictions. Some have been refused legal registration by the national or local authorities and others, including legally recognized NGOs, have been refused the authorization to hold meetings and public events. Others found that the foreign guests they had invited to attend some of their activities were refused visas to enter Algeria. In addition, in the past year as in previous years, demonstrations organized by some of these associations were prevented from taking place or dispersed by security forces who ill-treated, intimidated, threatened or arrested the organizers and/or the participants.

[...]

The associations which face such problems and restrictions are mainly those whose actions concern human rights violations committed by security forces, as well as associations acting on behalf of victims and families of victims of armed groups and whose activities, previously tolerated and often encouraged, are now in opposition to the government policy – notably on the issue of the Civil Harmony law and the amnesty of armed group members.

[...]

Other NGOs which have been legally recognized for many years, such as the *Ligue algérienne pour la défense des droits de l'homme* (LADDH), Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights, and the *Rassemblement Action Jeunesse* (RAJ), Rally for Youth Action, have for years systematically been refused authorization to hold meetings, conferences or other public activities, and they are never allowed to use public halls, which are generally made available to other associations." (AI 8 November 2000, Restrictions on Freedom of Association and Expression for Victims and Human Rights Defenders)

"Although the 1989 Constitution allows NGOs, under some conditions, to operate freely, in practice NGOs, even when legalised, have been severely hindered if not blocked in their efforts to manage the conflict....Under these difficult circumstances some Algerian NGOs continued to operate, largely by advocating a peaceful solution to the conflict. They were supported by international NGOs which conducted fact-finding missions when possible, sent delegations and urged, on the one hand, the Algerian government and armed groups to respect basic human rights and, on the other hand, called upon the international community to launch an international inquiry into the violence." (EPCPT October 1999, Multi-Track Diplomacy)

Some national NGOs working in the field of conflict management are described below:

"The International Service for Human Rights and the Latin American Federation of Associations of Relatives of Disappeared Detainees gathered with the Committee of Relatives of the Disappeared of

Algeria in a workshop on the 'disappeared' in Algeria held in September 1998. They submitted 477 dossiers of documented cases of 'disappearances' to the UN Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances. The Committee of Relatives of the Disappeared of Algeria is a loose organisation that has been active since the summer of 1998. Aided by Amnesty International and the Federation internationale des droits de l'homme (FIDH), it sent delegates to several European countries where they held conferences to draw attention to the problem of the 'disappeared'. The organisation also started to organise weekly demonstrations in Algeria which are attended by hundreds of mothers. A request by the Committee for formal recognition has been denied.

Another Algerian NGO involved in conflict management is the Rassemblement d'action jeunesse (RAJ), an organisation founded in 1992. The RAJ provided human rights education to youth all over the country, assisted them in searching for employment, and lobbied the government to start a dialogue between all the parties involved in the conflict. Following the first massacres in 1995, the RAJ produced a manifesto for peace and collected over 20,000 signatures in a few days. It has also organised an all-night concert for peace which was attended by more than 11,000 young people. The activities of the RAJ were subsequently curtailed by government forces despite its legal recognition in 1993.

Algeria has two major human rights organisations; the League algerienne pour les droits de l'homme (LADH) and the League algerienne pour la defense des droits de l'homme (LADDH). The difficult circumstances under which both organisations operate were highlighted in June 1994 when Yousef Fathallah, the president of the LADH was murdered. Both organisations claim complete independence but their members and activities are far from non-partisan. On several occasions Algerian intellectuals and politicians, including former Foreign Prime-Minister Mouloud Hamrouche, FIS-leader Abdelkader Hachani and LADDH president Ali Yahya, have made a 'call for peace' by issuing written statements. Numerous major mass demonstrations have taken place: in October 1994, in protest against the violence in general, in 1997 following the rigged local elections, and in June 1998 in protest against the murder of Berber Raising Matoub Lounes." (EPCPT October 1999, Multi-Track Diplomacy)

Algerian Red Crescent Society (ARCS) has provided relief to attack victims throughout the conflict (1998)

- Survivors of killings provided with first aid, relief distributions and counselling
- Survivors receive clothing, food and tents
- ARCS assists traumatized children

"The Algerian Red Crescent Society (ARCS) is providing assistance to the survivors of the killings in the form of first aid, relief distributions and psychological counselling. In a recent report to the Secretariat, the National Society indicates that since 1996 it has supplied assistance valued at over 22 million Algerian Dinars (CHF 528,000). In the first three weeks of this year, it has already distributed 26 tons of goods, chiefly foodstuffs and blankets.

Immediately after an attack, the Society in co-ordination with the public authorities, is responsible for giving emergency first aid to the wounded. Afterwards, it provides relief items for all survivors, including clothing, food, tents and household items, etc. and maintains distributions as long as necessary. Many people not only lose family members, often the breadwinner, in the attacks, but also have their homes and belongings destroyed. In the longer term, the Society also provides psychological counselling to survivors.

After the emergency phase, the ARCS, once again in co-operation with the competent public authorities, assists young children who witnessed the killings and have lost their families and homes. These children suffer deep psychological scars which require specialised care. Other ARCS aid includes the organisation of local holiday camps and financial assistance for rest and recovery stays in Algeria or abroad.

Algeria has a legal support system which compensates victims of terrorism in both the emergency and rehabilitation phases. Since this system is not able to cope with all the requests for assistance, the Algerian Red Crescent is considering establishing aid centres in areas affected by terrorism. They would be fully equipped to assist children suffering from post traumatic disorders. For adults, in addition to psychological counselling, the centres would make available skills training and help with the creation of small businesses, in order to encourage social reinsertion.

[...]

The Federation Secretariat has remained in regular contact with the ARCS ever since the beginning of the fighting in 1992. The Secretariat and a number of National Societies have offered assistance in the past but this has so far not been required by the ARCS." (IFRC 30 January 1998, Algeria: Information Bulletin no. 1)

International response

The US is to sell military gear to government for fight against militant groups (December 2002)

- The US government announced in December 2002 that it will aid Algeria in its fight against the Islamic militants
- It will proceed slowly, partly because of human rights groups' criticism of the Algerian anti-terrorist policy

"The Bush administration will sell equipment to the military-backed government of Algeria to help combat Islamic militants, administration officials said today. The militants have engaged in a violent uprising since an Islamic political party was banned in the early 1990's.

The officials said that no decisions had been made on how large the package of military equipment might be, or what would be sold, but that items were likely to include night-vision gear for use by individuals or on military vehicles.

An American official said the United States would proceed slowly on the military aid package, in part because of the criticism by human rights groups, which have accused Algeria of brutality on its crackdown over the past 10 years. More than 100,000 people have reportedly been killed in violence during the past decade; some put the number at 150,000." (NYT 10 December 2002)

The UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion visited Algeria (September 2002)

- The UN Special Rapporteur on the freedom of religion visited Algeria from 16-26 September 2002
- He indicated that he encountered no obstructions during his mission, and that he was able to meet representatives of NGO's and religious communities

"La fin de la visite en Algérie de Abdellatif Amor, le rapporteur spécial de l'ONU sur les droits de l'homme, en charge de la question des libertés de culte, a été marquée par un point de presse organisé mercredi soir à Djenane El-Mithaq.

Au bout d'une mission de 10 jours -du 16 au 26 septembre -, le rapporteur de l'ONU a laissé entendre qu'il a pu se faire une idée assez précise de la situation de la pratique religieuse et de la liberté du culte en Algérie. Il soulignera que la mission devait être organisée au milieu des années 90, mais cela n'a pas été possible du fait du refus catégorique des autorités algériennes d'accueillir des enquêteurs de l'ONU à cette époque. Toutefois, cette première mission - d'autres rapporteurs de l'ONU sont attendus en Algérie à l'invitation des autorités du pays - devrait atténuer quelque peu le contentieux entre l'Algérie et l'ONU. Abdellatif Amor n'y voit d'ailleurs rien de moins qu'un «catalyseur» à même de mettre à plat les incertitudes cultivées par les instances internationales à l'égard de l'Algérie. Cela est d'autant plus vrai que «l'Algérie ne développe pas un discours hostile au respect des droits de l'homme», dira-t-il.

Pourtant, l'Algérie suscite toujours des interrogations à l'étranger. Pour le conférencier, cela est une conséquence directe des dix ans de violences passées qu'a connues le pays.

[...]

Visiblement satisfait de sa visite, Abdellatif Amor indiquera n'avoir rencontré aucune entrave tout au long de sa mission. Il a pu se réunir avec des représentants d'ONG privées. Il a pu s'entretenir également avec des représentants de la communauté catholique et protestante en Algérie.

Au plan officiel, il a été reçu par le président du Comité consultatif sur les droits de l'Homme, Maître Ksentini, mais également par Ali Benflis, Abdelaziz Belkhadem, Mohamed Charfi et le président du HCI. Curieusement, le ministre des Affaires religieuses ne semble pas faire partie des officiels rencontrés au cours de son séjour. M. Amor doit remettre son rapport à la CDH de l'ONU au mois de novembre prochain." (Le Quotidien d'Oran 28 September 2002)

The FIDH expressed concern over increase in displacement (April 2002)

- The FIDH submitted a written report to the 58th session of the UN CHR on the situation in Algeria
- It expressed concerns on the increase in forced disappearances, displacement, summary executions and rapes

"The Paris-based International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) has submitted a written report to the 58th session of the UN Commission for Human Rights on the situation in Algeria.

The FIDH's spokesperson, Jacqueline Moudeina, called on the Commission to respond more firmly to the dramatic worsening of the situation in Algeria, and particularly in Kabylia.

She also appealed for Algeria to agree to requests for visits to the country from the special rapporteur on extrajudicial killings and the working group on enforced disappearances to investigate the 7,200 documented cases of missing people.

The FIDH also submitted a report by the affiliated Algerian League for the Human Rights (LADDH) on the events in Kabylia to the president of the commission and UN rapporteur on extrajudicial killings.

The FIDH also expressed concern at the increase in forced disappearances, displacement, summary executions and rapes, all acts that were crimes against humanity.

It also observed that although impunity was the rule in Algeria for the authorities, those eventually prosecuted were human rights campaigners. One such case was Mohamed Smain, head of the Relizane chapter of the LADDH in western Algeria." (Algeria Interface 11 April 2002)

International reaction to the events in Algeria has been tempered (1998-2000)

- Economic interest and fear of Islamist forces have limited international concern
- Priority has been accorded to containing the violence and maintaining the stability of the regime
- Belief exists in Europe that quiescence over past eight years has paid off

General:

"Economic interest, support for the government and fear of Islamist forces have limited international concern about the appalling events in Algeria, though some initiatives were taken in response to new waves of civilian massacres at the end of 1997 and beginning of 1998. However, thousands more people were displaced by these and prospects for a resolution of the conflict are no nearer." (Dammers 1998, p. 180)

"Until now, European attitudes towards Algeria have tended to accord priority to maintaining the stability of the regime and to containing violence through tolerance of the regime's strong-armed strategy of eradicating the Islamic threat. Less attention has been paid that might have been hoped to addressing the crisis's root causes, despite formal support for political reform in the South Mediterranean region through the Barcelona Process. Instead, Europe has kept its distance, steadfastly avoiding becoming involved or using its leverage to influence the course of events within Algeria. In return, the Algerian regime has assumed responsibility for ensuring there has been no massive outward migration or spill-over of violence into Europe, and no disruption in the flow of crude oil and natural gas.

The problem is that, without external support and encouragement, the Algerian authorities will be tempted to assume that no fundamental change is required to address the underlying problems. At present, there is a belief in Europe that European quiescence over the past eight years has paid off, simply because now the acute crisis in Algeria appears to be waning. Yet without concerted action to address the causes of the conflict, there is a real risk that Algeria's civil conflict will simply revive in more pernicious forms in the future." (ICG October 2000, sect. 2C)

Multi- and bilateral reaction:

"EU

The European Union (E.U.) was less engaged with Algeria on human rights issues than during 1998, when public horror at repeated massacres created pressure for action. The muted approach was attributable in part to the decline in violence, the favorable reception of President Bouteflika's early steps toward reform, and decidedly mixed reviews of the European démarches taken in 1998.

There were no high-profile E.U. missions such as the 1998 visits by a nine-member European Parliament delegation and by the junior foreign ministers of the troika (representing the preceding, current, and next presidents of the European Council), and no human rights hearings such as those held in the parliament in November 1997. However, shortly after Bouteflika's inauguration, the E.U. Presidency submitted a private letter to Algiers requesting information on a number of cases of "disappearances" and other abuses. No reply had been received as of the end of September [1999].

The European Parliament took a stand for press freedom in November 1998, at a moment when several of Algeria's private newspapers had been suspended. A resolution asked the European Commission to support all projects aimed at promoting press freedom and to consider such freedom as an essential element of E.U.-Algerian cooperation.

The E.U. made clear it would not push for resolutions critical of Algeria at the meeting of the U.N. Human Rights Commission in Geneva in March-April. Instead, an E.U. statement delivered on March 31 [1999] welcomed Algeria's cooperation with the U.N. 'Panel of Eminent Persons' in 1998 while cautioning that 'its visit is not a substitute for cooperation with the procedures and mechanisms of the United Nations in the field of human rights....The E.U. urges Algeria to facilitate early visits of U.N. human rights mechanisms, particularly the U.N. special rapporteurs on torture and on extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions and to give full effect to the [1998] concluding observations of the U.N. Human Rights Committee.' The statement said the E.U. 'continues to remain concerned over reports of involuntary disappearances...and calls upon the government to invite the [U.N.] Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances to visit the country...'

[...]

The European Commission approved a 57 million Euro financial agreement to support small and medium-scale Algerian enterprises. Under the European Commission's MEDA Democracy program, 10.3 percent of an approximate overall amount of 10 million Euros was allocated for various human rights and democracy projects in Algeria in 1998. At the time of this writing it was not possible to obtain the breakdown for 1999. However, the allocation of funds to projects in Algeria under the MEDA program had increased steadily since 1996, and the government of Algeria reportedly did not stand in the way of E.U. assistance to nongovernmental entities. Well over half of Algeria's exports and imports were with E.U. nations.

France

France eagerly mended relations with Algeria during 1999, pleased to find in President Bouteflika a willing partner. Yet French enthusiasm with a 'new era' in bilateral relations was not colored by any public display of concern for governmental human rights abuses that remained systemic, albeit on a scale lower than in previous years.

Paris had remained quietly supportive of the Algiers government during the 1990s, despite strains caused by Algeria's internal strife and its spillover effects in France. Algeria's former ruler and its adversary in a brutal independence war, France was home to the world's largest Algerian diaspora community. It remained the country with the closest links to Algeria and played the leading role in setting E.U. policy. France provided little direct bilateral aid but its generous credit guarantees helped to preserve its place as the leading exporter of goods to Algeria.

[...]

During this process, France indicated that it was working to address issues of concern to Algerians, including the ease of movement for Algerian citizens and air traffic between the two countries, and the reopening of closed French consulates. However, senior French officials avoided any public mention of human rights abuses committed by the state. Nor, in praising Bouteflika's peace plan, did they comment on how its durability might be affected by a failure to address grave violations.

United States

During the first half of the year, Washington remained restrained in seeking warmer ties in part because of Algeria's record of human rights abuses and manipulated elections. Algeria received no U.S. bilateral aid and for Washington paled in geopolitical significance next to the Arab-Israeli conflict, Egypt, Iran, and Iraq. The State Department's budget presentation to Congress for fiscal year 2000 maintained the U.S. has no 'vital' interests in Algeria, but said 'the transformation of this country into an open democracy, with a market economy would present the U.S. with major economic opportunities.'

Washington continued to encourage U.S. corporations to increase their stake in natural gas-rich Algeria. The U.S. Eximbank, which provides loans and loan guarantees to assist U.S. firms doing business abroad, had a level of exposure in Algeria that was second only to Saudi Arabia among Middle East and North African countries.

Public expressions of concern about human rights were not limited to the annual State

Department Country Reports. Ambassador Cameron Hume spoke out publicly on several occasions. For example, he told Le Matin daily in an interview published December 28, 1998, the U.S. "wanted to see from Algeria greater severity toward security forces that are guilty of excesses...They must be brought to justice." He also urged authorities to publish a detailed list of "disappeared" persons, according to Le Matin.

The U.S. did not press these points during the March-April meeting of the U.N. Human Rights Commission in Geneva and, in contrast to the statements made by the E.U. in 1999 and by the U.S. itself in 1998, did not criticize Algeria's refusal to allow visits by U.N. human rights rapporteurs.

[...]

The U.S. proceeded to put its relations with Algeria under a ninety-day review. It held no high-level bilateral meetings and broadened its existing ban on licensing private-sector sales to Algeria of lethal weapons, extending it to other types of munitions. And, while the U.S. refrained from sending Bouteflika a congratulatory telegram, First Lady Hillary Clinton received two Algerian women whose children "disappeared" during the Algerian strife, allegedly at the hands of security forces. This meeting, which took place three days after Bouteflika's inauguration, was widely reported in the Algerian press.

But Washington soon began to warm to Bouteflika. A meeting between the Algerian head of state and President Clinton at Moroccan King Hassan II's funeral in July was followed by other contacts. The U.S. maintained its policy of licensing no lethal weapon sales but resumed consideration, on a case-by-case basis, of commercial applications to sell other types of munitions to Algeria.

[...]

If the U.S. was pleased to see Bouteflika trying to resolve the armed conflict and talking with more candor than his predecessors about human rights problems, it remained to be seen whether continued improvement in bilateral relations would require his taking concrete actions to curtail institutionalized abuses and establish safeguards against their recurrence." (HRW 2000, The Role of the International Community)

O.A.U. leadership has failed to play an effective role to stop the violence in Algeria (October 1999)

"The Organisation of African Unity (OAU), of which Algeria is historically a highly influential member, has failed to play any role in efforts to stop the violence. In November 1994, its African Commission on Human and People's Rights adopted a resolution on Algeria, expressing concern about extra-judicial executions, torture and arbitrary detention and calling upon the world community to 'mobilize and support democratic forces in Algeria and abroad in their efforts to restore peace, the rule of law, and respect for human rights in Algeria'. However, this resolution was dropped in March 1995, undoubtedly as a result of Algerian pressure not to intervene in its domestic affairs. The Arab League has also refrained from making any attempt at conflict resolution. Instead, it has merely supported the Algerian government and accepted its stress on combating 'terrorism' with all means." (EPCPT October 1999, Official Conflict Management)

A number of international human rights and humanitarian organizations have attempted to act in the Algerian context (October 1999)

- Amnesty International has taken lead role in exposing human rights abuses
- Human Rights Watch and Fédération Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l'Homme have also been quite active
- International Crisis Group began monitoring the situation in Algeria at the end of 1997

"Amnesty International has taken the main initiative in exposing the scope of human rights violations by government forces and armed groups in Algeria. Until 1997, when the organisation was banned from entry, Amnesty International conducted fact-finding missions that were documented in several reports. Human Rights Watch and the FIDH also conducted visits to Algeria to record human rights violations. An attempt by the FIDH to observe a trial in July 1997 failed when they were denied access to the court. Reporters sans frontières (RSF) and the Committee to Protect Journalists also published reports. A delegation of the latter organisation, headed by CNN-reporter Peter Arnett, went in October 1998 on its first fact-finding mission and met with Communications' minister Habib Chawki, to discuss, amongst other cases, the 'disappearance' of two Algerian journalists and the suspension of permits for several daily newspapers. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch both briefed the UN Human Rights Commission on the situation in Algeria. The organisations mentioned here issued joint statements in October 1997 and April 1998, in both cases to persuade the world community at large and the UN in particular to immediately launch an international inquiry into the violence.

In 1998 a group of leading Algerian and European intellectuals, including Pierre Bourdieu and historian Mohamed Harbi, formed the International Committee for Peace, Democracy, and Human Rights in Algeria. In an attempt to advise the UN panel led by Soares on which issues needed to be addressed during their visit, the Committee issued its first declaration just before the panel's departure for Algeria.

Numerous other international NGOs have called upon the Algerian government to end human rights violations and respect public liberties. They include the World Organisation against Torture, Article 19, the International Federation of Journalists, International Pen, the International Press Institute, and the World Press Freedom Committee.

The International Crisis Group began monitoring the situation in Algeria at the end of 1997 with the aim of identifying 'practical ways in which the international community can contribute to a lasting resolution of the Algerian crisis'. In March 1998 it issued its first report on Algeria. This contained a series of recommendations emphasising the importance of press freedoms.

The International Red Cross Committee has been unable to visit the country since 1992 due to restrictions imposed by the Algerian government. Other humanitarian organisations have also been denied the access needed to provide relief to victims of the conflict." (EPCPT 1999, Multi-Track Diplomacy)

Greatest international reaction to the Algerian situation came in 1998

- Critical declarations by Kofi Annan and Mary Robinson in late 1997 set the stage for increased UN attention to country's human rights situation
- European Union became more engaged in the Algerian situation in 1998 than at any other time since eruption of crisis
- UN Human Rights Committee blasted Algeria for its poor human rights record in 1998

General:

"Algeria's human rights emergency provoked more international concern and diplomatic activity during 1998 than at any time since the violence became endemic in 1992. The catalyst for the international outcry was a series of large-scale massacres, officially attributed to armed Islamist groups but with disturbing evidence suggesting possible collusion by the security forces, including 'disappearances' and torture, also received a higher profile, due to the efforts of relatives of victims and their advocates, greater local press attention to these issues, the willingness of some deputies to raise them in parliament, and interventions by human rights groups and visiting foreign delegations.

[...]

Declarations in September 1997 by U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Human Rights Commissioner Mary Robinson about the bloodshed in Algeria set the stage for increased, though wavering, U.N. attention to the country's human rights situation." (HRW 1999, Human Rights Developments and The Role of the International Community)

"Since 1992 over 100,000 people, many of them civilians, have been killed in Algeria but the international community and media have shown little concern for the vast majority of the victims. The interest of the outside world in the Algerian human rights crisis has remained sporadic and limited to killings of high-profile Algerians and of foreigners and to the large-scale massacres of 1997 and early 1998 in which hundreds of people were killed in a single night and which it would have been difficult to ignore." (AI 8 November 2000, The Need to Conduct Investigations)

EU engagement:

Beginning in late 1997, the E.U. became more engaged in the Algerian crisis than at any time since it erupted. During the year that followed, E.U. thinking evolved in a fashion that could only have pleased the Algerian authorities. E.U. officials and members of the European Parliament (M.E.P.s) spoke of the need to support the government's efforts to build democracy and fight terrorism, albeit 'within the rule of law and consistent with human rights.' A succession of European officials distanced themselves from two positions that Algiers viewed as inadmissible: allegations that the security forces were implicated in the massacres, and the call for an international inquiry into human rights violations. These shifts in thinking occurred even as Algiers tightly controlled the agenda and the movements of visiting E.U. troika and M.E.P. delegations and rejected frequent entreaties for greater transparency on human rights issues. Algiers also insisted that Europe's alleged tolerance of Algeria-linked terrorist networks rank high on the agenda of any bilateral discussion.

The human rights subcommittee of the European Parliament helped to focus attention on human rights by holding hearings on Algeria on November 24-25, 1997. The witnesses, from Algeria and international organizations, presented a wide range of views. On November 27 Foreign Minister Attaf appeared before the subcommittee. Asked about 'disappearances,' he replied, 'There are some, but less than you allege, and those cases are followed up.'

UN Human Rights Committee criticism:

"On July 20-21, 1998, an Algerian government delegation met with the United Nations Human Rights Committee to discuss Algeria's second periodic report regarding its implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). In its oral presentation to the committee on July 20, the Algerian delegation insisted that 'there was no crisis of human rights in Algeria' but rather 'a terrorist phenomenon which violated human rights.' After its review, the committee, in unusually strong language, characterized the Algerian situation precisely as a 'widespread human rights crisis.'" (HRW August 1998, Summary and Recommendations)

"Amnesty International shares the grave concerns about the human rights situation in Algeria, expressed by the UN Human Rights Committee in their conclusions announced today, and welcomes the Committee's recommendations.

For the first time a UN mechanism, in expressing its concern about the serious human rights crisis, has issued concrete recommendations to the Algerian Government for measures it should take to stop and prevent grave violations, Amnesty International said.

If these recommendations are implemented this could certainly help to address the very grave human rights crisis in Algeria.

During the two-day examination of the Government report last week [July 1998], the Committee repeated expressed concern about the serious human rights crisis in Algeria and about violations by government forces, including disappearances, secret detention, torture and extrajudicial executions, and about the existence and role of militias armed by the state.

The Committee stated that: Widespread and indiscriminate attacks against the civilian population, involving the loss of innumerable lives, and a general climate of violence heighten the responsibility of the State party to re-establish and maintain the conditions necessary for the enjoyment and protection of fundamental rights and freedoms in Algeria." (AI 31 July 1998)

"In July, the U.N. Human Rights Committee, after scrutinizing the government's report and oral presentation on the state of civil and political rights covering 1992-98, delivered the most severe indictment ever by a U.N. body of Algeria's human rights practices. The committee declared that it was 'appalled at the widespread massacre of men, women and children in a great number of villages and towns,' and the sexual violence directed against women. It also expressed concern about the 'lack of timely or preventive measures of protection to the victims [of massacres] from police or military officials in the vicinity and at the persistent allegations of collusion of members of the security forces in terrorist attacks'; at the 'persistent allegations of systematic torture,' and at 'the failure of the State to respond adequately, or indeed at all' to 'disappearances.' The committee urged independent investigations into abuses and asked that 'access be given as soon as possible to the ICRC and other independent observers.'

The committee urged Algeria to conduct independent investigations, and 'in all cases of massacres to conduct an independent enquiry into the conduct of the security forces, from the lowest to the highest levels, and where appropriate, to subject them to penal and disciplinary sanctions.'" (HRW 1999, The Role of the International Community)

The UN Human Rights Commission's strong criticism of Algeria's poor human rights record was not supported with additional comments by the UN "panel of eminent persons". For more information on the UN reaction to events in Algeria in 1998, see HRW 1999 Annual Report.

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