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EU ANNUAL REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY IN THE WORLD

2021 COUNTRY UPDATES

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*.This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

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offices. According to observers, local human rights NGOs continued to face obstacles to their legal registration in 2021 while there have been isolated reports of increased surveillance of selected local activists, supporters of Sahrawi self-determination and journalists.

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

1. Overview of the human rights and democracy situation: Elected in December 2019, President Tebboune dissolved the Algerian National Assembly as of 1 March 2021, thus paving the way for early legislative elections on 12 June. Both legislative and local elections were marked by a low turnout. Stricter rules for submitting candidacies resulted in hundreds of municipalities not fielding any candidates. In both elections, opposition parties mostly opted out, and raised concerns regarding the transparency of the process of tabulating results at local level. No external observers were present at the ballots. In both general and local elections, the main parties of the incumbent government, (*Front de libération nationale* and *Rassemblement national démocratique*) continued to secure a majority of seats, with the support of independent lists. Islamic parties made a breakthrough at the National Assembly, but were not represented in the technocratic government designated in early July 2021.

In the context of the elections, President Tebboune pardoned dozens of sentenced opponents, while placing dozens of others in preventive custody. Reportedly, there are numerous prisoners of conscience. Algerian media reported on young political activists being tortured or ill-treated while in police custody, leading to the opening of an investigation in the beginning of 2021. According to UN OHCHR, activists, human rights defenders, journalists and ordinary citizens peacefully expressing dissent have continued to face criminal prosecution also on the basis of vaguely worded provisions of the Penal Code.

Many observers noted an increased level of targeted crackdowns on activists, NGOs, journalists and opposition party leaders active in the Hirak movement, which had resumed its gatherings since February 2021. By mid-June 2021, demonstrations have ceased. Prosecutions, trials and convictions have often been grounded on the vague definition of charges such as incitement to unarmed assembly, or dissemination of false information likely to cause harm to national unity.

Many electronic media have been made inaccessible to internet users in the country. As regards the ranking in the world press freedom index established by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Algeria continues to slide, dropping from 141st place in 2019 to 146th out of 180 countries in 2020 and 2021 (compared to 119th place in 2015).

2. EU action - key focus areas: The EU-Algeria common Partnership Priorities for 2017-2020 remain an expression of shared commitment to the universal values of democracy, the rule of law and human rights by the two parties. The focus areas for cooperation include governance, participatory democracy, promoting and championing fundamental rights, enhancing the role of women in society, decentralisation, strengthening the judicial system, and enhancing the role of civil society. In 2021, the process of updating the common Partnership Priorities for 2021 – 2027 was launched. The protection of refugees is an integral component of the humanitarian projects funded by the EU in five Sahrawi refugee camps in Southwest Algeria, near Tindouf. Humanitarian assistance amounted to EUR 9 million in 2021, providing for assistance in the field of water and sanitation, food, nutrition, essential medicines, and education in emergencies. In addition, due to COVID-19 pandemic, the EU increased its

funding by EUR 1 million to support the roll-out of the COVID-19 immunisation campaign for refugees.

3. EU bilateral political engagement: The EU has regularly raised with the Algerian authorities the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the conditions for pre-trial custody, in Algiers through the EU delegation and during the regular diplomatic contacts through the headquarters, including at the highest level. Within the framework of the structured dialogue in the framework of the Association Agreement with Algeria, the EU emphasised the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Interrupted for two years, the EU – Algeria informal dialogue on migration and mobility was held on 1 July 2021.

4. EU financial engagement: A new project on countering violence against women and girls started in 2021 and will run until 2023. It is designed as a national adaptation of the regional campaign “Zero Tolerance for Violence Against Women and Girls”, which deployed many activities in Algeria, for example training teachers and educators on how to avoid the consolidation of gender stereotypes through school and recreational activities with children. This new Algerian chapter funds awareness-raising and local media campaigns, exchanges and capacity development for activists across the country, and provides direct support for small associations running shelters and services for victims. The new phase of the “Joussour” network also started in 2021. The network regroups more than 60 Algerian and more than 20 European associations. It focuses on youth as actors of change in their local communities.

Both these initiatives complement the EU COVID-19 response package for Algeria, which was mainly dedicated to health supplies and sustainable economic recovery. In the framework of the EU health emergency action, seven local associations work in coordination with the communication services of the Ministry of Health on awareness-raising campaigns on vaccination and safety measures. In parallel, the EU renewed its support to the Algerian agenda for local development and participative democracy in partnership with the UNDP: the programme 'Participatory Democracy and Local Development' (CapDeL) was extended until end 2022. For example, 40 small projects were ongoing in the eight target municipalities in 2021. All were designed to respond to local development needs as laid out in the new generation of 'Municipality Development Plans', elaborated and adopted with a participatory methodology. CapDeL has enabled the emergence of young actors (many of them women) and new collaborations between civil society and local authorities, based on a common vision of the communities' needs and new mutual trust and understanding. The EU renewed its contribution to the modernisation of the justice sector, extended until the end of 2022.

5. Multilateral context: The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR), in March 2021, urged the authorities to respect the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. In May, the UNHCHR expressed growing concern about the situation in Algeria, where the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly continue to be under attack. It called on the authorities to revise the Criminal Code and other laws on associations and on public meetings and demonstrations, to bring them into line with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, both of which Algeria has ratified. These concerns were again expressed in December. The UN Security Council noted with deep concern the continued hardships faced by Sahrawi refugees, their dependency on external humanitarian assistance, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. It further noted with deep concern insufficient funding for those living in Tindouf refugee camps and the risks associated with the reduction of food assistance. Algeria maintains a

moratorium on executions since 1993 and has regularly voted in favour of UN resolutions calling for its worldwide application.

Republic of Tunisia

1. Overview of the human rights and democracy situation: The year 2021 saw a significant change in the Tunisian political arena, marked by the events of 25 July, when the President of the Republic suspended parliamentary activity and dismissed the Prime Minister by invoking Article 80 of the 2014 Constitution. This was followed by the release of Presidential Decree no.117 on 22 September, which effectively concentrated most powers in the hands of the president and announced that subsequent law-decrees would prevail over the constitutional provisions without being subject to judicial review. However, the president declared that Titles I and II of the Constitution related to general principles and fundamental rights and freedoms remained valid. Since then, a new prime minister and cabinet of ministers have been sworn in and a new calendar announced, which outlines important political milestones for 2022, such as a popular consultation and early legislative elections. Despite the absence of major backtracking in terms of individual rights and freedoms in the wake of these exceptional circumstances, the amplification of some existing challenges contributed to growing concerns about a degradation of the human rights situation in the country. This included an increase in trials of civilians in military courts, as well as the blanket use of travel bans, house arrests and a shrinking space for freedom of expression in the weeks following 25 July. Towards the end of the year, arbitrary detentions were also reported.

2. EU action - key focus areas:

Protecting and empowering individuals: the EU continued to provide support to civil society organisations by promoting access to information, legal assistance, advocacy and inclusion. The EU delegation also carried out activities to promote gender equality and strengthen the role of women in the political arena and has equally worked towards supporting overall access to quality education and the health system.

Building resilient, inclusive and democratic societies: during 2021 the EU delegation finalised the Gender Action Plan (GAP) III country-level implementation plan to guide EU actions on the ground and launched new initiatives on tackling gender-based violence as part of its 'Social Inclusion Support' programme. Further, the EU supported the inclusion of LGBTI communities and supported civil society organisations advocating for human rights including for migrants, unaccompanied minors, refugees and asylum-seekers.

Promoting a global system for human rights and democracy: the EU continued to support activities aimed at strengthening the independence of the judiciary, modernising infrastructure and working towards fair trials, improving the treatment of detainees and developing alternatives to incarceration. The EU delegation also supported independent authorities in Tunisia in order to strengthen their role in addressing challenges. However, one of them, the National Authority Against Corruption, was closed down in August 2021. The EU equally prepared actions in support of State accountability by supporting institutions such as the Court of Auditors, the Competition Council, the Parliament (before 25 July) and the media.

New technologies: harnessing opportunities and addressing challenges: the EU supported the modernisation of schools via some of its programmes, as well as the digitalisation of the