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Algeria

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President Abdelaziz Bouteflika was elected in April 1999 to a 5-year term. Bouteflika had served as Foreign Minister in a previous government. The President is the constitutional head of state, appoints and dismisses the Prime Minister, and may dissolve the legislature. According to the Constitution, the Prime Minister appoints the cabinet ministers; however, in practice the President has taken a key role in designating the members of the Cabinet. The military establishment strongly influences defense and foreign policy. Bouteflika was regarded throughout the 1999 election campaign as the candidate most favored by the dominant security establishment and the most likely winner. At the end of the campaign, the other six candidates withdrew, credibly charging massive fraud by the military, and Bouteflika was elected easily, although with a turnout as low as 30 percent. The presidential election campaign was marked by increased openness; however, international observers and political parties pointed out numerous problems with the conduct of the elections. A September 16, 1999 national referendum, which asked citizens whether they agreed with Bouteflika's peace plan (which includes an amnesty program for the extremists fighting to overthrow the Government), was free of charges of fraud, and Bouteflika's peace plan won a reported 98 percent majority, with a reported 85 percent turnout. Bouteflika is not affiliated formally with any political party, but he has the parliamentary support of a seven-party coalition. In June 1997, Algeria held its first parliamentary elections since January 1992 and elected the first multiparty parliament in the country's history. The cancellation of the 1992 elections, which the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was poised to win, suspended the democratization process and a transition to a pluralistic republic, and escalated fighting, which still continues, between the security forces and armed insurgent groups seeking to overthrow the Government and impose an Islamic state. The Government does not always respect the independence of the judiciary.

The Government's security apparatus is composed of the army, air force, navy, the national gendarmerie, the national police, communal guards, and local self-defense forces. All of these elements are involved in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations and are under the control of the Government. The security forces committed serious human rights abuses, although allegations of such abuses continued to decline.

The economy is slowly developing from a state-administered to a market-oriented system. The Government has implemented stabilization policies and structural reforms. However, privatization of state enterprises has made little progress, and there has been little progress on reform of the banking and housing construction sectors. The state-owned petroleum sector's output represented about a quarter of national income and more than 96 percent of export earnings during the year. Noncompetitive and unprofitable state enterprises constitute the bulk of the nonhydrocarbon industrial sector. The agricultural sector, which produces grains, fruit, cattle, fiber, vegetables, and poultry, makes up 10 to 12 percent of the economy. Algeria is a middle-income country; annual per capita income is approximately \$1,600. Officially, about 30 percent of the working-age population is unemployed, and about 70 percent of persons under the age of 30 cannot find adequate employment.

Despite measurable improvements, particularly in addressing problems of torture and arbitrary detention, the human rights situation was generally poor and serious problems persisted, including significant government restrictions on citizens' political and association rights 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 suspected of involvement with armed Islamist groups; however, the incidence of such abuses by security forces continued to decline. Security force involvement in disappearances from previous years remains unresolved. Security forces sometimes reach the sites of massacres too late to prevent or halt civilian casualties; however, there were no reports that security forces were complicit in massacres that took place during the year. An international nongovernmental organization (NGO) noted during the year that the country's poor prison conditions improved during the year. Prolonged pretrial detention and lengthy trial delays are problems, although the practice of detention beyond the legal limit appears to be less frequent. Although the Constitution provides for an independent judiciary, executive branch decrees restrict some of the judiciary's authority. The authorities do not always respect defendants' rights to due process. Illegal searches and infringements on citizens' privacy rights also remained problems.

There was no overt censorship of information; however, while the print media is relatively free, news media practiced self-censorship. Newspapers reported frequently on terrorist violence and on surrenders under the amnesty program, about which there was a wide range of views expressed in the media. The independent press commented openly and regularly on political matters and other significant issues. In some cases, newspapers represented specific political and economic interests. Electronic media continued to express only

government policy. The Government also continued to restrict freedom of speech, press, assembly, association, and movement, although to a lesser degree than in the previous year. The Government also places some restrictions on freedom of religion. During the April 1999 presidential election, the candidates who ultimately withdrew from the election credibly reported irregularities, such as government ballot-box stuffing through manipulation of military votes. During the 1997 legislative, municipal, and provincial elections, there were credible reports of irregularities, such as government harassment of opposition-party observers and fraud in vote-tally procedures. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Reporters Without Borders, and the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues (FIDH) visited the country during the year at the invitation of the Government. Domestic violence against women, the Family Code's limits on women's civil rights, and societal discrimination against women remained serious problems. Child abuse is a problem. Amazigh (Berber) ethnic, cultural, and linguistic rights continue to be an issue, although these concerns are represented by at least two political parties with seats in Parliament. Child labor is a problem.

Armed groups committed numerous serious abuses and killed hundreds of civilians. There was an increase in violence compared with 1999. Armed terrorists continued their widespread campaign of insurgency, targeting government officials, families of security-force members, and civilians. Many of the killings appeared to be related to opposition to the amnesty program. According to the Government, more than 5,000 insurgents have availed themselves of the amnesty program so far, and the armed groups have become smaller; however, a hard-core insurgent 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. Press reports estimated that approximately 2,500 civilians, terrorists, and security force members died during the year in domestic turmoil. The violence now seems to take place primarily in the countryside, as the security forces largely have forced the insurgents out of the cities. There were numerous instances in which armed groups kidnaped women, raped them, and forced them into servitude.

After his 1999 election, President Bouteflika acknowledged that a more accurate accounting of the number of persons killed during the previous 8 years placed the total at about 100,000.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Section 1 Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom From:

a. Political and Other Extrajudicial Killing

The security forces committed extrajudicial killings, mostly during clashes with armed terrorist groups, although the number of such killings continued to decrease during the year. For example, in early March, the army found and killed 12 suspected terrorists 280 miles southwest of Algiers. On June 20, troops backed by gunships and artillery attacked guerrillas, killing 16 persons. Security force killings of terrorists decreased by approximately 10 percent compared to 1999. The Government maintains that security forces resort to lethal force only in the context of armed clashes with terrorists. The Government also contends that, as a matter of policy, disciplinary action is taken against soldiers or policemen who are guilty of violating human rights, and such disciplinary action reportedly was taken during the year. Human Rights Watch and other groups claim that security forces failed to intervene in some past situations to prevent or halt massacres of civilians, although there were no claims that this occurred during the year.

One person died from the injuries he sustained in June after police rounded up and beat 200 persons who had been attending a local mosque (see Section 1.c.).

In December 1999, one person died of a heart attack the day after being beaten by police who had responded to a terrorist attack in the town of Dellys. The case received considerable print-media attention, and the government-funded National Observatory for Human Rights (ONDH) investigated the incident. After the investigation and ensuing trials, 21 members of the security forces were prosecuted and the local commanders of 2 different security services were investigated and suspended from their duties.

There were reports that progovernment militia killed one or two civilians during the year. The Government handled the killings as common murder cases.

On November 22, 1999, prominent FIS leader Abdelkader Hachani, who had spoken out in favor of peace and reconciliation, was shot and killed in Algiers. On December 13, 1999, authorities arrested a suspect, who had the murder weapon in his possession. The Government completed its investigation into the incident, but had not made public the results by year's end.

Armed groups targeted both security-force members and civilians, and such killings increased by approximately 20 percent compared with 1999. In many cases, terrorists randomly targeted civilians in an apparent attempt to create social disorder. 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 (see Section 1.g.). Some killings also were attributed to revenge, banditry, and land grabs. The violence now seems to take place primarily in the countryside, as the security forces largely have forced the insurgents out of the cities. Increasingly the killing of civilians appeared to be a result of opposition to President Bouteflika's amnesty program and to facilitate the theft of goods needed by the armed groups. As well as the use of small bombs, terrorist tactics included creating false roadblocks outside the cities by using stolen police uniforms, weapons, and equipment. Press reports estimated that approximately 2,500 civilians, terrorists, and security force

members died during the year in domestic turmoil. For example, on March 18, terrorists killed 19 persons, including 7 children, during the Eid festival. On May 4, militants killed 19 persons and injured 26 when they reportedly opened fire on a bus after the driver refused to stop at a false roadblock 45 miles south of Algiers. There was an increase in violence during the summer. More than 200 persons reportedly were killed during July alone. On July 11, militants shot and killed 11 men who were sleeping in their tents while camping in Tipaza. At least nine persons were killed on July 17 when an armed group stopped their bus and sprayed it with machine-gun fire. On July 28, 270 miles west of Algiers, militants killed eight civilians and wounded six in an attack on a nomad family, cutting the throats of six children between the ages of 6 months and 4 years. On September 20, six persons, including three children, reportedly were shot and killed during an ambush by militants. On December 16, armed intruders killed 16 students and a security guard, and injured 5 other students at a high school dormitory in the town of Medea. On December 17, terrorists opened fire on a bus near the town of Tenes, killing 14 travelers. After his 1999 election, President Bouteflika acknowledged that a more accurate accounting of the number of persons killed during the previous 8 years placed the total at about 100,000.

b. Disappearance

There were no credible reports during the year of disappearances in which the security forces were implicated. However, there have been credible reports of disappearances occurring over a period of several years, many of which involved the security forces. In September 1998, the Ministry of Interior established an office in each district to accept cases from resident families of those reported missing. In May the Ministry of Justice reported that it had received 3,019 complaints of disappearance and had clarified 1,146 of them. However, credible sources state that the offices have not provided any useful information to the families of those who disappeared. By year's end, the Ministry of Interior had agreed to investigate 4,700 cases. The Ministry reports that it has provided information to the families in 3,000 of those cases. In 1,600 of the cases, families have requested administrative action to obtain death certificates for their missing relatives. However, there were no prosecutions of security-force personnel that stemmed from these cases. Families of the missing persons, defense attorneys, and local human rights groups insist that the Government could do more to solve the outstanding cases. The Government asserts that the majority of reported cases of disappearances either were committed by terrorists disguised as security forces or involved former armed Islamist supporters who went underground to avoid terrorist reprisals.

In September Amnesty International reported that more than 4,000 persons had disappeared since 1994 after being detained by security forces. AI stated that some died in custody from torture or were executed, but that many others reportedly were alive. Local NGO sources state that a few of the persons who disappeared have been released from captivity by the security forces, but that there has been no public information about these cases, due to the fear of reprisal against those released. Human rights activists assert that a number of the persons who disappeared still are alive in the hands of the security forces, but offer no evidence to support this assertion.

Terrorist groups continued to kidnap scores of civilians. In many instances the victims disappeared and the families were unable to obtain information about their fate. Armed groups kidnaped young women and held them captive for extended periods for the purpose of rape and servitude (see Sections 1.a., 1.c., 5, 6.c., and 6.f.).

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

Both the Constitution and legislation ban torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment; however, according to local human rights groups and defense lawyers, the police at times resort to torture when interrogating persons suspected of being involved with, or having sympathies for, armed insurgency groups. There were no reports of torture during the year at the Algiers police facility called Chateau Neuf, as had been the case in the past.

There continued to be reports of police abuse of detainees during the year. After its October visit (see Section 4), Amnesty International stated that although there were "substantially fewer" cases of torture "in comparison to some years ago," such cases nevertheless "continue to occur." Many victims of torture hesitate to make public such allegations due to fear of government retaliation. Accusations of torture were made by those accused of involvement in terrorist activities. The Interior Ministry and the ONDH have stated publicly that the Government would punish those persons who violated the law and practiced torture. Government officials reported in November that between 350 and 400 security officials had been punished for "human rights abuses," although the Government provided no details regarding the abuses that such officials committed or the punishment that they received. There is no independent mechanism available to verify the Government's claims.

In early August, the Government announced new policies concerning the Police Judiciaire (PJ), the officers who interrogate suspects when they first are arrested to determine whether there are grounds for prosecution. Local judges now are to grade the performance of PJ officers operating in their jurisdiction in an effort to ensure that the officers comply with the law in their treatment of suspects. In addition, any suspect held in preventative detention is to undergo a medical examination at the end of the detention, whether the suspect requests it or not.

In March in the western cities of Relizane and Oran, the authorities beat and intimidated demonstrators who were attempting to draw attention to the problem of persons who had disappeared. The Government arrested 40 persons during two separate demonstrations that occurred about a week apart; however, those arrested were released after a short time (see Section 2.b.). In June following a bomb blast in Dellys, police rounded up a group of 200 persons who had been attending the local mosque. The group was taken to police

headquarters and beaten. One person died from the injuries he sustained. Members of the group took legal action against the police and, as a result, the local chiefs of the police and the Gendarmerie were fired and two of the offending officers were arrested. In November police used force to disrupt a march by families of persons who had disappeared, which coincided with a visit to that city by Amnesty International (see Section 2.b.).

In December 1999, a terrorist bomb killed and injured police in the town of Dellys. Within hours security forces rounded up and detained more than 100 persons of both sexes and a variety of ages. Police officers beat many of the detainees and threw them into the crater made by the terrorist bomb. One of the mistreated persons died of a heart attack the next day. A senior regional police commander ordered the police to stop these actions. In response to complaints from the mistreated persons, the authorities suspended the local commanders of 2 different security services and prosecuted 21 members of the security forces (see Section 1.a.).

Armed terrorist groups committed numerous abuses, such as beheading, mutilating, and dismembering their victims, including infants, children, and pregnant women. These groups also used bombs that killed and injured persons (see Sections 1.a. and 1.g.). Terrorists also committed dozens of rapes of female victims, many of whom subsequently were murdered. There were also frequent reports of other young women being abducted, raped for weeks at a time by group leaders and other members, and forced into servitude (see Sections 1.a., 1.b., 5, 6.c., and 6.f.).

Prison conditions remain generally poor, with significant overcrowding. However, an international NGO stated during the year that conditions had improved considerably. A decrease in prison population reduced overcrowding somewhat. Moreover, prisoners were found generally to be in good health and benefiting from adequate food and expanded visitation rights. The provision of adequate medical treatment to prisoners still is limited, but the Government reportedly is addressing the issue.

In general the Government does not permit independent monitoring of prisons or detention centers. However, in October 1999, March and again in May, the Government allowed International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to visit prisons. The ICRC in April decided no longer to seek access to military prisons because it lacked any credible evidence that these prisons held civilians. The ICRC did not visit FIS leaders in prison or under house arrest.

d. Arbitrary Arrest, Detention or Exile

The Constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention; however, the security forces continued arbitrarily to arrest and detain citizens. Human rights activists state that this practice continued to diminish during the year. The Constitution stipulates that incommunicado detention in criminal cases prior to arraignment may not exceed 48 hours, after which the suspect must be charged or released. According to the 1992 antiterrorist law, the police may hold suspects in prearrestment detention for up to 12 days; they also must inform suspects of the charges against them. In practice the security forces generally adhered to this 12-day limit during the year.

In March in the western cities of Relizane and Oran, the Government arrested 40 persons during two separate demonstrations occurring about a week apart; however, those arrested were released after a short time (see Section 2.b.). In November police used force to disrupt a march by families of the disappeared, and arrested five persons. Four subsequently were released; the fifth was tried and convicted of attacking a security officer (see Section 2.b.).

FIS president Abassi Madani, who was released from prison in 1997, remains under house arrest and is allowed to receive visits only from members of his family (see Section 2.d.), although he has made numerous press statements and conducted interviews while under house arrest. Jailed oppositionist and FIS vice president Ali Benhadj, who had been held incommunicado from 1992 until 1998, now is allowed contact with members of his family, who speak to the press on his behalf.

The 1992 Antiterrorist Law suspended the requirement that the police obtain warrants in order to make an arrest. During the year, the police made limited use of this law. However, according to defense attorneys, police who execute searches without a warrant routinely fail to identify themselves as police and abuse those who ask for identification (see Section 1.f.). Police and communal guards sometimes detain persons at checkpoints (see Section 2.d.). There are reports of police arresting close relatives of suspected terrorists in order to force the suspects to surrender. According to Amnesty International, on April 4, police arrested 73-year-old El-Hadj M'lik in front of several witnesses. He had been questioned previously concerning his sons, one of whom is believed to be a member of a terrorist group. Security officials reassured the family, on two separate occasions, that M'lik would be returned to them. However, he had not been returned by year's end, and the Government provided no information regarding his whereabouts.

Prolonged pretrial detention was a problem. Persons accused of crimes sometimes did not receive expeditious trials; however, long-term detention appeared to decrease somewhat during the past year (see Section 1.e.). Hundreds of state enterprise officials who were arrested on charges of corruption in 1996 remained in detention. Three or four of the higher ranking detainees were released during the year.

Under the state of emergency, the Minister of Interior is authorized to detain suspects in special camps that are administered by the army. In 1995 the Government announced that it had closed the last camp and released the 641 prisoners there. Local human rights activists and NGO's state that no such camps now exist. They note that the Government continues to keep some former prisoners under surveillance and requires them to report periodically to police.

Forced exile is not a legal form of punishment and is not known to be practiced. However, there are numerous cases of self-imposed exile involving former FIS members or individuals who maintain that they have been accused falsely of terrorism as punishment for openly criticizing government policies.

One such case was resolved in September when Ali Bensaad, a professor at the University of Constantine, who had been in exile in Germany, returned to the country. The former exile was issued a limited (6-month) passport, which allowed him to return. Bensaad is pursuing redress in the court system for the "machinations" he claims were perpetrated against him by former high-ranking officials.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary; however, in practice the Government does not always respect the independence of the judicial system. In November 1999, President Bouteflika named a commission to review the functioning of the judiciary and to recommend ways to improve it. In August after the commission submitted its report, the President announced a massive reorganization of the judiciary. He replaced 80 percent of the heads of the 187 lower courts and 99 percent of the presidents of the 37 higher-level courts. Most of the court heads were reassigned to new locations; however, a number were replaced outright. Whereas only a few courts previously were headed by women, 19 now have female heads.

The judiciary is composed of the civil courts, which try cases involving civilians, and the military courts, which have tried civilians for security and terrorism offenses. There is also a Constitutional Council, which reviews the constitutionality of treaties, laws, and regulations. Although the Council is not part of the judiciary, it has the authority to nullify laws found unconstitutional.

Regular criminal courts try those individuals accused of security-related offenses. Long-term detentions of suspects awaiting trial again appeared to decrease somewhat during the year.

According to the Constitution, defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty. They have the right to confront their accusers and may appeal the conviction. Trials are public, and defendants have the right to legal counsel. However, the authorities do not always respect all legal provisions regarding defendants' rights, and continue to deny due process. Some lawyers do not accept cases of individuals accused of security-related offenses, due to fear of retribution from the security forces. Defense lawyers for members of the banned FIS have suffered harassment, death threats, and arrest.

There are no credible estimates of the number of political prisoners; some estimate the number to be several thousand. An unknown number of persons who could be considered political prisoners are serving prison sentences because of their Islamist sympathies and membership in the FIS. There are credible estimates that the Government released 5,000 political prisoners after Bouteflika's 1999 election.

International humanitarian organizations did not request visits with political prisoners during the year; therefore, it is unclear whether the Government would permit such organizations to visit political prisoners. In general the Government does not permit independent monitoring of prisons or detention centers; however, over the past 18 months, it has permitted the ICRC to monitor general prison conditions in civilian prisons (see Section 1.c.).

f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home or Correspondence

Authorities frequently infringed on citizens' privacy rights. The Constitution provides for the inviolability of the home, but the state of emergency authorizes provincial governors to issue exceptional warrants at any time. Security forces also entered residences without warrants. According to defense attorneys, police who execute searches without a warrant routinely fail to identify themselves as police and abuse those who ask for identification. Security forces deployed an extensive network of secret informers against both terrorist targets and political opponents. The Government monitors the telephones of, and sometimes disconnects service to, political opponents and journalists (see Sections 2.a. and 3). There are reports of police arresting close relatives of suspected terrorists in order to force the suspects to surrender (see Section 1.d.).

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.

g. Use of Excessive Force and Violations of Humanitarian Law

Armed groups were responsible for numerous, indiscriminate, nonselective killings. Terrorists left bombs at several markets and other public places during the year, killing and injuring dozens of persons. In rural areas, terrorists continued to plant bombs and mines, which often targeted security force personnel. For example, on September 29, a group of at least 100 armed men seized control of the roads leading into Bani Yassi, a small town 56 miles east of Algiers near Tizi Ouzou. The group then destroyed the barracks of the local communal police with an explosive device, entered the wreckage after the explosion, and killed those police officers who were not killed in the explosion. On November 4, one soldier was killed and two others were injured in a bomb blast at an electrical pylon in the mountainous region of Zaccar, about 40 miles southwest of Algiers. On December 5, three people were killed and 11 were injured in an explosion in Tiaret (200 miles west of Algiers).

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The Constitution provides for freedom of speech; however, the Government restricts this right in practice. A 1990 law specifies that freedom of speech must respect "individual dignity, the imperatives of foreign policy, and the national defense." The state of emergency decree gives the Government broad authority to restrict these freedoms and to take legal action against what it considers to be threats to the state or public order. However, the Government did not enforce these regulations strictly, and the independent press reported regularly on security matters without penalty. Reporting by government-controlled press organs frequently included deflated numbers of civilians and government forces killed, and inflated terrorist casualty counts; however, there were no credible allegations of inflated terrorist surrenders under the amnesty program during the year, as had been the case in the past. Government discrepancies were noted frequently in independent newspapers.

In March 1994, the Government issued an interministerial decree that independent newspapers could print security information only from official government bulletins carried by the government-controlled Algerian Press Service (APS). Independent newspapers openly ignored the directive, and the trend toward increased openness about security-force losses continued during the year. The Government continued to provide the press with more information than in the past about the security situation. Journalists deliberately did not report on current possible abuses by security forces to avoid difficulties with the Government, although there was significant coverage of NGO activity aimed at publicizing such abuses committed in the past. According to the Ministry of Health, it no longer forbids medical personnel from speaking to journalists, and such personnel spoke to the press during the year. The Government's definition of security information often extended beyond purely military matters to encompass broader political affairs. In 1995 FIS officials who had been freed from detention in 1994 received direct orders from the Justice Ministry to make no further public statements. This ban remains in force. In general, journalists exercised self-censorship by not publishing criticism of specific senior military officials.

For a second consecutive year, there were no reports that the Government put journalists under "judicial control." In previous years, the Government used this practice to harass journalists who wrote offending articles by requiring the journalists to check in regularly with the local police and preventing them from leaving the country. According to a Europe-based NGO that specializes in press freedom, the Government continued to refrain from harassing journalists under criminal defamation statutes during the year, as had been its practice in the past.

There were no newspapers allied with Islamist political parties in print, due to government pressure; however, legal Islamist political parties have access to the existing independent press, in which they may express their views without government interference.

The Government maintains an effective monopoly over printing companies and newsprint imports. However, at least two newspapers were in the final stages of negotiations with private firms to print newspapers and import newsprint, which would circumvent such government control. There was no abuse of the Government's power to halt newspaper publications during the year.

The Government continued to exercise pressure on the independent press through the state-owned advertising company, which was created in 1996. All state-owned companies that wish to place an advertisement in a newspaper must submit the item to the advertising company, which then decides in which newspapers to place it. In an economy in which state companies' output and government services still represent approximately two-thirds of national income, government-provided advertising constitutes a significant source of advertising revenue for the country's newspapers. Advertising companies tend to provide significant amounts of advertising to publications with a strong anti-Islamist editorial line and to withhold advertising from newspapers on political grounds, even if such newspapers have large readerships or offer cheap advertising rates.

President Bouteflika stated in November 1999 that the media ultimately should be at the service of the State. Radio and television remained under government control, with coverage biased in favor of the Government's policies and the government-supported party, the National Democratic Rally (RND). Parliamentary debates are televised live. Satellite-dish antennas are widespread, and millions of citizens have access to European and Middle Eastern broadcasting. A five-member delegation from Reporters Without Borders visited the country in June. The group was allowed to meet freely with the interlocutors of their choice and concluded that the press enjoyed increasing freedom. However, the delegation also noted a number of continued barriers to full press freedom.

Many artists, intellectuals, and university educators fled the country after widespread violence began in 1992; however, some continued to return during the year. There was a growing number of academic seminars and colloquiums that occurred without governmental interference. The Government continues to interfere in seminars that were political or economic in content (see Section 2.b.). The only reported strike at a university during the year occurred in October at Bab izzouar University, where a small number of professors went on strike to protest work conditions. After a week, the teachers returned to work (see Section 6.a.).

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The Constitution provides for the right of assembly; however, the 1992 emergency law and government practice sharply curtail this right. Citizens and organizations must obtain permits from the appointed local governor before holding public meetings. While the Government frequently grants licenses to political parties, NGO's, and other groups to hold indoor rallies, in most instances outdoor demonstrations are not permitted.

Some unlicensed groups continue to be active, including groups dedicated to the cause of persons who have "disappeared." Such groups continued to hold regular demonstrations outside government buildings. However, in March in the western cities of Relizane and Oran, the authorities beat and intimidated demonstrators attempting to draw attention to the cause of persons who disappeared. The Government arrested 40 persons during two separate demonstrations occurring about a week apart. However, those arrested were released after a short time. In November police again disrupted a march by families of persons who had disappeared. In this instance, which coincided with a visit to that city by Amnesty International, the police used force, and arrested five persons. Four subsequently were released; the fifth was tried and convicted of attacking a security officer.

The Government refused to permit, in the name of public order, a proposed march in October to protest the Israeli Government's actions against Palestinians in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza in the fall. When a group of protesters attempted to hold a rally despite the ban, they were dispersed in a nonviolent manner.

The Constitution provides for the right of association; however, the 1992 Emergency Law and government practice severely restrict it. The Interior Ministry must approve all political parties before they may be established (see Section 3). In January the Government refused to approve the Wafa Party because of its perceived ties to the FIS. In August 40 members of Parliament petitioned the Government, demanding an explanation of the Government's refusal to recognize the Party. In November the Minister of Justice responded, stating that the Wafa Party would not be recognized because it included large numbers of members who belonged to the outlawed FIS. The Government closed the Party's offices on November 13. The Front Democratique, which is headed by former Prime Minister Sid Ahmed Ghazali, applied for registration but received no response within the time period specified by law for governmental decision on such cases (see Section 3). The Interior Ministry licenses all nongovernmental associations and regards all associations as illegal unless they have licenses. It may deny a license to, or dissolve, any group regarded as a threat to the Government's authority, or to the security or public order of the State. After the Government suspended the parliamentary election in 1992, it banned the FIS as a political party, and the social and charitable groups associated with it. Membership in the FIS remains illegal, although at least one former FIS leader announced publicly that he intended to form a cultural youth group.

c. Freedom of Religion

The Constitution declares Islam to be the state religion but prohibits discrimination based on religious belief, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there are some restrictions. Islam is the only legal religion, and the law limits the practice of other faiths; however, the Government follows a de facto policy of tolerance by not inquiring into the religious practices of individuals.

The law prohibits public assembly for purposes of practicing a faith other than Islam. However, there are Roman Catholic churches in the country, including a cathedral in Algiers (the seat of the Archbishop), which conduct services without government interference. In 1994 the size of the Jewish community diminished significantly, and its synagogue since has been abandoned. There are only a few smaller churches and other places of worship; non-Muslims usually congregate in private homes for religious services.

Because Islam is the state religion, the country's education system is structured to benefit Muslims. Education is free to all citizens below the age of 16, and the study of Islam is a strict requirement in the public schools, which are regulated by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Private primary and secondary schools are not permitted to operate.

The Government appoints preachers to mosques and gives general guidance on sermons. The Government monitors activities in mosques for possible security-related offenses, and bars their use as public meeting places outside of regular prayer hours. The Ministry of religious affairs provides some financial support to mosques and has limited control over the training of imams.

Conversions from Islam to other religions are rare. Because of safety concerns and potential legal and social problems, Muslim converts practice their new faith clandestinely. The Family Code, which is based on Shari'a (Islamic law), prohibits Muslim women from marrying non-Muslims, although this regulation is not always enforced. The code does not restrict Muslim men from marrying non-Muslim women.

Non-Islamic proselytizing is illegal, and the Government restricts the importation of non-Islamic literature for widespread distribution. Personal copies of the major works of other religions, such as the Bible, may be brought into the country. Non-Islamic religious texts and music and video selections no longer are difficult to locate for purchase. The Government prohibits the dissemination of any literature that portrays violence as a legitimate precept of Islam.

Under both Shari'a and the law, children born to a Muslim father are Muslim, regardless of the mother's religion. Islam does not allow conversion to other faiths at any age. In 1994 the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) declared its intention to eliminate Jews, Christians, and polytheists from Algeria. The GIA has not yet retracted that declaration and, as a result, the mainly foreign Christian community tends to curtail its public activities.

The country's 9-year civil conflict has pitted self-proclaimed radical Muslims against the general Islamic population. Approximately 100,000 civilians, terrorists, and security forces have been killed during the past 9 years. Extremist self-proclaimed "Islamists" have issued public threats against all "infidels" in the country, both foreigners and citizens, and have killed both Muslims and non-Muslims, including missionaries. The majority of the country's terrorist groups do not, as a rule, differentiate between religious and political killings. During the

year, terrorists continued attacks against the Government and civilians (see Sections 1.a. and 1.g.).

d. Freedom of Movement Within the Country, Foreign Travel, Emigration and Repatriation

The law provides for freedom of domestic and foreign travel, and freedom to emigrate; however, the Government at times restricts these rights. In the spring of 1999, the Government allowed travel abroad by representatives of organizations pursuing information on relatives who allegedly "disappeared" due to the actions of the security forces. These organizations, which were hosted by human rights NGO's, held public discussions on those who had disappeared.

The Government does not allow foreign travel by senior officials from the banned FIS. FIS president Abassi Madani, who was released from prison in 1997, remains under house arrest (see Section 1.d.). The Government also does not permit young men who are eligible for the draft and who have not yet completed their military service to leave the country if they do not have special authorization; such authorization may be granted to students and to those individuals with special family circumstances. The Family Code does not permit married females under 19 years of age to travel abroad without their husband's permission, although this provision generally is not followed in practice.

Under the state of emergency, the Interior Minister and the provincial governors may deny residency in certain districts to persons regarded as threats to public order. The Government also restricts travel into four southern provinces, where much of the hydrocarbon industry and many foreign workers are located, in order to enhance security in those areas.

The police and the communal guards operate checkpoints throughout the country. They routinely stop vehicles to inspect identification papers and to search for evidence of terrorist activity. They sometimes detain persons at these checkpoints.

Armed groups intercept citizens at roadblocks, using stolen police uniforms and equipment in various regions to rob them of their cash and vehicles. According to press reports, armed groups sometimes killed groups of civilian passengers at these roadblocks (see Section 1.a.).

The Constitution provides for the right of political asylum, and the Government occasionally grants asylum. The Government cooperates with the office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugees. For example, it cooperates with the UNHCR on programs to help refugee Sahrawis, former residents of the Western Sahara who left that territory after Morocco took control of it in the 1970's. The Government also has worked with international organizations that help the Tuaregs, a nomadic people of southern Algeria and neighboring countries. There were no reports of the forced return of persons to a country where they feared persecution.

Section 3 Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

The Constitution provides citizens with the right to change their government; however, there are significant limitations to this right in practice. The strong prerogatives of the executive branch, supported by the entrenched power of the military and the bureaucracy, prevent citizens from exercising this right. The withdrawal of six presidential candidates in 1999 amidst credible charges of fraud, and the election of President Bouteflika highlighted the continued dominance of the military elite in the process of selecting the country's political leadership.

President Bouteflika was elected in an April 15, 1999 presidential election that was seriously flawed by the withdrawal 1 day before of all other candidates, who charged that the military already had begun to implement plans to produce a fraudulent Bouteflika victory. Until those allegations surfaced, the campaign had been conducted fairly, with all candidates widely covered in both state-owned and private media. The conduct of the campaign—although regulated as to the use of languages other than Arabic, and as to the timing, location and duration of meetings—was free, and all candidates traveled extensively throughout the country. One potential candidate was denied the ability to run because the electoral commission determined that he could not prove that he had participated in Algeria's war of independence against France, a legal requirement for candidates for President born before July 1942. With the withdrawal of the other candidates and the absence of foreign observers, it was impossible to make an accurate determination of turnout for the election, although it apparently was as low as 30 percent; the Government claimed a 60 percent turnout.

Under the Constitution, the President has the authority to rule by decree in special circumstances. The President subsequently must submit to the Parliament for approval decrees issued while the Parliament was not in session. The President did not exercise such authority during the year. The Parliament has a popularly elected lower chamber, the National Popular Assembly (APN), and an upper chamber, the National Council, two-thirds of whose members are elected by municipal and provincial councils. The President appoints the remaining one-third of the National Council's members. Legislation must have the approval of three-quarters of both the upper and lower chambers' members. Laws must originate in the lower chamber.

In June 1997, Algeria held its first elections to the APN since elections were canceled in January 1992, and elected the first multiparty parliament in the country's history. Candidates representing 39 political parties participated, along with several independent candidates. Under a system of proportional representation, the government-supported party, the National Democratic Rally, won a plurality of 154 seats out of a total of 371. In their final report, neutral observers stated that, of 1,258 (of the country's 35,000) voting stations that they assessed, 1,169 were satisfactory, 95 were problematic, and 11 were unsatisfactory. In November 1997, the provincial election commissions announced the results of their adjudication of the appeals filed by various

political parties. The RND lost some seats but remained the overall victor in the Assembly elections.

In 1997 the appointed previous legislature, the National Transition Council (CNT), changed the law that regulates political parties. Under the controversial law, potential parties require official approval from the Interior Ministry before they may be established. To obtain approval, a party must have 25 founders from across the country whose names must be registered with the Interior Ministry. A party headed by one of the six presidential candidates who withdrew from the April elections registered in September 1999. Two parties failed to receive registration. In January the Government refused to approve the Wafa party because of its perceived ties to the FIS (see Section 2.b.). The Front Democratique, which is headed by former Prime Minister Sid Ahmed Ghazali, applied for registration but received no response within the time period specified by law for governmental decision on such cases. No party may use religion, Amazigh heritage, or Arab heritage as a basis of organizing for political purposes. The law also bans political party ties to nonpolitical associations and regulates party financing and reporting requirements.

The more than 30 existing political parties represent a wide spectrum of viewpoints and engage in activities that range from holding rallies to printing newspapers. The Government continues to ban the FIS as a political party (see Section 2.b.). With the exception of the leading progovernment party, the RND, and the Front de Liberation National (FLN), political parties sometimes encounter difficulties when dealing with local officials, who hinder their organizational efforts. The Government monitors private telephone communications, and sometimes disconnects telephone service to political opponents for extended periods (see Section 1.f.). Opposition parties have very limited access to state-controlled television and radio, although the independent press publicizes their views.

Women are underrepresented in government and politics. The new cabinet, named in August, has no female members. Eleven of the 380 members of the lower house of Parliament are women. In September 1999, President Bouteflika appointed the first-ever female provincial governor. A woman heads a workers' party, and all the major political parties except one had women's divisions headed by women.

The Amazighs, an ethnic minority centered in the Kabylie region, participate freely and actively in the political process. Two major opposition parties originated in the Amazigh-populated region of the country: The Socialist Forces Front and the Rally for Culture and Democracy. These two parties represent Amazigh political and cultural concerns in the Parliament and the media. The two Amazigh-based parties were required to conform with the 1997 changes to the Electoral Law that stipulate that political parties must have 25 founders from across the country.

The Tuaregs, a people of Amazigh origin, do not play an important role in politics, due to their small numbers, estimated in the tens of thousands, and their nomadic existence.

Section 4 Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

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 allowed access to the authorities or to prisons beyond 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, delegations from Amnesty International, the ICRC, Human Rights Watch, Freedom House, the FIDH, and Reporters Without Borders visited the country at the Government's invitation. Amnesty International visited in May and again in October, and, after its May visit, claimed that during the visit its delegation was "able to move around the country freely and no restrictions were imposed" on its activities. However, 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. In September and October, the ICRC conducted its third visit to the country to monitor general conditions in the civilian prisons. ICRC president Jakob Kellenberger commented during the visit on the constructive nature of the dialog between the ICRC and the Government. A delegation from Human Rights Watch met with government officials in May. 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." Freedom House visited July 3-10, and again in November, in order to assess the possibility of establishing programs involving support for the rule of law, including women's rights, freedom of the press, and judicial reform.

The National Observatory for Human Rights was established by the Government in 1992 to report human rights violations to the authorities. It prepares an annual report with recommendations to the Government.

The Government has a national ombudsman, who receives individual complaints and presents an annual report to the President. Provincial representatives are designated to accept individual grievances and to make them known to the authorities. Most such complaints concerned bureaucratic unresponsiveness and lack of jobs and

housing (see Section 5).

Section 5 Discrimination Based on Race, Sex, Religion, Disability, Language, or Social Status

The Constitution prohibits discrimination based on birth, race, sex, belief, or any other personal or social condition; however, women continue to face legal and social discrimination.

Women

Women's rights advocates assert that spousal abuse is common, but there are no reliable statistics regarding its extent. Spousal abuse is more frequent in rural than urban areas, especially among less-educated persons. There are no specific laws against spousal rape. Rape is illegal, and in principle a spouse could be charged under the law. However, there are strong societal pressures against a woman seeking legal redress against her spouse for rape, and there have been no reports of the law being applied in such cases. Battered women must obtain medical certification of the physical effects of an assault before they lodge a complaint with the police. However, because of societal pressures, women frequently are reluctant to endure this process. There are very few facilities offering safe haven for abused women, and many more are needed. Women's rights groups have experienced difficulty in drawing attention to spousal abuse as an important social problem, largely due to societal attitudes. There are several rape crisis centers run by women's groups, but they have few resources. In August 1998, the Government released figures indicating that the whereabouts of 319 women remain unknown, and that there were 24 reports by women of rape. Most human rights groups believe that the actual number is much higher. There is a rape crisis center that specializes in caring for women who are victims of rape by terrorists.

Some aspects of the law and many traditional social practices discriminate against women. The 1984 Family Code, which is based in large part on Shari'a, treats women as minors under the legal guardianship of a husband or male relative. For example, a woman must obtain a father's approval to marry. Divorce is difficult for a wife to obtain except in cases of abandonment or the husband's conviction for a serious crime. Husbands generally obtain the right to the family's home in the case of divorce. Custody of the children normally is awarded to the mother, but she may not enroll them in a particular school or take them out of the country without the father's authorization. Only males are able to confer citizenship on their children. Muslim women are prohibited from marrying non-Muslims; Muslim men may marry non-Muslim women (see Section 2.c.).

The Family Code also affirms the Islamic practice of allowing a man to marry up to four wives, although this rarely occurs in practice. A wife may sue for divorce if her husband does not inform her of his intent to marry another woman prior to the marriage.

Women suffer from discrimination in inheritance claims; in accordance with Shari'a, women are entitled to a smaller portion of an estate than are male children or a deceased husband's brothers. According to Shari'a, such a distinction is justified because other provisions require that the husband's income and assets are to be used to support the family, while the wife's remain, in principle, her own. However, in practice women do not always have exclusive control over assets that they bring to a marriage or income that they earn themselves. Females under 19 years of age may not travel abroad without their husbands' permission (see Section 2.d.). However, women may take out business loans and are the sole custodians of their dowries. In its 2000 report, the International Labor Organization (ILO) Committee of Experts noted that the Government has stated that, despite incorporating equality between men and women into the legislative and regulatory texts governing the workplace, in practice women still are confronted with discriminations in employment resulting from stereotypes that exist regarding a woman's place in society.

While social pressure against women pursuing higher education or a career exists throughout the country, it is much stronger in rural areas than in major urban areas. Women constitute only 10 percent of the work force. Nonetheless, women may own businesses, enter into contracts, and pursue opportunities in government, medicine, law, education, the media, and the armed forces. About 25 percent of judges are women, a percentage that has been growing in recent years. President Bouteflika's changes to the judiciary in August increased the number of courts headed by women (see Section 1.e).

Although the 1990 Labor Law bans sexual discrimination in the workplace, the leaders of women's organizations report that violations are commonplace. Labor Ministry inspectors do little to enforce the law.

There are numerous small women's rights groups. Their main goals are to foster women's economic welfare and to amend aspects of the Family Code.

During the year, extremists sometimes specifically targeted women. There were numerous incidents of women being killed and mutilated in massacres. Armed terrorist groups reportedly kidnaped young women and held them captive for extended periods for the purposes of rape and servitude (see Sections 1.a., 1.b., 1.c., 6.c., and 6.f.).

Children

The Government is committed in principle to protecting children's human rights. It provides free education for children 6 to 15 years of age, and free medical care for all citizens--albeit in often rudimentary facilities. The Ministry of Youth and Sports has programs for children, but such programs face serious funding problems. 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.

People with Disabilities

The Government does not mandate accessibility to buildings or government services for the disabled. Public enterprises, in downsizing the work force, generally ignore a law that requires that they reserve 1 percent of their jobs for the disabled. Social security provides for payments for orthopedic equipment, and some nongovernmental organizations receive limited government financial support. The Government also attempts to finance specialized training, but this initiative remains rudimentary.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

The Amazighs are an ethnic minority centered in the Kabylie region. Amazigh nationalists have sought to maintain their own cultural and linguistic identity while the Government's Arabization program continues. The law requires that Arabic be the official language and requires, under penalty of fines, that all official government business be conducted in Arabic. The law also requires that Arabic be used for all broadcasts on national television and radios for dubbing or subtitling all non-Arabic films, for medical prescriptions (although the law is not followed in practice), and for communications equipment. As part of the national charter signed in 1996, the Government and several major political parties agreed that the Amazigh culture and language were major political components of the country's identity. In September 1999 President Bouteflika stated that the Amazigh language would never be an official language.

There are professorships in Amazigh culture at the University of Tizi Ouzou. The government-owned national television station broadcasts a brief nightly news program in the Amazigh language. Amazighs hold influential positions in government, the army, business, and journalism.

The Tuaregs, a people of Amazigh origin, live an isolated, nomadic existence and are relatively few in number.

Section 6 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

Workers have the right to establish trade unions of their choice. About two-thirds of the labor force belong to unions. There is an umbrella labor confederation, the General Union of Algerian Workers (UGTA) and its affiliated entities, which dates from the era of a single political party. The UGTA encompasses national syndicates that are specialized by sector. There are also some autonomous unions, such as syndicates for Air Algerie pilots (SPLA), airport technicians (SNTMA), and teachers (CNES).

Workers are required to obtain government approval to establish a union. The 1990 law on labor unions requires the Labor Ministry to approve a union application within 30 days. The Autonomous Syndicates Confederation (CSA) has attempted since early 1996 to organize the autonomous syndicates, but without success. The application that the CSA filed with the Labor Ministry still was pending at year's end, although the CSA continues to function without official status. The law prohibits unions from associating with political parties and also prohibits unions from receiving funds from foreign sources. The courts are empowered to dissolve unions that engage in illegal activities. The labor union organized by the banned FIS, the Islamic Syndicate of Workers (SIT), was dissolved in 1992 because it had no license.

Under the state of emergency, the Government is empowered to require workers in both the public and private sectors to stay at their jobs in the event of an unauthorized or illegal strike. According to the 1990 Law on Industrial Relations, workers may strike only after 14 days of mandatory conciliation, mediation, or arbitration. The law states that arbitration decisions are binding on both parties. If no agreement is reached in arbitration, the workers may strike legally after they vote by secret ballot to do so. A minimum level of public services must be maintained during public sector service strikes.

In February the Agricultural Services Department went on strike for increased salaries. On March 28 and 29, The National Customs Union went on strike to demand the implementation of a previously negotiated agreement on salaries. On April 3, the air traffic controllers (Syndicat National des Personnels de la Circulation Aerienne) went on strike as a part of extended salary negotiations. In May steelworkers went on strike for assurances of job security. In that same month, the National Teacher's Union (Union National des Personnels de l'Education et de la Formation-UNPEF) went on strike for increased salaries and better housing. There also were various taxi strikes throughout the country during the year. The workers received varying numbers of concessions to their demands as a result of the strikes. In October a small number of professors at Bab Izzouar University went on strike to protest work conditions (see Section 2.a.).

Unions may form and join federations or confederations, affiliate with international labor bodies, and develop relations with foreign labor groups. For example, the UGTA has contacts with French unions.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

The law provides for collective bargaining for all unions, and the Government permits this right in practice. The law prohibits discrimination by employers against union members and organizers, and provides mechanisms for resolving trade union complaints of antiunion practices by employers. It also permits unions to recruit members at the workplace.

The Government has established an export processing zone in Jijel.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

Forced or compulsory labor is incompatible with the Constitution's provisions on individual rights, and the Penal Code prohibits compulsory labor, including by children; however, while the Government generally enforces the ban effectively, armed terrorist groups reportedly kidnap young women and hold them captive for weeks at a time, during which group members rape them and force them into servitude (see Sections 1.a., 1.b., 1.c., 5, and 6.f.).

In its 2000 report, the ILO's Committee of Experts noted that the law that requires persons who have completed a course of higher education or training to perform a period of service of between 2 and 4 years in order to obtain employment or work in an occupation, is not compatible with relevant ILO conventions dealing with forced labor.

d. Status of Child Labor Practices and Minimum Age for Employment

The minimum age for employment is 16 years. Inspectors from the Ministry of labor enforce the minimum employment age by making periodic or unannounced inspection visits to public sector enterprises. They do not enforce the law effectively in the agricultural or private sectors. Economic necessity compels many children to resort to informal employment, such as street vending. The Government prohibits forced and bonded labor by children and generally enforces this prohibition (see Section 6.c.).

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The law defines the overall framework for acceptable conditions of work but leaves specific agreements on wages, hours, and conditions of employment to the discretion of employers in consultation with employees. The Government fixes by decree a monthly minimum wage for all sectors; however, this is not sufficient to provide a decent standard of living for a worker and family. The minimum wage is approximately \$105 (8,000 dinars) per month. Ministry of Labor inspectors are responsible for ensuring compliance with the minimum wage regulation; however, their enforcement is inconsistent.

The standard workweek is 40 hours. There are well-developed occupation and health regulations codified in a 1991 decree, but government inspectors do not enforce these regulations effectively. There were no reports of workers being dismissed for removing themselves from hazardous working conditions. Because employment generally is based on very detailed contracts, workers rarely are subjected to conditions in the workplace that they were not informed of beforehand. If workers are subjected to such conditions, they first may attempt to renegotiate the employment contract and, that failing, resort to the courts.

f. Trafficking in Persons

The law does not prohibit specifically trafficking in persons. Armed terrorist groups frequently kidnaped young women and held them captive for weeks at a time, during which group members raped them and forced them into servitude (see Sections 1.a., 1.b., 1.c., 5, and 6.c.). There is a rape crisis center in Algiers that specializes in caring for women who are victims of rape by terrorists.

[End.]