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OHCHR – UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Press briefing notes on Algeria

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Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights: Rupert Colville

Location: Geneva

Date: 5 March 2021

We are very concerned about the deteriorating human rights situation in Algeria and the continued and increasing crackdown on members of the pro-democracy Hirak movement.

Protests, which had been continuing online as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, have resumed on the streets in recent weeks, with the authorities responding in the same repressive manner seen in 2019 and 2020.

There have been numerous instances across the country where security forces have used unnecessary or excessive force and arbitrary arrests to suppress peaceful demonstrations. According to reliable information, hundreds of individuals have been arrested since the protests resumed on 13 February 2021.

These developments echo what happened in 2019 and 2020, during which a total of at least 2,500 people were arrested or detained in connection with their peaceful activism. Similarly, the criminal prosecution in 2019 and 2020 of activists, human rights defenders, students, journalists, bloggers and ordinary citizens expressing dissent continued during the first two months of 2021.

Journalists have been arrested for covering or reporting on the protest movement, and 16 independent online media outlets known for their critical reporting have been blocked.

Vaguely worded provisions of the Algerian Penal Code are being used to unduly restrict freedom of expression and prosecute people expressing dissenting opinions.

According to credible reports, some 1,000 individuals have been prosecuted for participating in the Hirak movement or for posting social media messages critical of the Government. According to the same reports, at least 32 people are currently detained for the legitimate exercise of their human rights, and some of them face lengthy sentences while others are still in pre-trial detention.

We have also received allegations of torture and ill-treatment in detention, including sexual violence.

We call upon the Algerian authorities to stop using violence against peaceful protestors and cease arbitrary arrests and detentions.

We urge the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all those arbitrarily arrested or detained for allegedly supporting Hirak, and drop all charges against them.

We also call on the authorities to conduct prompt, impartial and effective investigations into all allegations of torture and ill-treatment in detention and hold all those responsible accountable and ensure that victims have access to redress.

We urge the authorities to repeal legal provisions and policies that are being used to prosecute people who exercise their rights to freedom of opinion and expression and peaceful assembly.

ENDS

ecoi.net summary:

Unnecessary use of force
and arbitrary arrests by
security forces against peaceful
protesters in several parts of



the country since resumption of protests on 13 February 2021; continuing instances of prosecution of activists, human rights defenders, students, journalists, bloggers and ordinary citizens

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Algeria

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