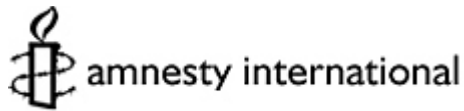


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People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

Head of state: **Abdelaziz Bouteflika**

Head of government: **Abdelmalek Sellal**

The authorities restricted freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly, particularly in the run-up to April's presidential election, dispersing demonstrations and harassing activists. Women faced discrimination in law and practice and remained inadequately protected against violence, despite proposed legislative reforms. Impunity prevailed for perpetrators of gross human rights abuses during the 1990s and acts of torture committed in subsequent years. Irregular migrants faced discrimination, abuse and arbitrary expulsion. Armed groups carried out lethal attacks. Death sentences were imposed; no executions were carried out.

Background

2014 saw continued social unrest caused by tensions between the Mozabite and Arab communities in the city of Ghardaia. There were demonstrations against unemployment, poverty and corruption in the oil and gas-rich south, as well as protests focused on President Bouteflika's decision to run for re-election in April.

Following the election, the government opened consultations on proposed revisions to the Constitution but some political parties boycotted these consultations and most independent civil society organizations were excluded. At the end of the year the process appeared to have stalled.

There were new clashes between the security forces and armed groups, notably Al Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), mostly in southern and eastern Algeria. Foreign governments increased their security co-operation with Algeria following the attack in January 2013 by an armed group at the In Amenas gas

extraction complex, in which dozens were killed and hundreds taken hostage, including foreign civilian workers. In September, an armed group calling itself *Jund al-Khalifa* (Soldiers of the Caliphate) abducted a French national in the Tizi-Ouzou region, an area where people had previously been kidnapped for ransom, and published a video on the internet showing him beheaded. His killing was in apparent reprisal for France's participation in a US-led alliance fighting the Islamic State armed group in Iraq. In December, the government said its forces had killed the leader of Jund al-Khalifa and two of his associates.

Algeria became a member of the UN Human Rights Council in January but the government continued to fail to agree to long-requested visits by key UN bodies and experts, including those concerned with torture, counter-terrorism, enforced disappearances and the right to freedom of association. The authorities did not grant visas to Amnesty International staff to visit Algeria. ^[1]

Freedom of expression

Journalists and government critics faced restrictions and judicial harassment by the authorities. On 12 March, the security forces closed down Al-Atlas TV, a private television station that had reported on anti-government protests and given airtime to a number of government critics. The authorities accused Al-Atlas TV of broadcasting without a licence. ^[2]

On 10 June, a court sentenced Youcef Ouled Dada to two years' imprisonment and a fine for posting a video on the internet showing police officers stealing from a shop during clashes in Ghardaia. The court convicted him of publishing photos and videos against the national interest and insulting a state institution. His sentence was confirmed on appeal.

Freedom of assembly

The authorities maintained a ban on all demonstrations in the capital Algiers although the security forces allowed some to go ahead without interference. In other cases, the police forcibly dispersed demonstrators, especially those from the *Barakat* (Enough) movement protesting against the President's decision to stand for re-election for a fourth term of office in April, and arrested some demonstrators, often releasing them after a few hours in custody. ^[3] Police also forcibly dispersed protests in other cities.

On 20 April, police used excessive force to disperse demonstrators in Tizi-Ouzou city who were commemorating the violent repression of protesters in 2001 in the Kabylia region. Witnesses reported that police beat unarmed protesters and fired plastic bullets, one of which hit Lounis Aliouat, blinding him in one eye. The authorities said they had suspended five police officers pending an investigation into the beatings but they did not disclose the outcome of the investigation.

In May, a court imposed suspended six-month sentences on Mohand Kadi, a student, and Tunisian national Moez Benncir on charges of "participating in a non-armed gathering that may disturb public order". Police had arrested both men on 16 April near a Barakat movement demonstration in Algiers, although both denied participating in it. ^[4] Mohand Kadi's sentence was confirmed on appeal.

Freedom of association

In January, the deadline for registering existing associations under Law 12-06 expired. The law imposed wide-ranging and arbitrary restrictions on associations, including NGOs and civil society organizations, and

penalties of imprisonment for up to six months plus a fine for membership of unregistered, suspended or dissolved associations. While some associations were able to register, others remained in legal limbo as they waited for the authorities' response to their registration application.

Amnesty International Algeria was one of a number of independent NGOs to file its registration application in accordance with the procedures set out in Law 12-06 but received no acknowledgement or other response from the authorities, despite repeated requests.

Women's rights

The authorities took some steps to improve women's rights. On 1 February, the adoption of Decree 14-26 provided for the first time for financial compensation to be paid by state authorities to women raped by members of armed groups during the internal conflict of the 1990s. At the end of the year it was unclear how many women had received compensation under Decree 14-26.

In June, the government proposed new legislation to criminalize physical violence against a spouse and indecent assaults on women when they are carried out in public. The proposed legislation would also make it a punishable offence to abandon a spouse or to use coercion or intimidation to obtain a spouse's financial resources. The proposed law establishing a state fund to assist divorced women with custody of their children whose former husbands failed to pay them alimony was adopted by Parliament on 26 November. At the end of the year, the other proposed amendments were still awaiting enactment.

Despite these advances, women remained inadequately protected from violence, including sexual violence, under the law. For example, a provision under which men who rape girls under the age of 18 are granted immunity from criminal prosecution if they marry their victim remained in force. Women's rights groups continued their long campaign for a comprehensive law to combat violence against women. Women also continued to face discrimination under the Family Code in relation to marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance.^[5]

Impunity

The authorities took no steps to investigate thousands of enforced disappearances and other human rights abuses committed during the internal conflict of the 1990s and in subsequent years. Families of those forcibly disappeared continued to demand information about the fate of their relatives, including on the anniversary of the vote for the Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation, which gave immunity to the security forces and criminalized public criticism of their conduct.

The UN Human Rights Committee ruled on five cases of enforced disappearance and urged the authorities to investigate them thoroughly, bring the perpetrators to justice and provide effective remedies to the relatives of the disappeared.

The authorities took no steps to implement the UN Committee against Torture's recommendations, issued in November 2013, on the death of Mounir Hammouche, who died in the custody of the Department for Information and Security (DRS) in December 2006. The Committee called for an impartial investigation into his death, with a view to ensuring the prosecution of those responsible for his torture, and for his relatives to be afforded full redress.

Counter-terror and security

Armed groups carried out a series of attacks targeting members of the security forces. In September, the Jund al-Khalifa armed group abducted and killed French national Hervé Gourdel, and posted a video on the internet showing him beheaded.

The authorities and the media reported scores of killings of members of armed groups by the security forces but disclosed few details of the circumstances in which these killings occurred, prompting fears that some may have been extrajudicial executions.

The DRS, despite reports of infighting among decision-makers over its role, continued to wield wide powers of arrest and detention, including incommunicado detention of terrorism suspects, facilitating torture and other ill-treatment. In June, the President issued Decree 14-183. This established a judicial investigation service within the DRS charged with preventing and suppressing acts of terrorism, acts that undermine state security and the activities of international criminal organizations deemed to threaten Algeria's national security.

In March, the US authorities returned Ahmed Belbacha to Algeria from Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, where they had imprisoned him without trial for over 12 years. In 2009 an Algerian court sentenced him after a trial held *in absentia* to 20 years' imprisonment. In December, he was acquitted of terrorism charges by the Algiers criminal court.

Refugees' and migrants' rights

Migrants continued to face abuses including discrimination and arbitrary deportation. The government did not disclose how many migrants it expelled but they were reported to number several hundred, with many expelled without due process and safeguards.

Irregular or undocumented migrants remained vulnerable to violence, xenophobia and expulsion. In January, a woman from Cameroon was detained for illegally residing in Algeria when she went to the police in the city of Oran to report being raped.

Thousands of Algerian would-be migrants known as "harragas", and foreign nationals, mostly from sub-Saharan Africa, continued to attempt the hazardous sea crossing from Algeria to Europe, despite a 2009 law that criminalized "illicit" exit from Algeria using forged documents or through locations other than official border exit ports.

Death penalty

Death sentences were imposed; no executions have been carried out since 1993.

In November, Algeria voted in support of a UN General Assembly resolution calling for a worldwide moratorium on the death penalty.

¹. Algeria: Allow rights groups to visit: No response from Algiers to requests from UN Bodies: Joint statement (MDE 28/001/2014) www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE28/001/2014/en

2. Algeria: Authorities shut down TV channel (MDE 28/003/2014)

www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE28/003/2014/en/d544fb16-7a7d-4d78-8bca-15cd41496492/mde280032014en.pdf

3. Algeria: Crackdown on peaceful assembly ahead of presidential elections (MDE 28/002/2014)

www.amnesty.org/es/library/asset/MDE28/002/2014/en/8b50cbdb-38f5-46d2-a425-58de3d8bd2c6/mde280022014en.pdf

Algeria: Key human rights concerns ahead of presidential elections (MDE 28/004/2014) www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE28/004/2014/en/5e47d443-3e88-4a9c-ae7b-50640e8f48de/mde280042014en.pdf

4. Algeria: Two young men arbitrarily detained and prosecuted (MDE 28/006/2014)

www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE28/006/2014/en/df5b8b27-554f-40f0-a768-ef5cc9c638db/mde280062014en.pdf

5. Algeria: Comprehensive reforms needed to end sexual and gender-based violence against women and

girls (MDE 28/010/2014) www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE28/010/2014/en/fedc7314-a3a6-4e31-92f3-1b3aef2faf44/mde280102014en.pdf

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