



EURO-MEDITERRANEAN HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK
 RÉSEAU EURO-MÉDITERRANÉEN DES DROITS DE L'HOMME
 الشبكة الأوروبية - المتوسطية لحقوق الإنسان

Collectif

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ALGERIA REPORT:

"POLITICAL REFORMS" OR ADDITIONAL LOCK ON SOCIETY AND POLITICS IN ALGERIA?

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS.

Algiers, Copenhagen, Paris, Thursday 19th April 2012 – In a joint report published today, the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN), the Collectif des Familles Disparues en Algérie (Collective of the Families of Disappeared People in Algeria, CFDA), the Ligue Algérienne pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme (Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights, LADDH) and the Syndicat National du Personnel Autonome de l'Administration Publique (National Autonomous Staff Union of the Public Administration, SNAPAP) are calling out to the Algerian public as well as the international observers in located in Algeria, particularly the European Union observer mission team, and to the Algerian population as well, to bring their attention to the new laws that have passed in Algeria and the violations of fundamental freedoms and human rights intensifying in Algeria.

At a moment when the upcoming elections on 10th May 2012 are the focus of all attention, the report entitled "Political reforms" or additional lock on society and politics in Algeria reveals that, contrary to the President's announcement on "political reform" and "improving democratic process", passing the new laws has, in effect, turned into an opportunity for Algerian power to further restrict civil society and the scope for political action – a tool for exerting greater control over Algerian society.

This report presents an overview of the different pieces of legislation through a series of thematic information sheets and recommendations on: **the law on the electoral system** (sheet 1), **the law setting the rules and conditions to increase women's chances to access to representation in elected assemblies** (sheet 2), **the law on political parties** (sheet 3), **on information** (sheet 4) and **on associations** (sheet 5).

These laws, passed in January 2012 in Algeria within the framework of so-called political reforms, mark a significant regression in matters of fundamental freedoms, in obvious violation of Algeria's international commitments and particularly the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

While international observers are already located in the country – having been invited by the Algerian authorities – exercising an electoral observation mission, police repression and impeded freedom of speech and freedom to demonstrate are intensifying in Algeria. Despite suspending the state of emergency, peaceful marches or other forms of public demonstrations in Algiers are still forbidden since a decision was made by the Head of Government on 18th June 2001. Incidentally, a significant police disposal is frequently deployed in Algiers and other cities to prevent citizens from demonstrating. Some of them are also arbitrarily arrested and detained several hours in police stations just because they expressed their opinions in public.

On April 14th, the day before the opening of the electoral campaign, a peaceful rally of the Mouvement des Jeunes Indépendants pour le Changement (Independent Youth Movement for Change, MJIC) calling to boycott the elections, was violently repressed by the police. Abdou Bendjoudi, one of the people in charge of the movement, was assaulted by a police officer inside a van before being taken to the police station along

with 24 militants from other organisations, notably SOS Disparus, including 78 year-old Fatima Yous, 72 year- old Djedjigua Cherguit , Hacene Ferhati and Slimane Hamitouche.

Similarly, trade union activists face administration's threats, contempt and retaliation because of their union activities. They are seriously impeded in practicing their right to demonstrate and rally, especially in this election period, like was the case recently for the national federation of justice and teachers, but also the National Workers' Committee on precarious and pre-employment and the national committee for defending the rights of the Algerian unemployed that claim their right to a decent work. On April 18, Abdelkader Kharba, member of the National Committee for defending the rights of unemployed and the LADDH, was arrested while filming a demonstration organized by the National Federation of the justice sector in front of the Court of Sidi Mohamed in Algiers.

Our organisations call on the Algerian authorities to immediately release Abdelkader Kharba, ensuring in all circumstances his physical and psychological integrity, and to put an end to acts of harassment against human rights defenders, including the immediate withdrawal of arbitrary legal proceedings instituted against them.

Our organisations firmly denounce the discordance between the Algerian authorities' announcements and the repressive practices they resort to and bring the Algerian public as well as the international observers' attention, especially the European Union election observation mission team, about the new laws adopted in Algeria and the violations of fundamental rights and human rights intensifying in Algeria.

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