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## The Development in Algeria in the shade of the Arabic spring, and its consequences on migration (Public version)

Report from a Swedish-Swiss fact-finding mission to Algeria  
June 11-16, 2011



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Appendix: A copy of an Identity Card issued by the Saharan Arab Democratic republic (SADR)

## 1. Summary

In early January 2011, when the *Jasmine revolution* had taken hold in Tunisia, a series of protests and riots erupted in Algeria. Youth clashed with security forces in Algiers demanding improved socioeconomic conditions. In February 2011, even more people took to the streets, resulting in extensive demonstrations, and a more politicised agenda with calls for regime change. On February 12, approximately 2 500 people demonstrated in central Algiers under the surveillance of 35 000 police officers. Violence as of January did, however, not occur.

Since February 2011, demonstrations take place every Saturday. They are, however, generally peaceful and less confrontational than the January demonstrations. The number of participants has also decreased considerably. In addition to the frequent demonstrations, a large number of strikes currently affect various sectors of society.

The regime has responded to the dissent of the population by considerable salary increases for various occupational groups, and by appointing a commission for consultations regarding political reform. The Commission, headed by Abdelkader Bensalah, is assigned to seek advice and input from civil society, political parties and others. The intervention of the security forces, after the January riots, was characterised by discipline, and restraint, in terms of force.

The consulted sources have generally adopted a cautious stance regarding the regime's intentions concerning actual democratisation. However, several interlocutors also expressed some optimism.

The Algerian authorities' rather tolerant approach in dealing with unrest and criticism, combined with the population's fatigue after a decade of civil war, is a widely accepted explanation why a radicalisation and revolutionary development like the one in Tunisia has not occurred, and is less likely to occur, in the near future.

The socioeconomic conditions in the country still constitute a breeding ground for unrest and migration. Judging by the information presented to the delegation, it seems, however, unlikely that a dramatic increase in emigration from Algeria would be imminent.

## **2. Introduction**

From June 6 to June 22, 2011, the Swedish Migration Board and the Swiss Federal Department for Justice and Police (FJDP), Office for Migration, undertook a joint Fact-finding mission to Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. The Delegation consulted sources in Algeria from June 11 to June 16, 2011.

The main scope of the mission was to find up-to-date information on the political development, and the development in terms of security, as well as its consequences on migration. Additionally, there was a need to find up-to-date information regarding certain potentially vulnerable groups.

The sources used are all reported, but to some extent anonymous in order not to reveal the informant. The report does not purport to be exhaustive and should not be accorded exclusive evidentiary value in connection with the determination of an individual case. The information in this report does not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the Swedish Migration Board or the Swiss Federal Department for Justice and Police (FJDP), Office for Migration, on a particular issue, and there is no intention by the report to make policy choices. The Swedish Migration Board and the Swiss Federal Department for Justice and Police (FJDP), Office for Migration are jointly responsible for the report.

In Algeria, the delegation consulted representatives of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Intergovernmental Organisations (IGOs), an Algerian governmental human rights organisation, independent newspapers, political parties, embassies, the Algerian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and the Catholic Church. A complete list of consulted interlocutors is included at the end of this report. The interviews were conducted in Algiers and in the village of Benthala.

Also included is information deriving from interviews with the Moroccan Ministry of Interior and IOM, in Rabat, as well as material from an interview with UNDP in Tunis.

The Embassy of Sweden and the Embassy of Switzerland, both in Algiers, assisted the delegation with extensive support in terms of preparation, implementation, and country of origin information.

### 3. Political development and its consequences on migration

#### 3.1 The socioeconomic situation

After independence 1962, Algeria received support from the countries of the Eastern Bloc, which led to the establishment of a planned economy in accordance with socialist ideology. After the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, economic reform with liberalisation measures was initiated.<sup>1</sup>

However, important structural problems still remain in the economy. State enterprises are subsidised without demands of rendering the activities more effective. Dependence on oil and gas exports is extremely strong, while domestic production of consumer products is hampered; 70 % of such products are imported. The private companies are met with suspicion by the public sector, and competition does not function properly.<sup>2</sup> Additional inhibitory issues are bureaucracy and corruption. The Military exerts control over gas and oil resources, and consequently has influence over the economic system.<sup>3</sup>

Several of the consulted sources pointed out that Algeria has got substantial financial resources.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, a too large a portion of the assets does not benefit the population.<sup>5</sup> A representative of a European embassy in Algiers stated that the distribution of wealth is difficult to discern, but the links between the political elite and the economy are strong. There are many who are opposed to increased local production as they gain from consumer goods imports.

Furthermore, the economic consequences of the civil war that raged in Algeria in the 1990s, and part of the 2000's, were severe. Resources have been channeled to terror prevention and security at the expense of investments in socioeconomic development, and tourism revenues have been absent. The country has also suffered enormous losses of human resources. Up to 200 000 people are considered to have perished during the war. Add to this the emigration that started in the 1990s due to political and social causes, and led to so-called brain drain, when a large number of doctors, lawyers, and others from the country's elite left the country.<sup>6</sup> According to a representative of UNDP in Algiers this exodus is continuing.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, young Algerians who leave the country tend to

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<sup>1</sup> CNCPPDH, Algiers, 2011-06-15, and Embassy of Sweden, Algiers, 2011-06-12

<sup>2</sup> A European embassy, Algiers, 2011-06-12

<sup>3</sup> An international organisation, Algiers, 2011-06-14, and a political party, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>4</sup> RCD, Algiers, 2011-06-15, UNDP, Algiers, 2011-06-15, and Liberté, Algiers, 2011-06-14

<sup>5</sup> International organisations, Algiers, 2011-06-14 and 15, a political party, Algiers, 2011-06-15,

<sup>6</sup> LADDH, Algiers, 2011-06-15, UNDP, Algiers, 2011-06-15, and FFS, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>7</sup> UNDP, Algiers, 2011-06-15

invest in the country of arrival rather than in Algeria.<sup>8</sup> Emigrating Algerians also tend to send considerably less in remittances to their relatives back home, in comparison with their Moroccan neighbours for exemple.<sup>9</sup>

The authorities have acted and taken measures to change and improve the economy. Among other things, they have facilitated the issuance of micro-credits for the youth, and accorded administrative assistance. Bureaucratic obstacles have also been reduced.<sup>10</sup> There are, furthermore, ongoing projects aiming to persuade people to return to the interior of the country through development efforts. 500 municipalities are included.<sup>11</sup>

Despite some improvements, the Algerian economy is characterised by large scale unemployment, particularly among the youth. The Algerian population is young, with a large proportion between 18 and 30 years of age. The unemployment within this group is considered a key factor in the upcoming political development in Algeria. According to the human rights organisation *Ligue pour la Défense Algérienne des Droits de l'Homme* (LADDH), there is currently a generation of Algerians who are in exclusion, and lack confidence. A large proportion of this group is well-educated, 1, 2 million Algerians are enrolled at universities in Algeria<sup>12</sup>, but after graduation, the prospects of finding employment are slim.<sup>13</sup>

Unemployment among graduates is officially 20 %, but probably much higher in reality.<sup>14</sup> An aggravating factor, is the housing shortage.<sup>15</sup> A representative from ICRC pointed out that housing shortage and unemployment have negative effects on young Algerians' opportunities to start a family, which also cause frustration and tension.<sup>16</sup>

The socioeconomic shortcomings thus create a strong pressure for change in Algeria. According to representatives of a European embassy and a local newspaper, the population in general consider socioeconomic issues and the personal financial situation more important than democratic development.<sup>17</sup>

### 3.2 Political development

In the discussion concerning the current Arab spring, it should be noted that Algeria experienced something of a spring during the 1980s with democratic achievements such as a multiparty system and increased

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<sup>8</sup> UNDP, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>9</sup> RCD, Algiers, 2011-06-15, and CNCPPDH, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>10</sup> UNDP, Algiers, 2011-06-15, and FOREM, Benthala, 2011-06-13

<sup>11</sup> UNDP, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>12</sup> LADDH, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>13</sup> LADDH, Algiers, 2011-06-15, and an international organization, Algiers, 2011-06-14

<sup>14</sup> An independent newspaper, Algiers, 2011-06-14

<sup>15</sup> LADDH, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>16</sup> ICRC, Algiers, 2011-06-14

<sup>17</sup> A European embassy, Algiers, 2011-06-12, and independent paper, Algiers, 2011-06-14

freedom of the press.<sup>18</sup> The progress in terms of democracy was however interrupted abruptly with the military coup in 1992, sparked by the success of Islamic movement *Front Islamique du Salut* (FIS) in the 1991 elections.

Since 1988, there remains a democratic structure with a fairly well-designed constitution<sup>19</sup>, and, considerable freedom of press in comparison with other countries in the region.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, the rule is in practice authoritarian. A major problem is that the regime does not respect the constitution, and that the President circumvents the law by issuing decrees. A representative of a European embassy stressed that, in the case of Algeria, it is crucial that existing legislation is implemented. It is to a large extent well-articulated.<sup>21</sup> A local NGO described the constitution as a false front, and stated that it had never been respected.<sup>22</sup>

Furthermore, the power is in practice shared with the military high command consisting of elderly generals from the war of independence and the military security service *Département du Renseignement et de la Sécurité* (DRS). President Bouteflika, who once was selected by the army, is considered to have reduced the power of the generals after taking office.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, the military leadership is still powerful, not least with its influence in the economic sphere. The military security service and its leader General Mohamed Lamine « Toufik » Mediène is said to have considerable power in Algeria.<sup>24</sup> DRS has links to the state-owned oil and gas company Sonatrach and important influence regarding the appointment of governors (*walis*).<sup>25</sup> DRS is also said to have representatives with far-reaching authority at Algerian embassies abroad.<sup>26</sup> In this context, it should be noted that the DRS is associated with extra-judicial killings, torture, and other severe abuses committed whilst fighting the armed opposition during the civil war. A very large number of people that were taken away by the DRS during the 1990s are still missing.<sup>27</sup>

The moderate Islamist movement is represented by the party *Mouvement de la Société pour la Paix* (MSP). Representatives of an independent newspaper stated that the regime neutralises the Islamists by integrating MSP into the current government coalition. The interlocutors from this paper, critical towards the Islamist movement, described this approach as

<sup>18</sup> UNDP, Algiers, 2011-06-15, and El Watan, Algiers, 2011-06-14

<sup>19</sup> Embassy of Switzerland, Algiers, 2011-06-12

<sup>20</sup> ICRC, Algiers, 2011-06-14, El Watan, Algiers, 2011-06-14, and FOREM, Benthala, 2011-06-13

<sup>21</sup> A European embassy, Algiers, 2011-06-12

<sup>22</sup> A local NGO, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>23</sup> A local NGO, 2011-06-13, A European embassy, Algiers, 2011-06-12, and an independent newspaper, Algiers, 2011-06-14

<sup>24</sup> An international organisation, Algiers, 2011-06-14, and a European embassy, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>25</sup> European embassies, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>26</sup> An international organisation, Algiers, 2011-06-14

<sup>27</sup> Amnesty International: "Unrestrained Powers: Torture by Algeria's Military Security, July 2006, AI Index MDE 28/004/2006, p.7

dangerous, and stated that the movement had received a boost during the rule of President Bouteflika. The representatives also stated that the moderate Islamists have a long-term strategy to influence and sensitise the population in a discreet manner, and that it is possible that they will be more influential in the future.<sup>28</sup>

A representative of another independent newspaper stated that FIS had had its goal to reduce the role of women in Algeria fulfilled. Nevertheless, the representative believed that the Islamists would be a minority in the future, and not be able to dominate the agenda.<sup>29</sup>

Popular protests against the authorities and prompted by the socioeconomic conditions in the country is not a new phenomenon starting as a result of the revolution in Tunisia and the “Arab spring”. Only in 2010, unrest erupted on 9000-10 000 occasions.<sup>30</sup>

In early January 2011, when the *Jasmine Revolution* had taken hold in Tunisia, a series of protests and riots broke out in Algeria. Youth clashed with security forces in Algiers with demands for improved socioeconomic conditions. The violent protests resulted in the destruction of property and in five fatalities.<sup>31</sup> Yet, according to several sources, the police forces acted with discipline, and with deliberate restraint in regard to the use of force. Concerning the five casualties, one person is said to have died after being hit in the head by a tear gas grenade, an elderly man after inhaling tear gas, and a third person after having been shot whilst attacking a police station. The authorities are said to have adhered to this restrained approach regarding the treatment of protesters henceforth. The security forces reportedly also handled the situation in an efficient way by dispersing and preventing demonstrators from reaching their set destinations.<sup>32</sup>

During the January demonstrations, the demands of the protesters were focused rather on the poor socioeconomic conditions than on the current democratic deficit.<sup>33</sup> At this time, the umbrella organisation *la Coordination Nationale pour le Changement et la Démocratie* (CNCD) was created.<sup>34</sup>

In February 2011, the demonstrations were larger than before and with a broader and more politicised agenda calling for regime change.<sup>35</sup> On February 12, approximately 2 500 people took to the streets. The police presence at that time amounted to 35 000 men. Nevertheless, the security

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<sup>28</sup> An independent newspaper, Algiers, 2011-06-14

<sup>29</sup> An independent newspaper, Algiers, 2011-06-14

<sup>30</sup> A political party and an NGO, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>31</sup> An international organisation, Algiers, 2011-06-14, a political party, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>32</sup> An international organisation, a European embassy. Algiers, 2011-06-14

<sup>33</sup> Ibid

<sup>34</sup> A political party, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>35</sup> An international organisation, Algiers, 2011-06-14

forces observed previously showed discipline in terms of force.<sup>36</sup> Since February, there are now demonstrations every Saturday. They are however generally peaceful and less confrontational than the January demonstrations. The number of participants has also declined significantly.<sup>37</sup> At the time of the delegation's stay in Algiers, only a few people attended these demonstrations.<sup>38</sup>

In total there have been 2 700 demonstrations of various character since January, and demands on increases in salary have been made by representatives from a number of different professional groups, such as physicians and police officers from *Garde Communale*.<sup>39</sup>

In addition to the frequent demonstrations, the dissatisfaction of the population has been channeled into a large number of strikes.<sup>40</sup> According to an interlocutor representing the daily *El Watan*, there are strikes within all sectors of society. He also stated that the fear that previously had prevented employees from going on strike now has disappeared.<sup>41</sup>

Since January 2011, Algerian authorities have taken a number of measures in order to reduce tension and instability.

On February 24, the emergency rule that had prevailed since 1992 was lifted. According to a representative of a European embassy, though, no significant changes have been observed in practice<sup>42</sup>, and the ban to demonstrate in the capital, Algiers, remains.<sup>43</sup>

Furthermore, the authorities have sought to calm the situation by allocating enormous funds to increases in salary for various occupational groups.<sup>44</sup> Police officers, for example, have received a 50 % wage increase, and also customs officials have been allocated large sums.<sup>45</sup> A representative of an independent newspaper stated that, according to some sources, 30 billion dollars have been spent to appease the discontent of the population.<sup>46</sup> A representative of an international organisation in Algiers stated that the government paid its way out of a revolution by wage increases.<sup>47</sup> The State has also responded by granting credit and subsidies to a great extent, as well

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<sup>36</sup> ICRC, Algiers, 2011-06-14

<sup>37</sup> LADDH, Algiers, 2011-06-15, and ICRC, Algiers, 2011-06-14

<sup>38</sup> ICRC, Algiers, 2011-06-14

<sup>39</sup> Embassies, Algiers, 2011-06-12

<sup>40</sup> LADDH, Algiers, 2011-06-15, and ICRC, Algiers, 2011-06-14

<sup>41</sup> *El Watan*, Algiers, 2011-06-14

<sup>42</sup> A European embassy, 2011-06-12

<sup>43</sup> An international organisation, Algiers, 2011-06-14

<sup>44</sup> A European embassy, Algiers, 2011-06-12, an international organisation and a local newspaper, Algiers, 2011-06-14

<sup>45</sup> An international organisation, Algiers, 2011-06-14

<sup>46</sup> A local newspaper Algiers, 2011-06-14

<sup>47</sup> An international organisation, Algiers, 2011-06-15

as restructuring and simplifying bureaucratic procedures. It has for example become easier to obtain a passport.<sup>48</sup>

The demands for democratisation, have been addressed, by the President, by appointing a commission for consultations regarding political reform. The Commission, headed by Abdelkader Bensalah, is assigned to seek advice and input from representatives of civil society, political parties and others. The twenty-second day of consultations was held on June 13, 2011, with the participation of, among others, the President of *Fondation Nationale pour la Promotion de la Santé et le Développement de la Recherche* (FOREM) – an organisation involved in the protection of the rights of women, children, and youth. The Delegation met with representatives of FOREM a few hours after the twenty-second day of consultations. FOREM then informed that the discussions between civil society and the State had intensified, and that such dialogues between the authorities and civil society had never been held before. FOREM also argued that civil society had never been as strong as it is presently.<sup>49</sup>

Also participating in the consultations with the Bensalah Commission was the human rights organisation LADDH. In a meeting with the organisation in Algiers, its representatives informed that LADDH had presented a manifesto to the Commission, in which both the socioeconomic situation as well as the need for democratic reforms was addressed. LADDH stressed in particular the high level of unemployment and youth alienation.<sup>50</sup>

Whether the rulers' democratisation efforts are sincere or not, our sources' opinions are divided. The situation is currently difficult to assess, not least given the short time that has elapsed. Opposition party *Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Démocratie* (RCD), which has boycotted the Bensalah Commission, did not believe that the consultations will produce tangible results.<sup>51</sup>

An NGO stated that the authorities' intentions are unclear, and that everyone is asking themselves whether they are witnessing a real democratic transition or not. At the same time the NGO expressed cautious optimism by stressing that the government feels the pressure of the people, and recognises the importance of change without repression.<sup>52</sup>

FOREM asserted that it still was unclear whether the State really was determined to enforce political reform.<sup>53</sup>

A representative of the UNDP in Algiers welcomed the ongoing consultations and appraised that there was a political will for increased

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<sup>48</sup> LADDH, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>49</sup> FOREM, Benthala, 2011-06-13

<sup>50</sup> LADDH, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>51</sup> RCD, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>52</sup> An NGO, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>53</sup> FOREM, Benthala, 2011-06-13

freedom, power sharing, and the development of a state governed by law. At the same time, the representative emphasised that it will take about one or two years before it will be possible to discern whether there is question of a genuine democratic development.<sup>54</sup>

A representative of a European embassy did not consider that any major changes were to be expected before 2012, when Algeria will be celebrating 50 years of independence. President Bouteflika is suffering from health problems, but would probably like to remain in power until then. It is unclear what will happen after 2012, and who is in power after the presidential elections in 2014. It is possible that Bouteflika will withdraw with reference to age and/or illness. The representative furthermore stated that the ongoing developments are likely to lead to some form of change.<sup>55</sup>

A representative of an independent newspaper stated that the developments in the Arab world are comparable to the breakdown of the Berlin Wall in Eastern Europe, and appraised that the Arab world is moving towards democracy. The representative also stated that the rulers of Algeria are trying to gain time by slowing things down, as they are not interested in far-reaching reform. At the same time, President Bouteflika has to a certain extent committed himself to reform as a result of the pressure from the population. The representative found it likely that a basis of democratic transition would be achieved.

Another newspaper stated that the regime's strategy to try to calm the population through salary increases and consultations was only to be considered as short-term measures. The paper argued that the regime wants to stay in power, but the snare is closing in around its neck.<sup>56</sup>

### 3.3 The security situation

The delegation met in Algiers with representatives from *Centre Africain d'Etudes et de Recherche sur le Terrorisme* (CAERT), an organisation established in 2004, as a part of the African Union. CAERT is mainly engaged in research on terrorism.

According to CAERT, armed Islamist opposition is now almost exclusively an occurrence in north-eastern Algeria, and in the Sahel region (i.e. southern Algeria, northern Mali and Niger). CAERT stated that the armed Islamist forces in northern Algeria now are limited to approximately 200 individuals belonging to the organisation Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). The group was called Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) before swearing allegiance to Al Qaeda. The AQIM fighters move about in the mountains in the provinces of Jijel and Tizi Ouzo, and to some extent in

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<sup>54</sup> UNDP, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>55</sup> A European embassy, 2011-06-15

<sup>56</sup> Independent newspapers, Algiers, 2011-06-14

the mountain range that leads south in the province of Oued Soufa. The members of AQIM are sought after in mountainous areas by the Algerian security forces.<sup>57</sup>

A representative of the newspaper El Watan reported that the number of armed Islamists had decreased significantly. AQIM remains to some extent in Kabylia, but is now driven to the Sahel region. The support for the Islamists is minimal, and AQIM is not worrying the residents very much. Terrorism in Kabylia is not developed and the armed Islamists do not control areas. According to the representative of El Watan, terrorism does not exist in western Algeria anymore.<sup>58</sup>

CAERT states that when things are no longer successful in north-eastern Algeria, AQIM move their operations to the Sahel region, where it has about 300-400 men of different nationalities. AQIM recruits among young unemployed people in Mali and Niger. However, recruiting is less successful now than in the 1990s. AQIM strive to marry their members into clans in Mali in order to avoid being displaced from the area. AQIM's goal is to establish a caliphate in the Sahel.<sup>59</sup>

AQIM is also involved in human trafficking, drug trafficking (mainly cocaine that is transported from Latin America via West Africa, and the Sahel) and arms trade. Links between "ordinary" criminals and AQIM exist at least since 2005. The groups use the same routes, but do not execute attacks in the same area. The criminal factions cooperate within the arms trade.<sup>60</sup>

AQIM is also present in Libya, where they collaborate with the *Libyan Islamic Fighting Group* (LIFG). Members of the group were also reported to have been arrested in Tunisia in June 2011.<sup>61</sup>

According to the CAERT there exists another terrorist organisation in northern Algeria as well, *Dham Houmet Daawa Salafi* (DHDS). DHDS is a splinter group from the *Groupe Islamique Army* (GIA). The latter group is no longer active. DHDS only consists of twenty persons – dwelling in the province of Tipaza and in Ain Defla. DHDS are known for attacking security forces, not civilian targets. The representatives from CAERT had not heard about DHDS related activities in a long time.<sup>62</sup>

AQIM has, according to CAERT, realised that they have much to lose by attacking civilians. Notwithstanding that fact, the authorities can now provide protection for persons threatened by terrorists. The situation was

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<sup>57</sup> CAERT, Algiers, 2011-06-13

<sup>58</sup> El Watan, Algiers, 2011-06-14

<sup>59</sup> CAERT, Algiers, 2011-06-13

<sup>60</sup> Ibidem

<sup>61</sup> Ibidem

<sup>62</sup> Ibidem

different in the 1990s.<sup>63</sup> A journalist stated that a person who is threatened by terrorists would better leave the region in question, as it is not certain that he or she will receive protection from the police.<sup>64</sup>

CAERT asserted that terrorism is no longer a threat to stability in Algeria.<sup>65</sup>

A representative of the newspaper *Liberté* considered that terrorism is not a major problem nowadays.<sup>66</sup>

Representatives from the Algerian Ministry for Foreign Affairs claimed that terrorism in Algeria had been fought down.<sup>67</sup>

The strict security measures taken by the authorities in the city of Algiers were evident to the Delegation. The presence of security forces was exceptionally large, and checks points – particularly when entering the city – as well as bomb detectors at hotels, car parks, and embassies were frequent.

While the armed Islamic opposition is no longer considered a threat at national level, the question remains how the popular discontent that is increasingly ventilated will be reflected in future – whether a move towards escalated violence and instability is to be expected.

Violent clashes between police and demonstrators erupted in January, but the situation has since been stabilised. Protests have not yet been radicalised in a revolutionary direction, as was the case in Tunisia, and the government has refrained from responding to protests with high levels of repression.

From the information received during the mission, it is possible to discern a number of factors explaining why the demonstrators' demands have not yet led to a revolutionary development similar to the Tunisian experience.

The space accorded to Algerian press to criticise those in power, and current conditions, is considered to be central. The authorities use the press as a means to ventilate grievances, counter radicalisation, and avoid overheating.<sup>68</sup> Major independent newspapers like *Liberté*, *El Watan*, and *Soir d'Alger* use very explicit cartoons aimed at President Bouteflika, the DRS and the Police. The freedom of the press has its limits though, and newspapers balance between what is acceptable and what is not. Caution is taken, for example, regarding how to report on the Military.<sup>69</sup>

Another factor explaining why violence has not spiraled out of control in

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<sup>63</sup> CAERT, Algiers, 2011-06-13

<sup>64</sup> An independent newspaper, Algiers, 2011-06-14

<sup>65</sup> CAERT, Algiers, 2011-06-13

<sup>66</sup> *Liberté*, Algiers, 2011-06-14

<sup>67</sup> Algerian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2011-06-14

<sup>68</sup> An Algerian newspaper and international organisations, 2011-06-09--14

<sup>69</sup> An international organisation, Algiers, 2011-06-14

Algeria during the *Arab spring* is the conduct of the security forces, and their all in all moderate use of force. The authorities thus seem to have succeeded in avoiding provoking increased violence.

The effects of the extreme violence during the war in the 1990s are widely considered to be a further explanation. The population is now recovering after the traumatic years of terror, and do not wish to end up in a similar situation.

None of the sources that the delegation has consulted has indicated that escalating violence or revolution would be imminent. Nevertheless, it has been emphasised that it is essential that the rulers succeed in bringing about a viable economic development and political reform. Future radicalisation is possible, should people eventually not see signs of improvements.<sup>70</sup>

### 3.4 Migration

In Algeria, migrants are termed *harraga*, which translates to "those who burn the [documents]." According to representatives of the opposition party RCD, and the human rights organisation LADDH, Algerians began to emigrate in the 1990s; prior to that they did not have the means.<sup>71</sup>

Representatives of the UN Agencies UNIFEM and UNDP in Algiers stated that the Algerians who are now striving to get to Europe tend to be unemployed graduates. Those who lack training usually reckon that the prospects for them in Europe are too harsh.<sup>72</sup>

During the delegation's stay in Algiers, several sources emphasised the negative consequences of emigration on Algeria. Algerians tend not to send remittances back home to the extent of, for example, Moroccans.<sup>73</sup> Nor does Algeria have a banking system designed specifically for remittances, like the one in Morocco.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, young Algerian emigrants have the inclination to invest their earnings in their new country, not in Algeria.<sup>75</sup> A large portion of Algeria's productive elite has also left the country over the years. This brain drain is still in progress.<sup>76</sup> A large part of this group has settled in Canada.<sup>77</sup>

The difficult socioeconomic situation in Algeria is a breeding ground for migration, and in a study among women enrolled at universities, which an international organisation was referring to, it was found that all respondents

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<sup>70</sup> A European embassy, a political party, local and international organisations, 2011-06-09-15

<sup>71</sup> LADDH, Algiers, 2011-06-15, and RCD, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>72</sup> UNIFEM and UNDP, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>73</sup> RCD, Algiers, 2011-06-15, and CNCPPDH, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>74</sup> UNDP, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>75</sup> Ibidem

<sup>76</sup> Ibidem

<sup>77</sup> FFS, Algiers, 2011-06-15

wished to emigrate. Reason cited was work, freedom, equality and independence.<sup>78</sup>

To prevent emigration, a new law prohibiting and punishing illegal exit has been adopted.<sup>79</sup>

According to LADDH, migration from Algeria has declined significantly, despite unemployment, housing shortage, and other difficulties.<sup>80</sup>

Algeria is also a transit country for migrants from sub-Saharan Africa.

According to representatives of the Algerian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the first wave of Africans from Sub-Saharan Africa arrived in the 1970s, due to drought. The second wave came during the mid-1980s due to military conflicts in Mali and Niger.<sup>81</sup> Nowadays, a large part of the influx comes through Mali. Malians do not need a visa to enter Algeria.<sup>82</sup> Consequently, false Malian passports are frequently found among various nationalities.<sup>83</sup> According to a representative of the Catholic Church in Algiers, the number of migrants currently residing in Algeria might amount to 15 000.<sup>84</sup> According to LADDH, there were previously about 20 000 migrants staying in the Algiers region, but that number has now decreased.<sup>85</sup> Many of the migrants come from Cameroon and The Ivory Coast, but also from Nigeria.<sup>86</sup>

In the past, Sub-Saharan migrants stayed in villages in southern Algeria. Nowadays, though, they tend to stay in the cities of the north. According to UNDP, the tendency is that the migrants move west towards Spain.<sup>87</sup> LADDH stated that migrants have Spain and Italy as ultimate goals. Starting points for migrants are Oran in the north-west, and Annaba in the east. There are smuggling networks on these locations. The police carry out raids and checks, but migrants are often tolerated.<sup>88</sup>

According to representatives from the Moroccan Ministry of Interior, one of the largest illegal migration routes runs through Algeria, via Bechar alternatively Chlef, and into Morocco. The migrants cross the Moroccan border in the area close to Oujda. Once on Moroccan territory, migrants

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<sup>78</sup> An international organisation, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>79</sup> A political party, Algiers, 2011-06-15, and Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs:

“Mänskliga rättigheter i Algeriet 2010, p.5

<sup>80</sup> LADDH, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>81</sup> Algerian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2011-06-14

<sup>82</sup> Algerian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2011-06-14, and the Catholic Church, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>83</sup> Catholic Church, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>84</sup> Ibidem

<sup>85</sup> LADDH, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>86</sup> Catholic Church, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>87</sup> UNDP, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>88</sup> LADDH, Algiers, 2011-06-15

generally try to reach Europe through Ceuta, Melilla and Laâyoune.<sup>89</sup> The 1600 km long land border between Algeria and Morocco remains closed, but does not stop irregular migration.<sup>90</sup>

According to the Algerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 14 000 migrants had, until May 31, 2011, arrived due to the crisis in Libya. Most have now been repatriated by IOM.<sup>91</sup>

According to the Algerian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, migrants are entitled to health care in Algeria. They are not asked for a residence permit when seeking care. They are also offered free education, but instruction is only available in Arabic.<sup>92</sup>

ICRC stated that only Sahrawis, Palestinians, and Iraqis are recognised as refugees by the Algerian state.<sup>93</sup>

### 3.5 Conclusion

Given the considerable scale of unrest that has occurred in Algeria during the past 18 months, and the prevailing poor socioeconomic conditions, it seems reasonable to expect further protests and local riots. However, judging by the information received by the consulted sources, it would seem less likely that the expression of dissent in Algeria is about to radicalise, and in the near future, lead to a revolutionary development like the one witnessed in Tunisia. The authorities' strategy to curb dissent by increasing salaries, initiating dialogue with the civil society, tolerating criticism voiced in the press, combined with disciplined police operations, has most likely mitigated radicalisation tendencies. The population's fatigue of war also appears to be of high relevance.

Also, the armed Islamist terrorist groups' presence has been reduced significantly. The only group with some strength to speak of, AQIM, are sought in the north-eastern mountains, and has shifted focus from the more densely populated areas in the north to the Sahel in the south. The Islamist armed opposition is not considered to pose a serious threat to stability any more.

It therefore seems reasonable to conclude that a dramatic increase in emigration due to the security situation is not to be expected.

The interlocutors gave various views regarding the prospects of a democratic development, but at least some cautious optimism is possible to discern regarding the future, which, in combination with the economic

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<sup>89</sup> Moroccan Ministry of Interior, Rabat, 2011-06-21

<sup>90</sup> IOM, Rabat, 2011-06-20

<sup>91</sup> Algerian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2011-06-14

<sup>92</sup> Ibidem

<sup>93</sup> ICRC, Algiers, 2011-06-14

resources that are said to exist in the country, also speak against an imminent increase in emigration of a more comprehensive magnitude.

In conclusion, it seems reasonable to expect that Algeria will continue to generate migrants until the authorities have overcome current structural economic problems, unemployment, housing shortage, and alienation among the youth. However, judging by the information gathered by the delegation, a dramatic increase in emigration currently seems improbable.

## 4. Groups of particular interest

### 4.1 Women

Representatives of the newspaper *Liberté* stated that women enjoy more freedom in Tunisia than in Algeria. In Algeria, Islam still sets limits. The Family Law is influenced by religion.<sup>94</sup> A representative of the newspaper *El Watan* claimed that the Islamist party FIS had accomplished its goal to reduce the role of women in society. The representative thought, however, that Islamists would be in a minority in the future, and would not be able to dominate the agenda.<sup>95</sup>

Progress has been made, especially in the professional life.<sup>96</sup> Women are in majority within sectors such as health care and education, although they do not tend to reach the highest positions.<sup>97</sup> At the same time, there are families who still do not allow women to work.<sup>98</sup>

An indication of increased secularisation is that people nowadays have to register a civil marriage; previously, all they had to do was to turn to the Imam for the religious ceremony.<sup>99</sup>

Abortion is illegal, which means that women are forced into dangerous non-professional incisions.<sup>100</sup>

Violence against women is common in Algeria.<sup>101</sup> The women's rights organisation *Centre d'Information et de Documentation sur les Droits de l'Enfant et de la Femme* (CIDDEF), reported that 10 % of the Algerian women are victims of violence, according to a survey. According to statistics from the Algerian Police, about 10 000 reports regarding violence are handed in by women to the Police or the Gendarmerie annually.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> *Liberté*, Algiers, 2011-06-14

<sup>95</sup> *El Watan*, Algiers, 2011-06-14

<sup>96</sup> *Liberté*, Algiers, 2011-06-14

<sup>97</sup> *El Watan*, Algiers, 2011-06-14

<sup>98</sup> *Liberté*, Algiers, 2011-06-14

<sup>99</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>100</sup> *El Watan*, Algiers, 2011-06-14

<sup>101</sup> ICRC, Algiers, 2011-06-14, and *Liberté*, Algiers, 2011-06-14

<sup>102</sup> CIDDEF, Algiers, 2011-06-15

Representatives from UNIFEM and CIDDEF state that the legal system generally is operating properly for female victims of violence. They can contact a physician, obtain a certificate of injury, and then report the offender, such as her husband, after which he is punished.<sup>103</sup> The law turns against all forms of violence, not that which is specifically directed against women (see 269 § of the Algerian Penal Code relating to physical violence).<sup>104</sup> At the same time, UNIFEM states that the sentences are rather lenient for the kind of violence that women usually are subjected to.<sup>105</sup>

Several sources indicated that there are many women who do not turn to authorities after being subjected to violence.<sup>106</sup> Many women do not report their husbands, as it can easily lead to divorce, which makes them vulnerable. Women who are poor, unemployed, and perhaps with children, have difficulties managing on their own.<sup>107</sup> There is no support from the authorities in such situations according to CIDDEF.<sup>108</sup>

In case of divorce, the woman takes care of the couple's children. Under Article 72 of the Family Code, the man pays the rent for the woman and the children.<sup>109</sup>

It is common that the woman returns to her parents after divorce.<sup>110</sup>

According to representatives of an international organisation and a local newspaper, it is mainly NGOs, and not the Government, that are committed to women's rights.<sup>111</sup>

CIDDEF stated that women in large cities generally manage and are able to defend themselves. There are also NGOs to resort to. It is more difficult in rural areas, and in the provinces in the interior. NGOs, however, are reaching out to women in these areas with information on how to get help via radio spots and TV.<sup>112</sup>

In Algeria, there is a network of 15 women's centers, *Centres d'écoute*, where psychologists and lawyers give advice in areas such as legal aid, work, education, divorce, inheritance, psychological support, and more. In addition, there are seven shelters where abused women can seek refuge. Two are run by NGOs (SOS Femmes en Détresse and Association Rachda), and five, including three in Algiers, are operated by the State. There are

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<sup>103</sup> CIDDEF, Algiers, 2011-06-15, and UNIFEM, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>104</sup> CIDDEF, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>105</sup> UNIFEM, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>106</sup> El Watan, Algiers, 2011-06-14, Liberté, Algiers, 2011-06-14, and CNCPPDH, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>107</sup> CIDDEF, Algiers, 2011-06-15, and UNIFEM, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>108</sup> Ibidem

<sup>109</sup> Ibidem

<sup>110</sup> Ibidem

<sup>111</sup> IGO, Algiers, 2011-06-15, and an independent newspaper, Algiers, 2011-06-14

<sup>112</sup> CIDDEF, Algiers, 2011-06-15

about 50 places available per shelter. Currently, there is a need for more places than those available.<sup>113</sup>

CIDDEF reported that the organisation tries to find place in shelters at all costs when needed. CIDDEF also helps to give abused women shelter with host families. The organisation has about ten such family placements per year.<sup>114</sup>

A representative of FOREM stated that the organisation recently took care of a vulnerable woman for a few months, and then sent her on to a shelter for protection.<sup>115</sup>

According to UNIFEM, there are also other state reception centers for vulnerable people. However, they are not specifically designed for women.<sup>116</sup>

NGOs such as CIDDEF, SOS Femmes en Détresse and network Réseau Wassila also support women with legal advice, government contacts, employment, and medical and psychologist appointments.<sup>117</sup>

CIDDEF also helps to mediate in conflicts with the woman's family. A representative of the organisation stated that they generally find a solution in such situations.<sup>118</sup>

Honor crimes exist in Algeria, but are nowadays very rare.<sup>119</sup> A senior representative of FOREM stated that honor crimes are not part of the Algerian tradition.<sup>120</sup> A representative of the newspaper *Liberté* informed that honor crimes exist to a limited extent in the Berber region Aurès - in the North-east - nowhere else.<sup>121</sup>

Representatives of the governmental human rights association *Commission Nationale Consultative de Promotion et de Protection des Droits de l'Homme* (CNCPPDH) stated that if honor crimes occur, it is in rural areas. However, it is an unusual phenomenon, which has to do with the rareness of infidelity in rural areas.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Ibidem

<sup>114</sup> Ibidem

<sup>115</sup> FOREM, Benthala, 2011-06-13

<sup>116</sup> UNIFEM, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>117</sup> UNIFEM, Algiers, 2011-06-15, CIDDEF, Algiers, 2011-06-15, *Liberté*, Algiers, 2011-06-14, and CNCPPDH, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>118</sup> CIDDEF, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>119</sup> FOREM, Benthala, 2011-06-13, *Liberté*, Algiers, 2011-06-14, and CNCPPDH, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>120</sup> FOREM, Benthala, 2011-06-13

<sup>121</sup> *Liberté*, Algiers, 2011-06-14

<sup>122</sup> CNCPPDH, Algiers, 2011-06-15

#### 4.2 Children

*Fondation Nationale pour la Promotion de la Santé et le Développement de la Recherche* (FOREM) was created in 1990, and has observer status at the UN agency ECOSOC (see [www.forem.dz](http://www.forem.dz)). FOREM has cooperated with the UNHCR, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, and is working to support children, adolescents, and mothers – particularly in the fields of health and education. FOREM has eleven offices around the country (including Algiers, Benthala, Ain Defla, Reliziane and Tiaret), and consists of volunteer members from different professions (e.g. doctors, pharmacists, psychologists, and sociologists). The organisation also runs a sponsoring program for orphans. The delegation visited FOREM's office in the village of Benthala outside Algiers, where 400 people were killed by armed Islamists in 1997. FOREM has supported children traumatized by this event ever since.<sup>123</sup>

#### 4.3 LGBTQ

Representatives of the newspaper *Liberté* stated the following regarding the situation of homosexuals in Algeria. The topic is very sensitive and is not discussed in the press. It is hard to live as a homosexual in Algeria, and those who are, generally act very discreetly. Acceptance among families varies. Homosexuals who do not conceal their sexual orientation risk verbal harassment. There are no clubs for homosexuals. Sexual intercourse between individuals of the same sex may render a prison sentence in accordance with the Penal Code. The representatives of *Liberté* did not know whether the authorities, in practice, tended to act with tolerance or not.<sup>124</sup>

There is an association advocating LGBTQ people's rights, *Abu Nawas*, but it is not recognised by the state.<sup>125</sup>

CNCPPDH stated that LGBTQ issues is a subject considered Taboo. However, in practice, it is not tightly restrained by the State, unless minors are involved. There are not many homosexuals that are condemned, and the minority is not sought after by the authorities.<sup>126</sup>

#### 4.4 Christians

The following information regarding the situation of Christians in Algeria is stemming from a meeting on June 15, 2011, with a representative of the Catholic Church in the country.

There are about 50,000 Christians in Algeria. They are all foreigners, except those converted to the religion. Christians generally have no problem with the Algerian population.

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<sup>123</sup> FOREM, Benthala, 2011-06-13

<sup>124</sup> *Liberté*, Algiers, 2011-06-14

<sup>125</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>126</sup> CNCPPDH, Algiers, 2011-06-15

The Catholic Church is tolerated in Algeria as it is already established in the country. Nevertheless, the Church personnel experience some difficulties with visas and residence permits. Authorities generally issue tourist visas to nuns and monks, so they just may stay for a few months at a time, and thus are forced to exit and re-enter the country.

Moreover, the Catholic Church is active in women's and children's rights. It is also involved in issues related to migrants.

The 2006 law on religious ceremonies includes a number of restrictions placed on Christians. Religious ceremonies must be performed on an official site recognised by the authorities (a special permit may be granted as an exception). A person can be sentenced to imprisonment and fines if he or she prays elsewhere. The Catholic Church has a sufficient number of buildings, but the provision may be more problematic for other denominations. The Catholic Church's representative informed about an incident in which the governor of a province had a number of churches shut down, as they were not authorised by law. Eventually, however, all the churches concerned were re-opened, by order of the same governor.

Furthermore, a person who *converts* a Muslim to Christianity may be sentenced to 2-3 years imprisonment and fines, according to the 2006 law on religious ceremonies. However, it is not forbidden for Muslims to convert per se.

Evangelising is forbidden, and renders a prison sentence under the same law. According to the Catholic Church's representative, a woman was stopped 2-3 years ago with a couple of Bibles, which eventually led to a conviction in the court of first instance on charges of evangelism. The appellate court, however, refrained from processing the case, which consequently led to a closure of the case.

The authorities have also shown some good will towards Christians by deploying policemen outside a church in Boumerdès, a town that has been plagued by terrorism.

Furthermore, the Catholic Church's representative informed that the Police had two Christians arrested for eating during Ramadan. The Christians were later brought to trial, whereupon the court found that it was not a judicial matter.

The Bible is available on the internet, and people also have access to similar material via satellite TV.

According to the authorities, there are 3,000 Christian converts in Algeria. In reality, however, there are many more, according to the Catholic Church. Conversions take place especially in Kabylia, where there exist many different denominations. The Catholic Church's representative explained the more frequent occurrence of conversion in Kabylia with the fact that

Kabylisians, who are not Arabs, have been opposed to the ongoing Arabisation in Algeria. The representative also stated that the inhabitants of Kabylia once were Christians – among them St. Augustine.

Baptists and Anglicans accept conversion, and so does the Catholic Church. However, the preparation for conversion to Catholicism is more thorough, and thus rarer.

In January 2010, a number of converted pastors participated in a seminar organised by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, after receiving an invitation from the authorities. The Catholic Church's representative argued that this may be seen as a kind of recognition of converts.

#### **4.5 Palestinians**

On June 13, 2011, the delegation met with representatives of the Palestinian Embassy in Algiers.

Palestine has had a representation in Algiers since 1962, and the Embassy in Algiers is Palestine's first worldwide.<sup>127</sup>

Palestinians came to Algeria to a large extent in 1964. Many within this group were teachers, and some have since become Algerian citizens.<sup>128</sup>

In 1994, after the Oslo accords, a large number of Palestinians returned to Palestine. However, due to deteriorating conditions since 2008, about 5000 Palestinians currently wish to return to Algeria. According to the Embassy, Algerian authorities are inclined to permit entry for the group. Presently, however, the Palestinian population in Algeria amount to about 2,000 persons.<sup>129</sup>

The Embassy stated that the Palestinians are very well treated in Algeria. Palestinians have the same access to education and health care in the country as the Algerians. They also have the same opportunities to find employment.<sup>130</sup> They are not seen as migrants in Algeria.

According to the Embassy, all Palestinians are registered in Algeria.<sup>131</sup> Children born in Algeria are registered by Algerian authorities. The child can then also be registered at the Palestinian Embassy. A child becomes a national of Algeria if it has got an Algerian father or if the mother is an Algerian and the father is stateless or unknown.<sup>132</sup>

The Embassy also asserted that it is easy for Palestinians to obtain an

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<sup>127</sup> Embassy of Palestine, Algiers, 2011-06-13

<sup>128</sup> Ibidem

<sup>129</sup> Ibidem

<sup>130</sup> Ibidem

<sup>131</sup> Ibidem

<sup>132</sup> Ibidem

Algerian residence card (*carte de résidence*). In order to have the document issued, the applicant need to submit employment references, and show that rent is being paid. The applicant must, furthermore, personally appear to collect the residence card. It is indicated on the card that the person is a Palestinian.<sup>133</sup>

According to the Embassy, Palestinians in Algeria may hold the following documents: Palestinian passport, Lebanese, Syrian or Egyptian travel document (Algerian authorities do not issue travel documents to Palestinians), and Algerian residence card. The Palestinians that are Algerian nationals may have Algerian passports. Currently, a few hundred Palestinians are Algerian nationals.<sup>134</sup>

If a person has a residence permit in Algeria, but not an Algerian passport, he or she must normally return to Algeria within two years, if he or she exits the country, and wish to return. However, Algerian authorities have granted Palestinians an exception meaning that they may return to Algeria even after a two-year absence. Palestinians do not need to contact an Algerian embassy abroad before his or her return.<sup>135</sup>

#### **4.6 Front Islamique du Salut (FIS)**

A representative of the ICRC stated that former members of the party *Front Islamique du Salut* (FIS) do not encounter problems with the Algerian State after the amnesty issued through the Law on Peace and Reconciliation. Individual ex-FIS members may have problems privately, for example, if someone in the neighbourhood wants to take revenge, but the threat is then not stemming from the authorities. Nor have family members of former FIS members' problems with the Algerian state.<sup>136</sup>

#### **4.7 Sahrawis**

Around 90 000 Sahrawis, originating from the disputed Western Sahara territory, are living in exile in Algeria (and around 25 000 in Mauritania), most of them in refugee camps in the South-western province of Tindouf.<sup>137</sup> They are recognised as refugees by the Algerian state.<sup>138</sup>

Life in the refugee camps is hard. Because of that, and out of frustration with the slow, or non-existing, pace in finding a solution to the conflict of Western Sahara, many young people emigrate, especially to Spain. Part of this emigration causes *brain drain*. Those who get an education in Cuba

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<sup>133</sup> Ibidem

<sup>134</sup> Ibidem

<sup>135</sup> Ibidem

<sup>136</sup> ICRC, Algiers, 2011-06-14

<sup>137</sup> UNHCR country operations profile – Algeria, 2011, <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/tehis/vtx/page?page=49e485e16>

<sup>138</sup> ICRC, Algiers, 2011-06-14

tend to go to Spain afterwards in order to find work. Each day around 15 Sahrawis from the camps apply for a visa to Spain.<sup>139</sup>

The hardships and the political deadlock have also to some extent radicalised the youth. Maybe those who study in Algeria have been influenced by Islamists. According to our Sahrawi interlocutor, the Sahrawis have no tradition of praying in mosques, but now there are mosques in the camps, and the sermons may deliver radical messages. There is a risk of this radicalisation spreading to countries with weak governments, like Mali and Niger, where AQIM already is active. So far the radicalised Sahrawis are a minority, and the interlocutor does not think that they will influence the Sahrawi culture.

In spite of the above mentioned difficulties, a lot of contraband in the south of Algeria, and problems for Polisario in the Libyan context, our interlocutor believes that the Arabic spring is good for Polisario and Western Sahara.<sup>140</sup>

The refugees in the camps can travel freely within Algeria, where they are treated nearly as Algerian citizens.<sup>141</sup>

The Sahrawi refugees in Algeria are also free to travel outside of Algeria. The Algerian state, more precisely a special unit within the passport authority, issues passports to the Sahrawis. The passports look exactly like the Algerian national passports. The only difference is that the holder is not noted as an Algerian citizen.

According to the representative of the Embassy of the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), the Sahrawis living in the camps in the province of Tindouf can get “Western Saharan passports”. They can travel with these passports in Sub-Saharan Africa, but many countries do not recognise the passports, a. o. the EU.

Polisario issues ID-cards to Sahrawis from 18 years of age. From that age they are obliged to wear ID-cards. The validity of the cards is five years. This year new cards are issued. The quality is better than the quality of the old ones. The cards are orange and illustrated with lines of sand. There is a flag up in the left corner above the photo of the holder. The text is in Spanish and Arabic.<sup>142</sup> A copy is attached to this report in Appendix A.

The representative of Polisario in Sweden may verify documents and if a person indeed is a Sahrawi.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Embassy of SADR, Algiers, 2011-06-12

<sup>140</sup> Ibidem

<sup>141</sup> Ibidem

<sup>142</sup> Ibidem

<sup>143</sup> Ibidem

According to the representative of the Embassy of the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), military service for SADR is voluntary.<sup>144</sup>

## 5. Torture

The consulted sources had divergent opinions regarding the existence of torture in Algeria.

According to Amnesty International, DRS used torture against terrorist suspects in secret detention as late as 2006. The abuse supposedly was carried out with systematic impunity in accordance with the 2006 amnesty laws.<sup>145</sup>

Representatives of CAERT stated that terrorist suspects no longer are at risk of being tortured. CAERT also asserted that, in order to ensure that no abuses are committed, legal experts from the Gendarmerie are incorporated in the military units fighting terrorists in the mountains.<sup>146</sup>

A representative of the independent human rights organisation LADDH stated that authorities previously acted in panic and used torture during a period marked by the absence of control. Nowadays, however, the situation has changed. The representative did not believe that torture existed in Algeria anymore.<sup>147</sup>

A representative of an international organisation stated that torture is no longer present in the country's prisons. The Police have been known to use violence to obtain confessions, and the leadership within the authority has indicated that improvements are needed. The representative believes that the Police authority actually is trying to bring about an improvement. On the other hand, the representative stated that it was not likely that the situation had changed fundamentally from what was reported in the Amnesty International document from 2006 regarding DRS' use of torture during interrogations of suspected.<sup>148</sup>

A representative of an independent newspaper stated that torture was used systematically during the war, but now only occurred in isolated cases to obtain confessions during interrogation. The representative was of the view that the press and the NGOs' efforts against torture had brought results.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Ibidem

<sup>145</sup> Amnesty International: "Unrestrained Powers: Torture by Algeria's Military Security", July 2006, AI Index MDE 28/004/2006, p. 41

<sup>146</sup> CAERT, Algiers, 2011-06-13

<sup>147</sup> LADDH, Algiers, 2011-06-15

<sup>148</sup> An international organisation, Algiers, 2011-06-14

<sup>149</sup> An independent newspaper, Algiers, 2011-06-14

## 6. Abbreviations

AQIM – Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb

CAERT – Centre Africain d'Etudes et de Recherche sur le Terrorisme

CIDDEF – Centre d'Information et de Documentation sur les Droits de l'Enfants et de la femme

CNCD – La Coordination Nationale pour le Changement et la Démocratie

CNCPPDH – Commission Nationale Consultative de Promotion et de Protection des Droits de l'Homme

DHDS – Dhamat Houmet Daawa Salafia

DRS – Département du Renseignement et de la Sécurité

ECOSOC – Economic and Social Council

FFS – Front des Forces Socialistes

FIS – Front Islamique du Salut

FOREM – Fondation Nationale Pour La Promotion De La Santé et Le Développement De La Recherche

GIA – Groupe Islamique Armé

GSPC – Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat

ICRC – International Committee of the Red Cross

IOM – International Organization for Migration

LADDH – Ligue Algérienne pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme

LGBTQ – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer people

LIFG – Libyan Islamic Fighting Group

MSP – Mouvement de la Société pour la Paix

POLISARIO – Frente Popular de Liberación de Saguía el Hamra y Río de Oro

RCD – Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Démocratie

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

UNHCR – Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF – United Nations Children's Fund

UNIFEM – United Nations Development Fund for Women

## 7. Consulted sources

### *Oral sources*

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 Catholic Church, Algiers  
 Centre Africain d'Etudes et de Recherche sur le Terrorisme (CAERT), Algiers  
 Centre d'Information et de Documentation sur les Droits de l'Enfants et de la femme (CIDDEF), Algiers  
 Commission Nationale Consultative de Promotion et de Protection des Droits de l'Homme (CNCPPDH), Algiers  
 El Watan (newspaper), Algiers  
 Embassy of Palestine, Algiers  
 Embassy of Sweden, Algiers  
 Embassy of Switzerland, Algiers  
 Embassy of the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), Algiers  
 Fondation Nationale Pour La Promotion De La Santé et Le Développement De La Recherche (FOREM), Benthala  
 Front des Forces Socialistes (FFS), Algiers  
 The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Algiers  
 International Organization for Migration (IOM), Rabat  
 Liberté (newspaper), Algiers  
 Ligue Algérienne pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme (LADDH), Algiers  
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Appendix A



NOMBRE DEL PADRE	اسم الأب
[REDACTED]	محمد محمد فائق
NOMBRE DE LA MADRE	اسم الأم
[REDACTED]	صفية محمد يحظيه
DOMICILIO	مقر الإقامة
[REDACTED]	مدرسة 27 فبراير
FECHA DE EXPEDICIÓN	تاريخ الإصدار
[REDACTED]	



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