



CDR Background Papers on Refugees and Asylum Seekers

BACKGROUND PAPER ON REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS FROM ALGERIA

**UNHCR
Centre for Documentation and Research
Geneva, October 1995**

This information paper was prepared in the Country Information Unit of the Centre for Documentation and Research on the basis of publicly available information, analysis and comment, and in collaboration with the UNHCR Statistics Unit. All sources are cited. This paper is not, and does not purport to be, fully exhaustive with regard to conditions in the country surveyed, or conclusive as to the merits of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

1. Asylum Seekers in Europe

1.1 Introduction

This section provides a statistical overview of refugees and asylum-seekers in Western Europe¹ in general and of Algerian refugees and asylum-seekers in particular. It is based on official government statistics provided to UNHCR over the period 1990-1994. Statistics referring to 1994 should be considered as provisional and subject to change.

The following observations should be taken into consideration when comparing individual asylum statistics from different countries. Firstly, due to the absence of common standards for the compilation of such statistics, the scope for any detailed comparison is limited. For instance, data may refer to individuals or principal applicants ("cases"), to those who submit a request for asylum or to those who are admitted into the asylum procedure. Persons fleeing from former Yugoslavia and benefitting from temporary protection may be included or excluded. Even within countries, comparisons may be hampered due to changing counting practices over the years.

In this section, refugee recognition rates have been calculated by dividing the number of Convention status recognitions ("Approved") by the total number of Convention status recognitions and negative decisions ("Rejected"). Humanitarian and other non-Convention status "recognitions", as far as they are reported in the asylum statistics, have been grouped together under one heading ("Allowed to stay").

The general trend indicates an overall decline of new asylum requests in Western Europe, with the exception of a few countries. The number of 1951 Convention status recognitions in 1994 (47,000) remained almost the same as in 1993 (48,000), while that for "humanitarian recognitions" decreased slightly. In the case of Algerian asylum seekers, the total number of applications decreased from 13,900 in 1993 to 7,600 in 1994, while it had increased from 1,600 to 14,000 during 1990-1993. Convention status recognitions as well as humanitarian recognitions of Algerian asylum seekers are relatively low compared to other nationalities.

1.2 Overall Trends in Asylum Applications

In 1994, some 329,000 persons applied for asylum in Europe, 40 per cent less than in 1993 (553,000) (see Table 1). Germany received almost 40 per cent of all the asylum seekers in Europe in 1994 (127,200) which, however, constituted a marked decrease compared to 1993 when nearly 60 per cent (323,000) of all asylum applications were lodged in Germany.

The Netherlands and the United Kingdom accounted each for some 15 per cent of all asylum-seekers in Europe during 1994. From 1993 to 1994, both countries more than doubled their share in European asylum applications.

Countries where 5 to 10 per cent of all applications in Europe were lodged during 1994 include France (8%), Sweden (6%), Switzerland (5%), and Belgium (4%). Countries with 2 per cent or less of all applications include Austria, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Norway, Greece and Portugal.

From 1993 to 1994, the following changes in the number of asylum seekers by country were recorded in Europe: Austria (+7%), Belgium (-43%), Denmark (-54%), Finland (-58%), France (-6%), Germany (-61%), Greece (+60%), Italy (-7%), Netherlands (+49%), Norway (-74%), Portugal (-65%), Spain (-2%), Sweden (-50%), Switzerland (-33%), United Kingdom (+51%).

1.3 Trends in Convention Status Recognition

Some 47,400 persons were granted Convention refugee status in Europe during 1994, slightly less than in 1993 (48,800). In 1994, Germany granted refugee status to some 25,600 persons, 56 per cent more than in 1993, and to more than half of all persons granted Convention status recognition in Europe.

The Netherlands and France each granted Convention refugee status to more than 6,000 persons (14 per cent) of the European total. Countries which accorded between 1,000 and 3,000 Conventions recognitions include Switzerland (3,000), United Kingdom (1,400) and Belgium (1,500). The following countries granted Convention refugee status to less than 1,000 persons during 1994: Sweden (790), Austria (680), Spain (630), Denmark (540), Italy (300), Greece (90), Finland (20), Norway (20) and Portugal (10).

During 1990-1994, Belgium, France and the Netherlands had Convention recognition rates which were at least twice as high compared to the overall rate in Europe (10 per cent). In Germany the Convention recognition rate doubled from 5 to 10 per cent during 1993-1994 (see table 2).

1.4 Trends in Other Humanitarian Recognitions

During 1994, some 58,000 persons were allowed to remain for humanitarian reasons, 20 per cent more than the number of persons granted Convention status recognition (see Table 1). Sweden accounted for 64 per cent (36,560) of all "humanitarian recognitions" during 1994 (including 17,950 asylum seekers who were allowed to stay under a special "amnesty" in April 1994).

Between 1990 and 1994, the number of Convention refugee recognitions increased by 63 per cent, while the number of non-Convention recognitions increased with 350 per cent.

1.5 Asylum Applications of Algerian Nationals

During 1994, 7,600 Algerian nationals sought asylum in Europe, almost 50 per cent less than the year before. The applications were mostly received by Germany (37%), followed by France (30%) and the Netherlands (17%). From 1993 to 1994, the number of asylum applications submitted by Algerian nationals more than doubled in France, the Netherlands and Spain but decreased significantly (-75 per cent) in Germany.

1.6 Trends in Convention Status Recognition of Algerians

Some 270 Algerians were granted Convention refugee status in Europe between 1990-1994, 63% of whom were accepted by Germany, 22% by France and 9% by Belgium. The total number of Algerians recognized rose from 10 or less during 1990-1992 to 60 in 1993 and to 170 in 1994.

Nevertheless, a comparison of Table 2 and 4 indicates that during 1990-1994 Convention status recognitions for Algerians (1 per cent) were significantly lower than for all nationalities (10 per cent).

1.7 Trends in Other "Humanitarian Recognitions" of Algerians

Out of 100 Algerians allowed to stay in Europe on non-Convention grounds between 1990 and 1994, 95 were admitted by Sweden.

2. Algerians in North Africa

On 1 July 1989, the governments of Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia ratified a treaty instituting the Union of the Arab Maghreb. The treaty acknowledges and aims to strengthen the historic, religious and linguistic links among the people of these countries. For example, Article 2 of the treaty provides, *inter alia*, for the progressive attainment of free movement of persons, services, goods and capital between member States, and Article 3 calls for the safeguarding of the independence of all the member States. In Article 15 the member States undertake to permit, within their respective territories, no activity or organization harming the security, territorial integrity or political system of any of the member States. They likewise undertake to refrain from joining any military or political pact or alliance directed against the political independence or territorial unity of the other member States (**United Nations General Assembly, A/44/594, 9 October 1989**).

3. The Internal Situation in Algeria

3.1 Recent Developments

The Democratic and Popular Republic of Algeria (Arabic name *el-Djezair*) is the largest of three countries comprising the Maghreb, and is situated located on the western Mediterranean coast of Africa, surrounded by Morocco, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Libya and Tunisia (**The Middle East and North Africa 1995**, 253; **Europa World Yearbook 1994**, 310). Algeria became independent from France in 1962. Its system of government is described as being headed by the President, who is elected by universal suffrage every five years, and who appoints and presides over the Cabinet (**Keesing's Record of World Events**, 1995, R131). Legislative power is said to be shared by the President and the 430-seat National Assembly, which is also elected every five years (**Ibid.**).

At present, Algeria is embroiled in a crisis which is attributed to two intertwined sources: the political legacy of the 1954-1962 war of independence, plus the economic failure in the 1980s resulting from policy choices made during the government of President Houari Boumédiène, who ruled the country from 1965 through 1978 (**The Middle East and North Africa 1995**, 3). Attempts by Chadli Ben Djedid, to redress the country's economic problems were undermined by adverse international developments such as the fall in oil prices and the dollar (**Ibid.**). The result was added economic hardship on Algerians, who had yet to see those promises made by the Revolution fulfilled, and thus were increasingly inclined to follow any of a number of emerging Islamic movements, especially the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) (**Ibid.**). On the political front, President Chadli oversaw the 1988 and 1989 referendums that approved amendments to the 1976 constitution and paved the way for a transition from the one-party socialist rule of the National Liberation Front (FLN), to a multi-party system of government (**Keesing's**, 1995, R131).

However, when multi-party elections held in December 1991 gave the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) a majority of seats in the National Assembly, the Algerian Government cancelled the second round of voting, scheduled for January 1992 (**Ibid.**). President Chadli subsequently resigned and was replaced a High Security Council, which in turn nominated a Council of State (HCS) chaired by Mohamed Boudiaf, to serve out Chadli's term (**The Middle East and North Africa 1995**, 4). Thereafter, the country has seen two other heads of state: Ali Kafi (July 1992- January 1994) and the current President, General Liamine Zeroual (**Ibid.**). Thus, since February 1992, Algeria has been governed under a state of emergency, in an atmosphere of insecurity described as verging on full-scale civil war (**Ibid.**; **Arabies**, janvier 1995; **U.S. Department of State, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1994, 1995; Economist Intelligence Unit, 1st Quarter 1995**, 4).

The suspension of the elections is said to have effectively halted the transition from one-party Socialist rule to a multi-party parliamentary system, as provided for by the 1989 Constitution (**Country Reports 1994, 1995**). It also triggered an increase in violent activity by armed Islamic groups against the government and its supporters (**Algenews**, 1 April 1995). Consequently, Algerians from many walks of life are currently caught in the conflict between the security forces and radical Islamic groups (**EIU**, 1st Quarter 1995, 4, 7), some of which are resorting to increasingly violent tactics in their goal to establish an Islamic state (**Middle East International**, 17 March 1995). In the words of **Amnesty International**,

The civilian population is targeted by both government forces and armed groups. Civilian victims of attacks by armed groups who have failed to report such incidents to the security forces for fear of reprisals by the armed forces have been persecuted by the security forces on charges of cooperating with, and supporting, the armed groups (October 1994).

Moreover, the fighting is reported to have damaged or destroyed the communications infrastructure, state factories and other public properties, including schools and forests (**ibid.**). While many of these acts are attributed to, and acknowledged by, the armed Islamist groups, the security forces are said to be responsible for many of them, including the destruction of houses believed to be used for hiding armed groups (**ibid.**), with resulting damages estimated to have reached US \$2 billion since 1992 (**Agence France Presse**, 11 July 1995). Algerian Government figures released in March 1995 indicate that more than 6,000 civilians were killed by Islamists in 1994, with an official adding that security forces had killed some 20,000 Islamists since 1992 (**Middle East International**, 17 March 1995). In April 1995, Western observers estimated the death toll to be 40,000 people, including 80 foreigners (**ibid.**; **Christian Science Monitor**, 3 April 1995; **Reuters**, 3 April 1995). The Algerian newspaper, **Liberté** is said to have reported that, as of February 1995, the violence had created some 140,000 orphans and 10,000 widows (**Moroccan New Agency, MAP**, 28 February 1995).

On February 21-22, 1995, in an incident described as the most violent to date since the start of hostilities in 1992, a revolt broke out in Serkadji prison in Algiers, where a reported 1,000 prisoners, 200 of them referred to as "terrorists", were said to be held (**Reuters**, 22 February 1995; **Keesing's Record of World Events**, February 1995; **Middle East International**, 17 March 1995; **Time**, 6 March 1995). Whereas four guards reportedly had their throats slit, Government figures indicated that security forces had killed "96 prisoners, 81 of whom were Islamists" (**Keesing's**, February 1995). In March 1995, government forces reportedly dealt a major blow to one of the largest (and possibly the most violent) of the Islamist militias, the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), that in a ten-day offensive resulted in the death of 1,400 or 2,800 guerrillas and "an unknown number of civilians" (**Time**, 10 April 1995; **Middle East International**, 31 March 1995; **United Press International**, 31 March 1995; **The Christian Science Monitor**, 3 April 1995). While some observers saw this attack as the achievement of President Liamine Zeroual's policy of "eradication" (**ibid.**), more recent reports allege that the GIA is now threatening the leaders of its former ally, the Islamic Salvation Army (the military arm of the Islamic Salvation Front - FIS), if they "do not disband or fold under its wing" (**International Herald Tribune**, 11 May 1995). In July 1995, the GIA reportedly issued further death threats against FIS leaders for opening dialogue with the Algerian Government (**Al-Hayat**, as reported by **Agence France Presse**, 11 July 1995). Clashes between the two militias are said to have caused dozens of deaths (**Reuters**, 27 April 1995). At present, a 23:30 H to 05:00 H curfew remains in place in the cities of Algiers, Blida, Boumerdes, Ain Defla, Chlef, Medea, Bouira, M'Sila, Tipasa and Djelfa (**Algerian Radio**, 4 March 1995).

The Economy

Algeria's economy is believed to be a contributing factor to the escalating violence in the country. Following the fall in oil prices, its economy virtually collapsed in the mid 1980's (**Reuters**, 7 February 1995). In 1992, Algeria ranked fifteenth among the world's oil producers (57 million tons, or 1.8% of world production), and sixth in natural gas production (50 million tons, or 2.7% of world production). Oil and gas exports represented 96% of foreign revenues, or US\$11.6 billion per year (**Le Drame Algérien**, 1994, 105-6). Moreover, economic policies undertaken in the 1970s concentrated investment in heavy industry, paying little attention to the agricultural and consumer goods manufacturing sectors, resulting in a considerable decrease in food self-sufficiency and a corresponding increase in imports of food and agricultural products (**ibid.**) One observer adds that the decrease in agricultural investment was due to the failure of land redistribution requirements of the Agrarian Revolution of 1974, which were opposed both by landowners and Islamist leaders (**Middle East Report**, January-February

1995). Due to the subsequent reprivatization, and the inflexibilities of state marketing and credit boards, agriculture was made less attractive for investors and peasants (**Ibid.**). In 1994, the agricultural sector, which represents 15% of GNP, was adversely affected by drought (**Le Monde**, 10 janvier 1995). On the other hand, factories are said to remain unable to deal with agricultural surpluses when they do exist, so that chronic shortages of basic foods are commonplace (**Middle East Report**, January-February 1995). In addition, the Algerian Government's programme of industrial investment was of a magnitude that could not be financed by oil revenues, leading instead to frequent reliance on foreign loans (from US \$900 million 1970 to US \$19.4 billion in 1980) (**Ibid.**). A significant portion of oil revenues, therefore, had to be allocated to servicing the foreign debt (from 3.4% in 1970 to 27.2% in 1980), which in turn diminished the country's import capacity (**Le Drame Algérien**, 1994, 105-6). This was compounded by the fall in oil prices in 1986 (from US\$30-40 to US\$25-30), leading to a collapse in investment (**Ibid.**)

At the end of 1994, oil and gas revenues were not expected to exceed US \$8 billion, of which US \$4 billion was to be allocated for food, medicine and spare parts, while the external debt amounted to US \$9.4 billion (**Le Drame Algérien**, 1994, 112). In addition, the suspension of most state subsidies, except for basic commodities like flour, coupled with inflation, which is expected to run between 10 and 15 percent by the end of 1995, has undermined the living standards of most of the country's 26 million people (**Reuters**, , 19 February 1995).

In an agreement covering the period from 1 June 1994 to 31 May 1995, the Paris Club of lenders rescheduled more than US\$5 billion of Algeria's official debt (**Africa Confidential**, 17 June 1994). On 12 March 1995, Algeria and its creditor banks reached an agreement for the rescheduling of US\$3.2 billion of its commercial debt (out of a total of US\$4.7 billion), which, according to the creditors, will allow Algeria to postpone loan repayments falling due between 1 March 1994 and 31 December 1997 until 1998 or the year 2000 (**Le Monde**, 14-15 mai 1995). On 13 May 1995, the European Union granted Algeria a US\$200 million loan to help it sustain its balance of payments (**Reuters**, 13 May 1995). However, there have been conditions imposed on some of these agreements, e.g., the Paris Club's loan rescheduling was contingent upon a restructuring programme that would include the elimination of 170,000 jobs in the state sector (**Africa Confidential**, 17 June 1994). This would increase the level of unemployment even further, in an economy that has been losing 300,000 to 400,000 jobs annually during the past five years (**Index on Censorship**, April-May 1994). At a rate of 25 percent, unemployment is high among the young male population who, lacking work or any prospects for the future, are thus easily recruited into Islamist groups, attracted by an ideology hostile to the state (**Le Monde Diplomatique**, mars 1995; **Reuters**, 19 February 1995).

The Rome Negotiations

Towards the end of 1994, the so-called "non-eradicator" opposition political parties organized their own meetings under the auspices of the Sant' Egidio Community in Rome (**Middle East Report**, January-February 1995). Whereas the first meeting, held in November 1994, was said to be inconclusive but helpful in clarifying certain issues, the second meeting, in January 1995, produced a joint Platform for a Peaceful Political Solution of Algeria's Crisis, or the "National Contract" (**International Affairs**, 2 April 1995). The National Contract was signed by the FLN, the FFS, the MDA, Ennahda, the PT, the presidents of the FIS External Executive Committee and External Parliamentary Delegation, and by the president of the Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights (**Ibid.**). Its provisions contain, *inter alia*, a call for an end to press censorship, the release of all political prisoners, and an agreement by the FIS to renounce violence in exchange for the lifting of the ban on the party and barring the army from politics.

The Rome Accord was reportedly rejected by the Algerian Government, fearful that any agreement with FIS demands would only pave the way for an Islamic republic (**Inter Press Service**, 13 January 1995; **Time**, 20 March 1995). Other opponents of the Rome platform argue that it is unrealistic to believe that the Islamist groups would abide by the rules of democratic government, and that leaving the road open to them would only lead to a next phase of the civil war, more violent than all the previous ones, which would force the anti-Islamists to take up arms (**Le Monde Diplomatique**, avril 1995). The Rome Accord was also allegedly rejected one week after its signing by the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS), the military wing of the FIS, as well as by the Armed Islamic Group (GIA). The AIS challenges the condemnation of violence in the Rome Accord, and says that any political solution approved by the FIS leadership would have to be achieved in accord with the armed fighters, or *mujahedin* (**Radio France Internationale**, 21 January 1995). The GIA, in rejecting the Accord, stressed its goal of establishing "a

caliphate through armed struggle, pointing out that the holy war, or *jihad*, and a civil war should not be confused with each other" (**Ibid.**).

In April 1995, Algerian president Liamine Zeroual invited representatives of ten political parties and four civil associations for discussions on the presidential elections he hopes to hold later this year (**Middle East International**, 14 April 1995). Arguing that the opposition was not yet prepared to discuss elections, most of the invitees opted instead for presenting their ideas on how to bring an end to the violence (**Ibid.**). However, according to some observers, there is presently little likelihood that these talks will bring about a reconciliation, in light of the two sides' differing agendas and the continuing exclusion of the FIS (**Ibid.**). For his part, a FIS official, Mr. Rabah Kabir, has reportedly said that "neither the army nor the Islamic opposition were capable of obtaining a military victory today" (**Radio France Internationale**, 2 January 1995). Mr. Kabir is said to also reject an Islamic dictatorship, pointing out that, "whatever the nature of the future government, it should encourage the existence of a strong opposition" (**Ibid.**).

3.2 Political Parties of Algeria

After its independence from France in 1962, Algeria was governed by a one-party system under the National Liberation Front (FLN) until national referendums in 1988 and 1989 paved the way for the establishment of a multi-party political system (**Political Parties of Africa and the Middle East**, 1993, 1). On 2 July 1989 the Constitutional Assembly approved a new law permitting the formation of new political parties, requiring, however, that they be licensed by the Ministry of the Interior and that they not be "externally financed or based exclusively on religious, professional or regional interest" (**The Middle East and North Africa 1995**, 266). Later that month the Assembly passed a new electoral law allowing opposition political parties to participate in future elections and to occupy seats in the National Assembly (**Ibid.**), which resulted in a total of 49 parties participating in the first round of voting at the December 1991 legislative election.

Algerian Movement for Justice and Development - *Mouvement algérien pour la justice et le développement* (MAJD)

Founded in late 1990 by several former leading members of the FLN. It is led by Kasdi Merbah and is allegedly opposed to the High Council of State (HCS) regime and to the increased use of military courts for trials under the emergency regulations (**Political Parties of Africa and the Middle East**, 1993, 3). In January 1995, it allegedly appealed to the Algerian authorities to "adopt protective measures against foreign Judaization which aimed at intervening openly in the [country's] private affairs" (**Algerian TV**, 15 January 1995).

Algerian Rally of Women Democrats (RAFD)

Led by Leila Aslaoui, a leader and former spokeswoman for the army-backed government. (**Reuters**, 28 February 1995). Said to be one of the main feminist groups in Algeria, it created an anti-fundamentalist tribunal (**Radio France Internationale**, 1 March 1995) and staged a mock trial of Islamist leaders such as Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj of the FIS, as well as their leaders in exile Anwar Haddam and Rabah Kebir; former Algerian president Chadli Benjadid (for "killing democracy" by legalizing the FIS in 1989), and the underground leaders of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) (**Reuters**, 8 March 1995). In February 1995 Ms. Aslaoui announced that her group would file a lawsuit in the U.S. against Amwar Haddam, the Washington-based leader of the FIS, on behalf of civilian victims of political violence in Algeria (**Reuters**, 28 February 1995).

Berber Cultural Movement - *Mouvement Culturel Berbère* - (MCB)

Founded in 1976, with the goal of achieving recognition of the Berber identity (**Le Devoir**, 1-2 avril 1995). Closely linked to the Front of Socialist Forces (FSS) and the Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD), each April the MCB organizes demonstrations in the towns of Kabylie to commemorate the "Berber spring", marking the bloody suppression of a student demonstration in Tizi-Ouzou. In September 1994 it successfully organized a one-day general strike in Kabylie (**Office fédéral des réfugiés**, octobre 1994).

Ettehad / *Ettahadi* - *Le Défi*

Founded: 1993, as successor to the PAGS. It is led by Cherif Hachemi, and favours the separation of church and state, the recognition of the Berber language (Tamazigh), and equality for men and women. Opposes Islamists as well as a "bureaucracy enriched by petroleum" (**Office fédéral des réfugiés**,

octobre 1994). Its membership consists largely of leftist trade union members and intellectuals (**Ibid.**). It opposes the relegalization of the FIS (**International Affairs**, April 1995). In February 1995, it issued a statement saying that it welcomed all moves towards the restoration of peace and security within a republican framework without, however, recourse to foreign intervention (**Algerian TV**, 5 February 1995).

Front of Socialist Forces - *Front des forces socialistes* (FSS)

Founded: in 1963; revived and legalized in 1989; became consultative member of Socialist International in 1992. It is led by Hocine Alit Ahmed, who lived in exile in Switzerland from 1966 until 1989. Described as left-wing, and increasingly seen as democratic socialist and advocating a mixed economy. Draws support from Berber heartland in the Kabylie region. In the 1991 first-round elections it emerged as the leading non-Islamist party, but refused participation in the second round of elections to avoid forming a coalition with either the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) or the FLN (**Ibid.**). However, the group is said to favour the relegalization of the FIS, participated in the Sant' Egidio negotiations and is a signatory of the Rome Accord (**International Affairs**, April 1995).

Movement for Democracy in Algeria - *Mouvement pour la démocratie en Algérie* (MDA)

Originally created in Europe in 1985 by the exiled former NFL leader and President, Ahmed Ben Bella, it was officially recognized in 1990. It is still led by Mr. Ben Bella. Originally, the party called for pluralist elections to a constituent assembly which would draw up a Constitution separating the powers and guaranteeing political and ideological freedoms (**Revolutionary and Dissident Movements**, 1991, 9). Like the MAJD, the MDA opposes the High Council of State (HCS) and the increased use of military courts for trials under emergency rule (**Political Parties of Africa and the Middle East**, 1993, 4). The party is mostly active in exile (**Office fédéral des réfugiés**, octobre 1994), it supports the relegalization of the FIS and is one of the signatories of the Rome Accord (**International Affairs**, April 1995).

National Liberation Front - *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN)

Founded in 1954, led by its Secretary-General, Mr. Abdelhamid Mehri. The group's orientation is said to be socialist. When first founded, it was anticolonialist and pan-Arabist, secular but supporting the maintenance of Islam as the country's religion. Following independence in 1962, the FLN was the ruling party, and was formalized by the 1976 Constitution as the sole and ruling party. However, the 1991 electoral crisis brought an end to FLN rule: a transitional government formed in June 1991 excluded senior FLN figures, and the June 1992 creation of a High Council of State (HCS) further underlined the changed position of the party when "associations of a political nature and mass associations" were required to surrender state properties . . . including FLN party headquarters in the Zighout Youcef palace" (**Political Parties of Africa and the Middle East**, 1993, 6). The FLN participated in the peace negotiations at Sant' Egidio, and is said to believe that it is better to work with the Islamist parties in order to restrain and guide them (**Le Monde Diplomatique**, avril 1995). It favours the relegalization of the FIS (**International Affairs**, Aril 1995).

National Organization for Martyrs' Sons/Children

Led by its Secretary-General, Mr. Tahar Benbaibèche. The organization is allegedly affiliated with the army-backed government. One of its members, Abdelouhab Ben Boulaïd, the son of a commander of the nationalist forces that brought an end to French rule, was assassinated on 23 March 1995 as he headed to take part in official festivities in memory of his father. The group was among 15 political parties invited by President Zeroual for discussions on the presidential elections to be held later this year (**Reuters**, 23 March 1995). On 30 March 1995 the group announced its participation in the elections (**Algerian Radio**, 30 March 1995).

Popular Unity Party

Led by Djamel Eddine Habibi, who announced his candidacy for the presidential elections to be held in late 1995. Believes fresh dialogue is needed including the demands of the Berber people concerning the Tamazight language. Also believes in a popularly elected government (**Algerian TV**, 19 January 1995).

Rally for Culture and Democracy - *Rassemblement pour la culture et la démocratie* (RCD)

Officially recognized on 9 September 1989, it is led by Said Saadi, its Secretary-General. The group is said to be the more moderate of the Berber parties. It is secular, advocates the use of Berber as a national language and favours a central economy (**Office fédéral des Réfugiés**, octobre 1994). A participant in the Sant' Egidio negotiations, the RCD also favours the relegalization of the FIS and signed

the Rome Accord (**International Affairs**, April 1995).

Republican National Alliance - *Alliance Nationale Républicaine (ANR)*

Founded on 6 May 1995 and is headed by Redha Malek. Said to be pro-military, reportedly aims to "fill the political vacuum" which in his view failed to offer a clear direction to rally people in the fight against Islamist militants (**Reuters**, 6 May 1995)

Socialist Vanguard Party - *Parti de l'avant-garde socialiste (PAGS)*

Founded in the 1930s, and led by Cherif el-Hachemi. Originally Communist, but since 1992 said to be trying to redefine itself (**Political Parties of Africa and the Middle East**, 1993, 7). It was originally founded as the Algerian Communist Party from what had been a section of the French Communist Party. It was banned in 1955, whereupon it joined the FLN in the struggle against French colonialism. Enjoyed legal status after independence in 1962, but was banned again that year and then dissolved itself in 1964. Restyled itself as the PAGS in 1966, albeit without legal status. It was officially recognized in 1989 (**Ibid.**).

Islamic Political Movements

The Algerian population is said to be 99 per cent Muslim (**Contemporary Religions: A World Guide**, 1992, 390). While the 1976 Constitution declared Islam to be the state religion, it did not incorporate Islamic law (*sharia*) into the country's legal system (**Islam and Islamic Groups**, 1992, 10). Nevertheless, since independence in 1962 Islamic movements have more or less coexisted with the Algerian government, and have exerted various degrees of influence on national policy (**Ibid.**). Following are the largest of these Islamic movements.

Algerian Islamic Movement - *Mouvement Islamique Algérien*

Founded in 1961, its current leadership is unknown; former leader Mustafa Bouyali was assassinated in 1987. Its goals are to establish an Islamic state ruled by a Quranic Consultative Council (*shura*). In 1992, it was believed that the movement consisted of 16 cells committed to armed opposition to the regime (**Islam and Islamic Groups**, 1992, 13).

Association of Muslim Brothers - *Jammat al-Ikhwān al-Muslimim*

Founded in the 1960s, it reportedly seeks an increase in religious education. In the 1970s it denounced state socialism, nationalization and religious reforms. Said to be heavily influenced by Egyptian and Syrian fundamentalism (**Ibid.**).

Association of Reformist Ulama

Founded in 1931 with the goal of reforming religious and secular education. During French rule it supported the ideas of the Salafiyyah reform movement and held that interpretation of Quranic principles in light of contemporary conditions would enable Muslim community to challenge Western hegemony. In 1956 it joined FLN in its struggle against French colonial rule (**Ibid.**).

Islamic Salvation Front - *Front islamique du salut (FIS) - al-Jibhat al-Inqāth*

Founded and officially recognized in 1989, it has a collective leadership under the organization's consultative council (*majlis ash-shoura*). The FIS' chief spokesmen, Abbasi Madani, Ali Belhadj, Abdelkader al-Hachani are currently in prison. Presently led by a moderate faction under Muhammad Said. The FIS allegedly developed from groups of Islamic fundamentalists active in Algeria since the early 1970s. Their influence reportedly increased after the collapse of oil prices in 1985-86 (**Revolutionary and Dissident Movements**, 1991, 8). The party is described as Islamist, seeking the establishment of an Islamic state and the introduction of *sharia* law in line with the Islamic concept of "consultation" (*shura*). The FIS 1991 party programme called for educational and media reform to conform with Islamic principles, a "higher level of education and behaviour among women, payment for women involved in childcare at home, improved standards of living for retired people, and accountability for public officials" (**Ibid.**, 14). The FIS was "poised" to win the legislative elections of 1991, which led to the army's intervention to halt the electoral process. The party was banned in 1992 on charges of violating the July 1989 law prohibiting political parties formed on a religious basis (**Political Parties of Africa and the Middle East**, 1993, 3; **Islam and Islamic Groups**, 1992, 14). In March 1995, the FIS reportedly issued a statement condemning "attacks against individuals, men or women, peacefully exercising their right to free expression, notably students, politicians, writers or journalists who do not participate in operations by the security forces involving the use of force" (**Agence France Presse** 17 mars 1995). The FIS participated in the Sant' Egidio negotiations and is a signatory of the Rome

Acord (**International Affairs**, April 1995).

League of the Call - *Rabitat al-Da'wa*

Founded in the 1970s, led by Shaikh Ahmed Sahnoun

Orientation: said to be non-political, it promotes the observance of the *sharia* law, Islamic values and scholarship throughout Algeria (**Islam and Islamic Groups**, 1992, 14).

Movement of the Islamic Society - *Mouvement de la Société Islamique - Harakat al-Mujtamaa al-Islamiya* (MSI/HAMAS)

Founded in 1990, and led by Shaikh Mahfouz Nanah. The group opposes the FIS on the grounds that the FIS attempts to dominate the Islamic movement in Algeria. Offers a less radical alternative to the FIS, emphasizing a reformist interpretation of Quranic values, the respect for human rights, for women's rights in the workplace and the consolidation of the democratization process (**Ibid.**; **Office fédéral des réfugiés**, octobre 1994). The party also favours the relegalization of the FIS, participated in the Sant' Egidio negotiations and is a signatory of the Rome Accord (**International Affairs**, April 1995). In February 1995 its leader indicated the party's support for the presidential elections (**Algerian Radio**, 7 February 1995).

Party of God - *Hezbollah*

Founded: the party failed to receive official recognition in 1990.

Renaissance Party - *Mouvement de la Renaissance Islamique - Harakat An Nahda Al-Islamiya* (MRI/AnNadhda)

Founded in the late 1970s and led by Abdallah Djaballa. The party aims for the establishment of an Islamic state and the introduction of *sharia* law, though retaining political pluralism. Supports national ownership of natural resources and encourages private initiative (**Office fédéral des réfugiés**, octobre 1994). It also participated in the Sant' Egidio negotiations, supports the relegalization of the FIS and is a signatory of the Rome Accord (**International Affairs**, April 1995).

Repentance and Flight - *At-Takfir wal-Hijra*

Founded: possibly in the early 1980s, and its leader is believed to be Tayeb al-Afghani. Described as a clandestine organization linked to an Egyptian group of the same name, and reportedly composed of Algerians who may have been trained by Afghan *mujaheddin* in Afghanistan. Their aims are said to be unclear, but it is assumed they supported the overthrow of the FLN-dominated government and the institution of an Islamic state (**Office fédéral des réfugiés**, octobre 1994).

Uprising - *Al-Qiyam*

Founded: 1964, dissolved in 1966 and officially banned in 1970. It is led by Al-Hashemi Tiojani (who was president at the time of the group's proscription). Its goal is said to be the implementation of the *sharia* and the establishment of a "single state with a single leader, founded on Muslim principles" (**Ibid.**).

3.3 Contending Military Forces

The Algerian Military

Depending on the source, the Algerian military consists of between 105,000 and 120,000 men, comprising the three branches of the armed forces, the gendarmerie and the police, of whom approximately 65,000 are conscripts (**Le Monde Diplomatique**, mars 1995; **Reuters**, 10 April 1995). There are also some 150,000 reservists up to the age of 50, who may be called up to strengthen security for the presidential elections (**Reuters**, 10 April 1995). At any one time, two-thirds of the active troops are allegedly engaged in the campaign to "annihilate" the Islamist guerrillas, with the remainder occupied in the traditional tasks of protecting or maintaining military infrastructures or as border guard patrols or on leave (**Le Monde Diplomatique**, mars 1995). The army is said to operate in the rural zones and mountain ranges, the police are active in the urban zones, and the gendarmerie operates both in the countryside and in populated areas (**Ibid.**). There is also said to be a contingent of special forces, allegedly assigned to specific objectives (**Ibid.**).

Armed Militias

Estimates by one source about the number of armed groups currently operating in Algeria have put the

figure as high as 600 (**Foreign Report**, 8 December 1994). Some of these groups are said to be attached to the larger Islamic political parties and are estimated to number approximately 20,000 (**Middle East Report**, January-February 1995), equipped mainly with self-defense weapons such as hunting rifles, home-made explosives, a few automatic light weapons, rocket-launchers, radio equipment and vehicles which allow them to wage urban guerrilla warfare (**Le Monde Diplomatique**, mars 1995). Many of these groups are subdivided into bands containing 150 to 200 men led by an *emir* known for his war exploits, who, on average, leads only for a few months before being killed himself (**ibid.**). The groups' activities are focused on the destruction of the infrastructure, military convoys and inflicting casualties among the security forces (**ibid.**). Other armed groups are believed to be anti-terrorist units attached to the security forces (**Algenews**, 1 April 1995). The following provides a profile of the main armed militias:

Armed Islamic Group - *Groupe Islamique Armé* (GIA)

Present leadership unknown and former leaders have been killed: Cherif Gousmi (alias Abou Abdallah Ahmad) on 26 September 1994; Abdelkader Hattab (alias Mouloud) in July 1994, and Murad Si Ahmad (alias Djafar Al-Afghani) in February 1994. The group is reportedly the most radical of the Islamist groups. In November 1993 it issued an ultimatum to all foreigners to leave Algeria. Also said to be responsible for the assassination of women who do not wear the veil (*hijab*), and for the December 1994 hijacking of an Air France plane during which they killed three passengers (**Time**, 5 January 1995). Moreover, it has allegedly threatened to eliminate the other Islamist groups in its goal to be the sole standard-bearer of the *Jihad* (Holy War) (**Libération**, 22 mars 1995). Operates mainly in urban centres, especially in Algiers and in the east (**ibid.**). According to government reports said to have been published by the official Algerian Press Service in the newspapers *l'Authentique* and *Liberté*, more than 2,800 GIA guerrillas were killed in a massive two-week military operation conducted at the end of March 1995, with the government claiming a "spectacular success" over the "decapitated" GIA movement (**Christian Science Monitor**, 3 April 1995). The group is allegedly composed of individual cells operating independently and in isolation from one another. In Algiers, members of each unit "maintain a simple network of spotters, each within eyesight of another . . . [exchanging] . . . information with hand signals, standing in doorways or on street corners . . . [or] . . . peering through car windows in search of government officials, political opponents or foreigners" (**Time**, 20 March 1995).

Death Squads

The so-called "Death Squads" are believed to be composed of members of OJAL (Organisation des jeunes Algériens libres), and of OSRA (Organisation de sauvegarde de la République Algérienne). They appear to believe in retribution ("an eye for an eye") against "terrorists" and their supporters. Thousands of deaths are attributed to them, and their attacks are said to be focused on people who are involved in the Islamist movement. They reportedly have issued notices against numerous arabophone intellectuals and journalists, or people they think favour Islamist theories (**Le Drame Algérien**, 1994, 66).

The Islamic Salvation Army - *Armée Islamique du Salut* - (AIS)

Founded in 1994 and currently led by Sheikh Madani Mirzag (alias Abou Al-Haithem), who was nominated in March 1995 as the interim national leader. As the military arm of the FIS, it was formed in 1994 along the lines of the Armed Islamic Movement (Mouvement Islamique Armée - MIA), allegedly as a counterweight to the GIA (**Middle East Report**, January-February 1995). However, the GIA and AIS are said to have enjoyed good relations and cooperate with one another, with the AIS also having "burned down schools and committed its share of assassinations" (**ibid.**). The March 1995 decision to nominate Sheikh Mirzag as interim national leader was reportedly made after consultations with the FIS leadership, with the aim of preventing the use of its name by clandestine groups or publications not under its direct control. (**Libération**, 16 mars 1995; **Office fédéral des réfugiés**, octobre 1994). At present, the AIS is said to be more open than the GIA to negotiations with the Algerian government aimed at ending the three-year-long civil strife (**Reuters**, 27 April 1995). Publication: "Al-Fafh Al-Moubine" (**Office fédéral des réfugiés**, octobre 1994).

Armed Islamic Movement - *Mouvement Islamique Armé* - (MIA)

Founded in 1992, after the banning of the FIS. Led by Abdelkader Chebouti, Said Mekhloufi

Said to be the clandestine branch of the FIS, responsible for an attack on Tazoult prison which freed nearly 1,000 prisoners. It owns the radio station "Al-Wafa" and publishes the magazine "An-Nafir" (**ibid.**).

The "Ninjas"

This group is believed to be composed of members of the elite forces of the Ministry of the Interior who conduct "cleansing operations" against the Islamists. They are said to be on call 24 hours a day, to patrol the streets in fast-moving vehicles, to wear bullet-proof vests and to be employed by the army in large-scale operations (**Le Drame Algérien**, 1994, 63).

Organization of Free Young Algerians - *Organisation des Jeunes Algériens Libres* (OJAL)

Founded in 1993. It is believed that this is a militant group which perpetrates attacks against Islamic communities (**Office fédéral des réfugiés**, April 1995). According to **Amnesty International**, OJAL has claimed responsibility for the abduction and killing of Islamists, including a founding member of the FIS who was abducted in November 1993, held and tortured for five days and then released, and for issuing death threats against civilian Islamists in the autumn of 1993 (October 1994). Members of this group are believed to be connected to the Death Squads (**Le Drame Algérien**, 1994, 67).

Self-Defense Groups

These are said to be state-organized vigilante committees armed with hunting guns and automatic rifles to enable the population to defend itself against armed raids by Islamic militants and outlaws (**The Washington Post**, 20 March 1995). On 12 March 1995 the Algerian Minister of the Interior reportedly announced that a law authorizing residents of isolated regions to "protect themselves" was being prepared by the government (**Agence France Presse**, 12 March 1995). In the meantime, he added, the government is creating self-defense groups on demand by citizens of remote regions, justifying this action by the government's inability to allocate one policeman to each Algerian (**Ibid.**). On 21 March 1995 at least seven Islamists were allegedly killed in the Kabylie region by inhabitants defending themselves against the guerrillas' attack on their village in order to requisition weapons (**BBC Summary of World Broadcasts**, 23 March 1995).

4. Human Rights Situation

4.1 International and National Legal Framework

Algeria has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (12 November 1989); the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (12 December 1989); the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (14 February 1972); the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid (26 May 1982); the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (12 September 1989); the Convention on the Rights of the Child (16 April 1993); the Convention Against Discrimination in Education (24 December 1968); the OAU Convention (25 May 1974), and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1 March 1987). It has acceded to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (31 October 1963) and to the Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons (8 November 1967) (**UNHCR/CDR Legal Databases**, May 1995).

Algeria is not a party to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, nor to the Convention on the Political Rights of Women (**UNHCR/CDR Legal Databases**, May 1995).

The Constitutional Reform of 1989

On 23 February 1989 a new Constitution was approved by referendum which emphasized individual and collective rights (as opposed to those of "the People" as a whole), gave public-sector workers the right to strike, and separated the executive, legislative and judicial functions, placing them under the supervision of a Constitutional Council (**The Middle East and North Africa 1995**, 266). It also established a Superior Islamic Council (Conseil supérieur islamique - SIC), said to be "a central religious institution with advisory powers . . . [which has] recommended an increase in religious education in secondary and higher education, greater air-time for religious programmes on television and radio, and the prohibition of the sale of material deemed 'harmful' to Muslims" (**Islam and Islamic Groups**, 1993, 12).

State of Emergency

A state of emergency was declared on 9 February 1992, empowering the Minister of the Interior to "order the internment of any person whose activity endangers public order" (**Index on Censorship**,

April-May 1994). This reportedly grants the Minister authority to restrict or forbid the movements of the people in certain areas and at precise periods of time; to institute zones where movement of non-residents is controlled; to impose restraint orders or confine to house arrest any adult whose activities are deemed harmful to public order and to the normal functioning of public services; to order staff of public as well as private enterprises to work during unauthorised or illegal strikes, and even to "order a temporary closure of public galleries and meeting venues, whatever their nature, and ban any demonstration deemed troublesome to peace and law and order" (*Ibid.*). In a presidential decree issued on 11 August 1992, more restrictive measures were introduced, such as the suspension or closing of "any company, organ, institution or body whose activities endanger public order and security, the normal functioning of the institution or the supreme interests of the country" (*Ibid.*). Thus, anything deemed a destabilising factor, whether in the press or in sermons in the mosque, was to be sanctioned (*Ibid.*). The anti-terrorist decree of 30 September 1992, introducing the special courts system, is said to have further undermined the independence of the judiciary and the ability of lawyers to provide adequate defences for their clients (*Ibid.*). In addition, **Amnesty International** noted that the decree criminalized the reproduction or distribution of literature deemed "subversive"; it reduced the age of criminal responsibility to 16 years; it widened the scope of the death penalty; it facilitated double sentencing; it limited rights of appeal, with the Supreme Court generally upholding all death sentences passed by the special courts (**Annual Report 1994**).

The Special Courts

On 18 February 1995, Justice Minister Mohamed Tegua announced the abolition of "three special courts established in late 1992 to deal with charges of terrorism and sabotage" (**Keesing's Record of World Events**, February 1995), adding that these cases would thereafter be tried by ordinary criminal courts. These special courts, located in Algiers, Oran and Constantine, had been set up under the Anti-Terror Law of 1 October 1992 (Decree-Law 92-03) and began operating in February 1993 (**Office fédéral des réfugiés**, Suisse, Octobre 1994). They were composed of civilian judges, at whose discretion a hearing would be open or closed, and who could ban an attorney from court if he was perceived to be using "obstructive methods", as determined by directives linked to the state of emergency (*Ibid.*). During the existence of these Special Courts, approximately 10,000 people were tried, with over 1,000 of them sentenced to death (**Reuters**, 19 February 1995). Since their abolition, 33 fugitive militants suspected of belonging to armed rebel groups have been sentenced to death, eight of them in absentia (**Reuters**, 17 May 1995).

Amnesty / Clemency Law - *Rahma*

In an attempt by the Algerian authorities to lure young Islamic activists away from the ranks of the fundamentalists, a clemency law (*Rahma*) was approved by the Transitional National Council at the end of January 1995 (**Algerian Radio**, 26 March 1995; **Reuters**, 28 January 1995). The law is reportedly aimed at Islamic guerrillas who have not been involved in killings or economic sabotage, and envisages lighter sentences for militants who surrender with their arms (*Ibid.*). On 26 March 1995, the Interior Ministry is said to have called on "misled youth to benefit from this law" (**Algerian Radio**, 26 March 1995).

4.2 General Respect of Human Rights

According to **Amnesty International**, since the declaration of the state of emergency on 9 February 1992, an estimated 40,000 people have died in Algeria, either at the hands of Islamist militants or the security forces (October 1994). Victims have included "known or suspected Islamist activists, and others suspected of having cooperated with the armed Islamist groups, either willingly or out of fear . . . [as well as] . . . civilians, including individuals known for their position against the agenda of Islamist groups, journalists and intellectuals, women, civil servants and magistrates" (*Ibid.*). Extrajudicial executions, torture, unfair trials and the killing of civilians are said to be the most prominent human rights abuses (*Ibid.*). The **U.S. Department of State** indicates that there is continued restriction on freedoms of assembly, religion and the press, as well as discrimination against women (**Country Reports 1994**, 1995). In March 1995, the president of the Algerian League for Human Rights, Mr. Ali Yahia Abdennour, is reported to have told a London audience that arbitrary arrests and summary executions were commonplace in Algeria, and that torture had become "routine" in a "sinister and bloody wave of violence and counter-violence" unleashed in 1992 (**The Times**, 23 March 1995). He added that 29 journalists had been assassinated for "collaborating" with the government, and 700 schools had been burned or ransacked by extremists opposing education, especially for women (*Ibid.*).

Extrajudicial executions

According to **Amnesty International**, it is not known precisely how many civilians have been killed in total by the security forces, since "this type of information is strictly censored and the Algerian media can only report information provided or approved by the security forces" (October 1994). There appears to be a pattern of extrajudicial executions committed by the security forces either in retaliation for previous attacks by armed groups on security forces and civilians, or as an alternative to arrests (**ibid.**). The victims are said to fall mainly into two categories: known or suspected members of armed Islamist groups, and people suspected of aiding or failing to denounce such groups, either willingly or under threat (**ibid.**). The **U.S. Department of State** indicates that most of these killings were committed in response to previous attacks by armed groups (**Country Reports 1994**, 1995).

On the other hand, Islamist groups are reported to have either killed or threatened to kill journalists, writers, intellectuals and political activists who have supported the cancellation of the 1992 elections, as well as civil servants, tax collectors, teachers, magistrates and lawyers suspected of working in the [now-outlawed] special courts, women seen as behaving in an un-Islamic fashion, hairdressers and beauticians, sellers of French-language newspapers and tobacco, and foreigners (**Amnesty International**, October 1994). The **U.S. Department of State** reports that "many victims had their throats cut or their bodies were mutilated after death . . . [and that] . . . often the victims' heads were discovered in one location and their bodies in another" (**Country Reports 1994**, 1995). The armed groups are said to be responsible for the killing of, *inter alia*, the national secretary for the Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens (UGTA); the president and vice president of the country's largest charitable organization, *Islah Wan El-Irchad*; the rector of the Houari Boumediene University of Science and Technology; the president of the Algerian League for Human Rights; the chairman of the Agronomy Institute of the University of Blida; a professor of economics at the University of Oran; the director of the School of Fine Arts in Algeria; a famous playwright/actor; the director of the National Institute of Islamic Studies in Batna; a famous singer; a leading sports personality; and the husband of the Government's former spokeswoman (**Country Reports 1994**, 1995).

Freedom of Expression

Under the state of emergency, the brief period of free expression provided for by the 1989 Constitution was said to have come to a halt, or to have been severely curtailed (**Index on Censorship**, April-May 1994). Secular and Islamic journalists were allegedly arrested for varying periods of time, many newspapers were banned, suspended or placed under constant surveillance (**ibid.**). According to **Article 19**, the Algerian Government issued an Inter-Ministerial Decree which was circulated to all national press editors and publishers in June 1994 (November 1994). Among its provisions, there is a requirement for the media to limit their reporting on political violence and government security operations to communiqués issued by a special "communications cell" established within the Ministry of the Interior (**ibid.**). It also designates the state-owned national news agency, *Algérie Presse Service* (APS), together with government press conferences, as the exclusive sources of such information for the national media, requiring journalists to "subordinate their professional ethics to the higher interests of the nation" (**ibid.**). Furthermore, it is said to encourage reporters to use "appropriate terminology" as provided by the Ministry of the Interior, and to provide a negative portrayal of the armed opposition (**ibid.**).

Torture

While the Algerian Government has allowed visits by **Amnesty International** in 1994 and 1995, it is said not to permit independent monitoring of prisons or detention centres by humanitarian organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) (**Country Reports 1994**, 1995; **Agence France Presse**, 1 avril 1995). Still, one observer reports that the security forces often torture detainees, especially suspected Islamists, and that some alleged victims fail to press charges for fear of reprisals by the security forces (**Country Reports 1994**, 1995). The same source adds that the [Algerian] National Observatory for Human Rights (ONDH) has allegedly submitted several cases of torture to the Ministry of Justice, yet never received any indication that any of them were investigated (**ibid.**). Another source indicates that detainees are tortured during *garde à vue* detention, which is often prolonged beyond the 12-day period provided for by the anti-terrorist decree of September 1992 (**Amnesty International**, October 1994).

4.3 Specific Groups at Risk

Artists/Intellectuals

According to one observer, militant Islamist groups have targeted artists and intellectuals by murdering their most prominent figures (**Le Monde**, 23 April 1995). Among the victims are the director of the national theatre, Azzedine Medjoubi, killed in February 1994; the popular *rai* singer, Cheb Hasni, in September 1994; the playwright Abdelkader Alloula and the director of the Fine Arts school, Ahmed Asselah; the writer and journalist Tohar Djaout, and the architect and feminist Nabile Dialmine, in February 1995 (**Ibid.**). Film actors reportedly work in an atmosphere of terror which makes it difficult to assemble together for the production of films (**Le Monde**, 23 April 1995). Others have fled into exile (**International Herald Tribune**, 5 May 1995; **Le Monde**, 23 April 1995).

The Berbers

Algeria's Berbers comprise one-quarter of the total population of the country, with two-thirds of them inhabiting the Kabylia region east of Algiers (**The Economist**, 15 October 1994). Kabylie is said to be a "bastion of resistance, rebelling against the central government and the Islamists" (**Le Devoir**, 1-2 avril 1995). Their rebellion against the central government is said to have led to the formation of the Berber Cultural Renaissance Movement, which blossomed as a reaction against the forced Arabization of Algeria begun in 1968, a policy they claim produced generations of "intellectually broken" schoolchildren (**Ibid.**) The most important of their demands to the government is the recognition of their language, *Tamazigh*, as one of the official languages of Algeria, together with French and Arabic, an issue over which there have been multiple labour strikes and school boycottings (**Ibid.**; **Jeune Afrique**, 14 December 1994). At present, however, the Berbers find themselves caught in the larger conflict of Algeria, with entire villages in Kabylia taken hostage by Islamist armed groups in search of weapons, which in turn has led to the formation, under government auspices, of "self-defense" groups, composed of males over 17 years of age armed with hunting rifles and automatic pistols (**Le Journal de Geneve et Gazette de Lausanne**, 20 mars 1995; **Middle East Times**, 25-31 December 1994).

Foreigners

The tactic of killing foreigners in Algeria is said to have been started in 1993 by the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) and the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS) in an effort to bring down the government (**International Herald Tribune**, 6-7 May 1995). The 5 May 1995 killing of five foreign workers at a natural gas pipeline project has brought to 85 the number of foreigners assassinated, of whom 28 were French citizens, as well as teachers, priests, nuns, construction workers and diplomats of other nationalities (**Ibid.**).

Government Employees

According to the London-based daily **Al-Hayat**, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) ordered Algerian Government employees to quit their jobs or die, the second such statement since the appointment of Madani Mezrak as the group's new leader in Algeria (**Reuters**, 21 March 1995). The FIS statement allegedly stated that all attacks would target "all those who support the injustice of the regime and its tyranny, whether they are individuals holding posts like heads of local councils, or members of the transitional council (parliament), armed militias and informers, regardless of their ethnic or political affiliation" (**Ibid.**).

Journalists

Since the start of the conflict in 1992, approximately 50 Algerian journalists have reportedly been assassinated by armed Islamists (**International Herald Tribune**, 27 October 1995). On the one hand, journalists are said to be targeted by the Islamists who, angered at the government's apparent stranglehold over the media, accuse reporters of biased and distorted reporting leading to the failure of talks with the government (**The Middle East**, February 1995). On the other, journalists also claim to be "hounded by the government, which has closed or suspended a number of papers because of their reporting", and any paper sympathetic to, or even neutral towards the Islamic cause has been closed down (**Ibid.**). Most of them live in a special hotel and are taken to work with an armed escort, carrying no identification and hiding their faces (**Ibid.**).

Judges/Magistrates

Islamist militants are said to regard judges and magistrates as symbols of government repression, and reportedly have killed more than 20 magistrates since 1993 (**Reuters**, 7 May 1995). The latest such incident was reported in early May 1995, when Mr. Djamel Amar Assani, a state prosecutor at Medea court, situated about 70 kilometers southwest of Algiers, was killed in front of his children by a spray of bullets as he opened the door of his car (**Ibid.**) Many lawyers died or received death threats for their participation in the special courts [abolished in February 1995]: some at the hand of Islamic groups

(**Index on Censorship**, April-May 1994). They had been warned not to plead in the special courts, and others were harassed, suspended or imprisoned by the authorities for defending Islamists or appealing their sentences in higher courts (**Ibid.**).

Police/Security Forces

Members of the Algerian police and security forces and their families have been the victims of car bomb attacks by armed groups: in March 1995, a car loaded with explosives went off beside a block of buildings housing police personnel and their families, wounding 63 people, eight of them children (**Libération**, 11-12 mars 1995). Early in the morning of 17 May 1995, another car bomb exploded near a police station in a town near Algiers, wounding 13 people, including two children (**Reuters**, 17 May 1995). In July 1995, an estimated 14 people were believed to have been killed when a car bomb exploded outside a building housing police families in the town of Boufarik, near Algiers (**Agence France Presse**, 17 July 1995). Young men of military age are also caught between two forces: threatened by the armed groups if they do not refuse to join the army or desert after having been conscripted, they also risk imprisonment if they desert the army or refuse to join (**Amnesty International**, October 1994). Another threat to army and police officers are the so-called "false checkpoints" along some roads where, believing they are dealing with colleagues, they show their identity badges, whereupon they are decapitated, their heads placed in plastic bags before being set on fire (**Index on Censorship**, April-May 1994).

Students/School Teachers

According to **Reuters**, in 1994 the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) ordered students at universities and schools to boycott classes because they hindered the "holy war" the GIA is waging to overthrow the government in order to replace it with an Islamic state (**Reuters**, 1 March 1995). On the other hand, **Amnesty International** has reported instances of teachers who, under threat by armed Islamist groups, have advised their female students to wear the *hidjab* (Islamic veil) and, as a result, have been arrested and imprisoned for encouraging civil disobedience (October 1994). Conversely, in an incident said not to have been adequately explained by the government, the **U.S. Department of State** reports that in March 1994 nine students and their teacher from the El Oued area were allegedly arrested by police "to verify their military service status", released after several weeks in detention and were "immediately killed by unknown 'terrorists' after release" (**Country Reports 1994**, 1995).

Women

According to a statement published in the Arab-language newspaper *Al-Hayat*, on 10 March 1995 the GIA issued an ultimatum to the Government to free jailed "women believers" or suffer the deaths of "women police officers or the wives of members of the security forces" (**Agence France Presse**, 10 March 1995). The latter were allegedly targeted because "it is not legitimately allowed that a Moslem wife should remain with her husband if he becomes an apostate by supporting the tyrant" (**Ibid.**) On 13 March 1995, after the expiration of the GIA deadline, the Algerian Press Service reported that a group of six Islamists abducted a 15-year-old schoolgirl from her school near Algiers, slit her throat and left her body in the gutter in front of the school (**Agence France Presse**, 13 March 1995). That same day, the daily *Liberté* is said to have reported that two sisters, aged 18 and 21 (one of whom was engaged to marry a policeman), were assassinated in Reghaia by three armed men, in front of their parents and younger sister (**Ibid.**). In May 1995, the GIA allegedly expanded its threat to include the wives of government officials (**International Herald Tribune**, 4 May 1995). In addition, Islamists have forced the closure of traditional meeting places for women, such as the hairdressers' and public baths (*hammam*s), which are considered by the fundamentalists to be places of "debauchery and corruption" (**L'Express International**, 30 March 1995). claim that at least 200 women have been killed since the start of the conflict in 1992 (**Ibid.**). Figures allegedly provided in August 1995 by the Algerian Security Forces indicate that 211 women were killed in 1994, and 160 had been assassinated so far in 1995 (**Liberté**, 5 August 1995).

5. Prospects for Peace

Elections

In April 1995, after meetings with representatives of five opposition political parties, President Zeroual reportedly announced his determination to hold elections, with the first round scheduled for 16 November 1995 (**Middle East Times**, 23-29 April 1995). However, the President still rejects any talks with armed groups waging war against the government, and the five opposition parties (FLN, FFS,

MDA, MRI-Ennahda) are said to refuse to participate in the elections if the FIS continues to be excluded from discussions (**Ibid.**). One observer notes, however, that the plan for the election is intended to outflank the opposition, which is calling for general elections based on party structures rather than on individuals, and on local constituencies rather than one country-wide vote (**EU**, 1st Quarter 1995, 4). In March 1995, the President, in what was seen as a tactical move, nominated seven new prefects (Walis), including the one for Algiers, thereby introducing military leadership into the most important decision-making centres of the country (**Le Monde**, 13 mars 1995).

Algerian authorities are reported to be doing their utmost to convince Algerians and the international community that the elections will be free and fair, and to have the support of "several political parties and various civil associations, including the country's powerful trade union movement, the UGTA" (**Middle East International**, 28 April 1995). However, many Algerians are said to doubt the government's ability to prepare the elections, and many voters may hesitate to go to the polls for fear of reprisals by armed groups (**Le Monde**, 13 Mars 1995). Moreover, the authorities appear not to be in a position to mobilize the large infrastructure required to organize elections: dozens of town halls have been burned, with their electoral registers gone up in smoke or stolen, a situation compounded by the "disappearance of any effective state presence throughout much of the country" (**Ibid.**; **Middle East Report**, January- February 1995).

The armed Islamist groups have reportedly announced that they would do everything in their power to prevent the elections from taking place (**Le Monde**, 5 October 1995). The main legal opposition (the signatories of the Rome Accord) is refusing to participate (**Reuters**, 25 October 1995), with the ex-ruling Front de libération nationale (FLN) calling for a boycott in certain regions, in protest at what they see as an election "devoid of freedom of choice and integrity" and designed to maintain the current government in power (**Le Monde**, 3 octobre 1995). The banned Front Islamique de salut (FIS) has reportedly denounced the presidential elections that it says will "lead the country into a more dangerous phase" (**Le Monde**, 26 septembre 1995).

Out of nearly 40 would-be presidential candidates, only four have been able to gather the required 75,000 supporting signatures in at least 25 of the 48 departments (**Le Monde**, 3 octobre 1995). They are Mahfoud Nahnah of MSI-HAMAS; Redha Malek of the Republican National Alliance (RNA); Said Saadi of the Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD), and Nouredine Boukrouh of the Party for the Renewal of Algeria (PRA) (**Le Monde**, 5 octobre 1995; 3 octobre 1995). President Liamine Zeroual was nominated an official candidate at a 12 September 1995 meeting of the Algerian military high command (**Reuters**, 14 September 1995).

An independent candidate, Abdelmajir Benhadid, who headed the Algerian Association for the Promotion of Sport, Culture and international Youth Tourism, was reportedly killed on 17 September 1995 by alleged armed Islamists (**ITAR-TASS**, 18 September 1995; **The Middle East Times**, 28 September 1995).

The months leading up to the elections have been marked by increased violence, including the failed car-bomb attempt against General Mohamed Lamari, the killing of former Interior Minister Mohamed Belkaid (**Reuters**, 12 October 1995), as well as continuing attacks against policement and their families, journalists, women, armed Islamist guerrillas and civilians (**Reuters**, 29 October 1995; 1 October 1995).

Bibliography

Africa Confidential, "Algeria: a downpayment from the west", 17 June 1994

Agence France Presse, "100 observers to be sent for Algeria's elections", 22 September 1995

_____, "Car bomb explodes as violence soars in Algiers", 17 July 1995

_____, "Militants sabotage gas pipeline in Algeria", 11 July 1995

_____, "GIA targets Algeria's women security force personnel in threats", 10 April 1995

_____, "Visite en Algérie", 1 avril 1995

_____, "Le FIS denonce les meurtres de femmes, enfants et intellectuels en Algérie", 17 mars 1995

_____, "Par des islamistes", 13 mars 1995

_____, "Pare une loi autorisant les groupes d'auto-defense, selon le ministre", 12 mars 1995

Algenews, "The situation in Algeria: a presentation by His Excellency H. Osman Bencherif, ambassador of Algeria to the United States, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 30 March 1995", [Internet] 1 April 1995

Algerian Radio, "National Organization of Martyrs' Children to enter presidential elections", 30 March 1995 [Internet]

___, "Interior Ministry repeats amnesty call to 'mised' youths", 26 March 1995 [Internet]

___, "Curfew hours reinstated after end of Ramadan", 4 March 1995 [Internet]

___, "Government-appointed human rights body rejects equation of police and Islamists", 25 February 1995 [Internet]

___, "Liamine Zeroual speaks to UGTA on reform programme and forthcoming elections" 23 February 1995 [Internet]

___, "UGTA to launch anti-terrorism campaign at Arab and international levels", 23 January 1995 [Internet]

Algerian TV, "State approves independent inquiry into Serkadj prison incident", 5 March 1995 [Internet]

___, "Islamic Arab Rally announces candidate for presidential elections", 5 February 1995 [Internet]

___, "Popular Unit Party leader to stand in coming presidential elections", 19 January 1995 [Internet]

___, "Political parties and organizations condemn the Rome meeting", 15 January 1995

Amnesty International, "Algeria: repression and violence must end", (MDE 28/08/94), October 1994
___, Annual Report 1994, London, 1994

Arabies, "L'Algérie, va-t-ell imploser?", janvier 1995

Article 19, "Secret decree: new attack on the media in Algeria", 10 November 1994

BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, "Seven Islamists reportedly killed in Kabylie after meeting local resistance", 23 March 1995

La Chaîne Info, Paris, "GIA claims responsibility for murders of three intellectuals", 20 February 1995

Christian Science Monitor, "Islamic rebels hit in Algeria, media report", 3 April 1995

Le Devoir, "Chanter pour vaincre la tyrannie", 1-2 avril 1995

Le Drame Algérien, "Les Ninjas dans le drame algérien", Reporters sans frontières, Editions La Découverte, Paris, 1994

___, "Les escadrons de la mort", Reporters sans frontières, Editions La Découverte, Paris, 1994

The Economist Intelligence Unit, Country Report on Algeria, London, 1st Quarter 1995

The Europa World Yearbook 1994. Vol 1, 35th ed. London: Europa Publications Limited, 1994

L'Express International, "Terreurs algériennes", 30 mars 1995

Foreign Report, "From bad to worse in Algeria", London, 8 December 1994

Index on Censorship, "Attack on justice", April-May 1994

___, "Attacks on the press and journalists", April-May 1994

___, "Death or exile", April-May 1994

___, "Journey through fear", April-May 1994

International Affairs, "The Algerian crisis: Algeria's ruinous impasse and the honourable way out", Vo. 71, No. 2, April 1995

International Herald Tribune, "For Algeria's journalists, a deadly front line", 27 October 1995

___, "2 Groups fighting in Algeria fall apart", 11 May 1995

___, "Militants kill 5 foreigners at Algerian pipeline site", 6-7 May 1995
 ___, "Entertainer's killers snuff out a song of hope", 5 May 1995
 ___, "Algeria militants vow to kill women related to employees of state", 4 May 1995

Inter Press Service, "Tunisia wary of Algerian war spilling over border", 3 March 1995
 ___, "Algeria: US praises party accord", 13 January 1995 [Internet]

Islam and Islamic Groups, Longman Group UK Limited, Harlow, Essex (UK), 1992

ITAR-TASS, the Russian Information Agency, "Candidate for presidency killed in Algeria", 18 September 1995

Jeune Afrique, "La grève scolaire continue en Kabylie", 14 décembre 1994

Journal de Genève et Gazette de Lausanne, "Les Berbères, prisonniers d'une guerre qui n'est pas la leur", 20 mars 1995

Keesing's Record of World Events, Vol. 41, Pearson Professional, Harlow, Essex (UK), 1995

Libération, "En Algérie, le GIA menace ses rivaux islamistes", 22 mars 1995
 ___, "Des familles de policiers visées par un attentat à Alger", 11-12 mars 1995
 ___, "En Algérie, l'AIS bétonne sa direction", 16 mars 1995

Liberté, "160 femmes assassinées en 1995", 5 August 1995

The Middle East, "Bringers of bad news", February 1995

Middle East International, "Algeria: Tentative dialogue", 14 April 1995
 ___, "Algeria: government forces' success", 31 March 1995
 ___, "Algeria: Aftermath of Serkadji", 17 March 1995

The Middle East and North Africa 1995, Regional Surveys of the World, Europa Publications Limited, London (UK), 1994

Middle East Report, "The menace and appeal of Algeria's parallel economy", January-February 1995
 ___, "Algeria's crisis intensifies: the search for a 'civic pact'", January-february 1995

Middle East Times, "Algerian candidate murdered: an omen", 28 September 1995
 ___, "Algeria throws down gautlet to opposition", 23-29 April 1995
 ___, "Berber villagers defend themselves", 25-31 December 1994

Le Monde, "Le pouvoir algérien veut recomposer le paysage politique", 5 octobre 1995
 ___, "Le FLN appelle à un boycottage 'modulé' de l'élection présidentielle algérienne", 3 octobre 1995
 ___, "L'ex FIS condamne l'élection présidentielle algérienne", 23 septembre 1995
 ___, "Accord entre l'Algérie et les banques sur la dette privée", 14-15 mai 1995
 ___, "Algerian women take lonely road to exile", 23 April 1995 [as reprinted in **The Guardian Weekly**, 23 April 1995]
 ___, "Exorcising the devil", 23 April 1995 [as reprinted in **The Guardian Weekly**, 23 April 1995]
 ___, "Le pouvoir Algérien maintient le scrutin présidentiel; En dépit de l'hostilité de la classe politique et de l'incrédulité de la population", 13 mars 1995

Le Monde Diplomatique, "En Algérie, mobilisation contre le compromis", avril 1995

Moroccan News Agency, MAP, "Algerian paper [Liberté] says violence has left 140,000 orphans, 10,000 widows", 28 February 1995 [Internet]

Office fédéral des réfugiés (Suisse), Feuille d'information sur les pays, "Algérie", Givisiez, Octobre 1994

Political Parties of Africa and the Middle East, Longman Group UK Limited, Harlow, Essex (UK),

1993

Radio France Internationale (Paris), "'Al-Hayat says Algeria carrying out joint patrols with Tunisia", 24 March 1995 [Internet]

___, "Algerian women's group announces tribunal to hold symbolic trials of Islamists", 1 March 1995 [Internet]

___, "Head of League of Human Rights wants independent inquiry into prison events", 23 February 1995 [Internet]

___, "Ennahdha leader says attack was reprisal by Algerian GIA", 15 February 1995 [Internet]

___, "Islamic Salvation Front official sees no possibility of a military victory", 21 January 1995 [Internet]

___, "Armed Islamist groups appear to reject Rome accord", 21 January 1995 [Internet]

Reuters, "Car bomb kills at least eight people in Algeria", 29 October 1995

___, "Chirac adopts high-risk strategy over Algeria", 12 October 1995

___, "Suspected Moslem guerrillas kill 18 in Algeria", 1 October 1995

___, "Algeria's Zeroual to run inelection - French paper", 14 September 1995

___, "Algeria condemns eight fugitive rebels to death", 17 May 1995

___, "Car bomb wounds 13 people near Algiers", 17 May 1995

___, "Algeria gets \$200 million loan from EU", 13 May 1995

___, "Gunman kills magistrate in Algiers - paper", 7 May 1995

___, "Algerian former hardline rulers create party", 6 May 1995

___, "Guerrillas killed in Algerian infighting", 27 April 1995

___, "Algerian army to call up reservists paper", 10 April 1995

___, "FIS condemns attacks on Algerian women", 3 April 1995

___, "Son of Algeria's independence war hero shot dead", 23 March 1995

___, "Algeria opposition calls for peace", 22 March 1995

___, "Algeria's FIS threatens government workers", 21 March 1995

___, "Widowed and raped, Algeria's women 'try' Islamists", 8 March 1995

___, "Algerian feminists call protest rally", 1 March 1995

___, "Algeria women's group to sue FIS official in U.S.", 28 February 1995

___, "Nearly 100 dead in Algiers prison mutiny", 22 February 1995

___, "Algeria abolishes feared Special Courts", 19 February 1995

___, "Algeria starts to bite bullet over privatization", 19 February 1995

___, "Gunmen kill Algerian mayor, murder suspect slain", 18 February 1995

___, "Militants kill another Algerian council member", 28 January 1995

___, "Algerian security forces accused of mass killings", 16 November 1994

Revolutionary and Dissident Movements of the World, Longman Group UK Limited, London, 1991

Time, "Ambush at Ain Defla", 10 April 1995

___, "Bloody days, savage nights", 20 March 1995

___, "Anatomy of a hijack", 9 January 1995

The Times, "Torture of suspects in Algeria 'routine'", 23 March 1995

United Nations, General Assembly, Strengthening of the Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean Region, A/44/594, 9 October 1989

United Press International, "Former Algeria leader says army divided", 31 March 1995

U.S. Department of State, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1994, Washington, D.C., 1995 [electronic format]

The Washington Post, "Civil strife grinding on in idyllic Algerian village; residents reluctantly join conflict", 20 March 1995

Xinhua News Agency, "IOJ chairman condemns assassination of journalists in Algeria", 13 April 1995