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## **Algeria: Lack of concrete progress on outstanding concerns is disappointing**

"The lack of concrete action by the Algerian authorities to address the wide range of outstanding human rights concerns, repeatedly raised by victims, their families and Algerian and international organizations, is a cause for deep disappointment," Amnesty International's delegates who visited Algeria from 5-19 November, have said.

Amnesty International welcomed the encouraging statements made over the past year by the Algerian authorities at the highest level. These included the authorities' wish to deal with these outstanding concerns and to further the dialogue and cooperation with Amnesty International and other human rights organizations on human rights issues. However, the human rights organization believes that these statements and promises have yet to be translated into concrete action.

"The Algerian authorities have not responded to a single request for information concerning the outcome of investigations into specific cases of human rights abuses or for crucial facts and figures about recent measures granting amnesty or exemption from prosecution," said Roger Clark, head of Amnesty International's delegation to Algeria.

Even though the cases of violations are substantially fewer in comparison to some years ago, cases of "disappearances", secret detention and torture, including for common-law detainees, continue to occur. The lack of action to address such cases stands in stark contrast with the authorities' repeatedly stated commitment to respect and protect human rights and to hold those responsible for the violations accountable for their actions.

"Impunity and a lack of investigations are still the norm, even when the violations are brought to the authorities' attention immediately," said Roger Clark.

Amnesty International strongly supports the demands of the victims, the victims' families and the Algerian human rights defenders, who work under stress, for the truth to be revealed and justice to be carried out.

Victims and families of victims are frustrated by what they consider to be a lack of political will to establish the truth about the violations and abuses committed by security forces, state-armed militias and armed groups during the last decade and to bring those responsible to justice.

"Promises of judicial reforms are encouraging, but they must be accompanied by concrete measures to enforce existing laws," Amnesty International said. "Unless justice is done and seen to be done it will be difficult to restore people's confidence in a justice system which continues to deny people due redress."

### **Background**

The Amnesty International delegation was composed of Roger Clark, former Director of the Canadian Section (Anglophone) of Amnesty International and Director of the Africa Program at the organization's International Secretariat, Donatella Rovera and Philip Luther, both staff members in the Middle East and North Africa Program of the organization's International Secretariat.

During their stay in Algeria, the delegates met with officials in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Interior and Justice, the President of the Supreme Court and the President and board members of the National Human Rights Observatory "*Observatoire national des droits de l'homme*" (ONDH), the official human rights monitoring body. No response was given to the organization's requests to meet Prime Minister Ali Benflis, Foreign Minister Abdelaziz Belkhadem, the General Attorney of the Algiers court, and key military authorities, namely General Mohamed Lamari, Chief of Staff, General Smain Lamari, head of counter-espionage, and General Mohamed Mediene, known as Toufik, head of Military Security. The delegation also met with non-governmental organizations, lawyers and other human rights activists working for the protection and promotion of human rights and public liberties, as well as with victims and victims' families.

In the course of their visit the organization's delegates were kept under close surveillance by plain-clothes individuals who followed them and often filmed their meetings and activities. Such obvious surveillance appeared to discourage some people from meeting with the delegates.

Amnesty International last visited Algeria earlier this year, between 2 and 14 May 2000, when the organization was granted access to the country for the first time since May 1996. Other international organizations which had also been denied access to the country for some years were also allowed to return to Algeria in May and June 2000. After its May 2000 visit Amnesty International asked to return to Algeria for a follow-up visit. The request was eventually accepted by the authorities for the period from 5 to 19 November 2000.

**See also:**

"Algeria: Truth and justice obscured by the shadow of impunity AI Index: MDE 28/11/00, 8 November 2000 (report)

"Algeria: Truth and justice should not be obscured by impunity" AI Index: MDE 28/14/00, 8 November 2000 (press release)

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