

WEB UPDATES – TACTICAL CAMPAIGN AGAINST TORTURE

Date	03/07/2006
Section	Features + action
Web action	18/06
AIDOC	MDE 28/014/2006

Title

Persistent torture by the Military Security in secret locations

Summary

Torture and other ill-treatment continue to be perpetrated with impunity in Algeria in cases of people who are thought to have information about terrorism.

All complaints against the security forces are now inadmissible, regardless of the crimes they may have committed.

Break the silence. **Act now to end torture in Algeria.**

Feature

Torture and other ill-treatment continue to be perpetrated with impunity in Algeria in cases of individuals who are thought to have information about terrorism.

The **Department for Information and Security (DRS)** - widely known as Military Security -, an intelligence agency within the military that specializes in counter-terrorism, operates with **great secrecy**.

The DRS systematically holds suspects in **secret places of detention**, and their families receive **no information about their whereabouts**, sometimes for months. While held by the DRS, detainees have no contact with the outside world and there are persistent reports of torture and other ill-treatment.

Statements established by the DRS are regularly used in court to obtain convictions for terrorism related offences, while allegations of torture or other ill-treatment in DRS custody are never investigated. Methods of torture include beatings, electric shocks, the forced ingestion of dirty water, urine or chemicals, and the suspension of detainees from the ceiling. Most detainees do not have access to a lawyer when they are first brought before a judge.

No civilian institution exercises effective oversight over the practices of the DRS. Prosecutors do not enforce safeguards under Algerian law and are apparently not informed of arrests carried out by the DRS.

The DRS specializes in detaining and interrogating people who are believed to have information about terrorist activities, due to their alleged links either with armed groups in Algeria or with international terrorist networks abroad.

The Algerian authorities have been engaged in counter-terrorism measures for well over a decade, and have become a prime ally of the USA and other governments in the **“war on**

terror". Today, the "war on terror" serves as a pretext in Algeria to continue abuses.

Foreign governments must do more to help end torture and ill-treatment in Algeria as security cooperation is being strengthened. Governments should not forcibly return anyone to Algeria who could be at risk of torture or ill-treatment, regardless of any "diplomatic assurances" from the Algerian authorities that returnees will not be tortured or ill-treated.

The Algerian government must end arrests and detentions by the DRS and ensure that all detainees have prompt access to lawyers. They should also repeal amnesty laws that grant impunity to members of the security forces and even **criminalize criticism of state agents** with years of imprisonment. All complaints against the security forces are now inadmissible, regardless of the crimes they may have committed.

Break the silence around violations committed by the DRS.

Take action!

Write to Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika demanding that he acknowledges and investigates the serious allegations of torture and other ill-treatment by the DRS, and call on him to ensure that the DRS no longer arrests or detains suspects.

LINKS

Press release: Algeria: Evidence of persistent torture by the Military Security in secret locations
<http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGMDE28/015/2006>

Report: Unrestrained powers: Torture by Algeria's Military Security
<http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGMDE280042006>

Report: Algeria - Torture in the 'War on Terror': A memorandum to the Algerian President
<http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGMDE280082006>

Quotes

"After more than a month of torture, I was completely exhausted. I could no longer bear these inhuman acts. They threatened me that they would bring my wife to the detention centre and to make her undergo the same torture... I told them I was prepared to write down everything they wanted and to 'admit' anything they wanted to hear from my mouth".

Former detainee, held incommunicado by the DRS for nine months, 2003.

"I was spat at by interrogating officers, insulted and kicked. They did this because I had denied information that they had presented to me."

Former detainee who was tortured by the DRS in 2005

Title for web action (if in separate page)

End torture by military intelligence agency in Algeria

Letter web action

Your Excellency,

I am deeply concerned at reports of torture and other ill-treatment by the Department for Information and Security (DRS), an intelligence service whose practices of arrest and detention are not controlled by Algeria's civilian authorities.

The DRS systematically holds suspects in secret places of detention, and their families receive no information about their whereabouts, sometimes for months. While held by the DRS, detainees have no contact with the outside world and there are persistent reports of torture and other ill-treatment.

These practices violate Algerian and international law. I call on you to use your prerogatives as head of state to institute effective safeguards against torture, in accordance with Algeria's obligations under international law. Anyone who is taken into detention should be allowed prompt access to a lawyer, as this is a key safeguard for the prevention of torture.

I also call on Your Excellency, in your capacity as head of state and as acting minister of defence, to ensure that DRS officers no longer arrest and detain suspects, given the persistent reports of abuse in DRS detention and the lack of oversight over the arrests and detentions carried out by the DRS.

All allegations of torture and other cruel inhuman or degrading treatment must be the subject of a prompt, thorough, independent and impartial investigation. I call on Your Excellency to repeal the legal provisions introduced in February 2006 to shield the security forces from investigation and prosecution in Algeria, as these provisions contravene Algeria's international obligations.

Yours sincerely,

Images: - -

1. <https://intranet.amnesty.org/adam/en/10893/detail.html>
2. <https://intranet.amnesty.org/adam/en/10169/detail.html>

1. Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika. @ AI
2. Ministry of Defence in Algiers @ AI