

## TRUTH AND JUSTICE FOR DISAPPEARED IN ALGERIA

### NEWSLETTER

#### Meeting with François Hollande

The French President paid an official visit to Algeria on 19th and 20th December. During these two days, the French President, accompanied by a large delegation of ministers and leading figures, drastically increased his meetings and symbolic acts in both Algiers and Tlemcen.

Ahead of the President's trip, on 17th December, the CFDA met up with Emmanuel Bonne, presidential adviser in charge of the North African office at the Elysée Palace, and Mr Desplechin, in charge of the Algerian and North African Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Nassera Dutour, Marta Semplici of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN) and Rachid Malaoui of SNAPAP presented both representations of the French government with their request to see the President meet the ordinary people, something which had not previously been part of his itinerary. They equally insisted that François Hollande seize this opportunity to present the issue of Human rights in the lead up to all negotiations with the Algerian authorities and address the treatment of the missing persons' files in his exchanges with the Algerian President.

Although critics had predicted that the French President's visit would mark a step forward towards bringing about peaceful relations between France and Algeria, François Hollande only spent a very short time in discussion with the organisations representing the People. A dozen of associations, of which CFDA was one, were indeed invited to meet François Hollande at the French Embassy in Algiers. Speaking on behalf of CFDA, Nassera Dutour drew the President's attention to the issue of forced disappearances in Algeria, and presented the project of an alternative Charter drawn up by members of the Coalition of Associations of Victims of Terrorism. The audience with the President lasted for only twenty minutes.

#### Discussion meetings

Families in Algiers, Oran, Constantine, Jijel and Sétif shared a very moving and stimulating experience during discussion meetings organised in each of the four cities from 9th until 16th November. A legal expert from Bolivia, whose husband was forcibly kidnapped, and a legal expert from Peru, who specialises in Human Rights and alternative justice systems, told of their personal and professional experiences in front of many Algerian families. Despite seeming a little intimidated to begin with, the families were able to exchange very touching and productive discussions with the speakers after their talk. The Algerian families were really able to establish parallels between their situation and those of relatives of victims of forced disappearances in Latin America. The statements of these two Latin-American participants reasserted the similarities between procedures used by the government and armed forces in the cases of forced disappearances.

This meeting therefore gave Algerian families a new perspective and new vision on their fight as well as encouraged them to continue the battle. The fight led by Latin-American families, which, in some countries, succeeded in opening up new inquiries and punishing those responsible, gave the families new hope now that they had an example to follow in their quest for Truth and Justice.

As a result of these discussion meetings, families in Oran decided to once again organise a monthly gathering. The first took place on 10th December on the International Day of Human Rights and was largely covered by the Algerian press.

Families in Constantine and Sétif intend to organise a get-together in Constantine.

#### Seminar "We want the truth: the search for the truth and the civil society's fight"

On 17th November, high-ranking participants were reunited with the motto "We want the Truth!", the topic of the seminar organised by the CFDA in collaboration with Djazairouna and Somoud in the context of the Coalition of Associations of Victims of the 1990s. The day was divided into two sessions: the first was centred on the role of the civil society and on means to mobilise it. The second aimed to present legal procedures and scientific methods for searching for the truth (documentation, preserving memory, DNA databases).

The audience of approximately sixty participants were made up of judges, legal experts, activists, relatives of missing persons and journalists. Specialists from all walks of life came to take part: as well as a testimony from a mother of a missing person and a debate led by representatives from the Coalition of Association, the Bolivian and Peruvian legal professionals who had met with families during the discussion meetings over the previous days presented the phenomenon of forced disappearances in their countries, allowing the audience to establish parallels with the Algerian situation of the 1990s and to open up new reflections on the way in which the civil society may intervene in order to make progress on unveiling the truth.

Tania Delabarde, doctor in anthropology and archaeology, took part via video conference to explain her work in identifying human remains.

Karima Bennoune, Professor and teacher researcher in International Law at the University of California, spoke of the problem of preserving memories and of the importance of implementing documentation extensively detailing all testimonies from families and victims of forced disappearances as well as information relating to mass graves and bodies buried under the mark "X".

The different talks were the subject of much animated debate and the day ended on Mouloud Boumghar's, a professor of Public Law at the University of Littoral, very optimistic concluding note.

#### Law education

The success of the training periods in international law of Human rights was confirmed during the sixth session held in Algiers on 12th and 13th October 2012. As previously done, this training was made available by specialists in international law of Human rights promoting the network of Algerian judges and legal experts.

During this training, the participants worked in plea campaign "reminder of the law", calling on Algerian tribunals to apply the principle of the supremacy of international law. The participants then wrote a legal argument addressed to the Special Rapporteurs to denounce the violations of Human Rights suffered by Mr Kherba, and worked on a practical case of forced disappearance.

#### Pleading their case at the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights' (ACHPR) 52nd ordinary meeting

The CFDA made further appeals during the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights' (ACHPR) 52nd ordinary meeting held from 9th until 22nd October 2012 in the Yamoussoukro region of the Ivory Coast.

The CFDA denounced the State in charge of Human Rights in Algeria. At the same time, the CFDA wanted to follow up on the matter introduced in 2007 in front of the ACHPR in collaboration with the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH). The CFDA was indeed able to see that this matter was reported on time and time again.

The ACHPR's meeting eventually became a way for the CFDA to form contacts with other active non profit organisations in Africa.

#### Demonstrations on the International Day of Human Rights, Algiers and Oran.

On the International Day of Human Rights, SOS Disappeared organised gatherings in Algiers and Oran, rallying up many families. Once again, the police dispersed the protest with great violence in Algiers and prevented the demonstration from taking place at its initial rendez-vous spot. The Algerian press covered the CFDA's protest as a matter of great importance and denounced the police's violence.

The protest in Oran, on the other hand, went without a hitch and marked resurgence in the desire for a repeat performance. The dynamism of the CFDA's team over the past few years has been able to strengthen its relations with the families and to give them the importance of regularly organising communal activities. More than fifty families were present and the daily paper El Watan published an article recounting the event. After the success of the first gathering, these families have decided to make this a monthly event.

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Meeting with François Hollande at the French embassy in Algiers.



The Bolivian and Peruvian legal experts during the discussion meetings



Demonstration of the International Day of Human Rights in Oran

### IN BRIEF

#### Meeting of the Algerian civil society with representatives of the European Union

The CFDA joined forces with other associations (FIDH, EMHRN, Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights (LADHD)) to formulate an open letter in the wake of the opening of negotiations of the EU-Algeria Action Plan discussing the topic of the European Neighbourhood Policy. This letter, sent to several European authorities, took this opportunity to call on the EU's commitment to respect Human Rights in its bilateral relations, especially with Algeria.

#### Nassera Dutour's talk at the conference "Europe, actor in a new partnership with Algeria?"

On 6th December, Nassera Dutour was invited to give a talk at the Paris conference entitled "Europe, actor in a new partnership with Algeria?" organised by Think Tank Ecolo Europa. A few days after François Hollande's visit to Algeria, the session's aim was to discuss the perspectives of a new partnership between the European Union and Algeria, and more globally with the Southern shores of the Mediterranean. On this occasion, Nassera Dutour spoke of the situation of Algerian families of missing persons and of the difficulties they faced on a daily basis to obtain the truth behind their fate. Benjamin Stora, Mélissa Rahmouni and Daniel Cohn-Bendit also gave talks alongside her.

#### Demonstration on the 58th anniversary of the start of the revolution

On 1st November, families celebrated, as they do every year, the anniversary of the onset of the revolution. Whereas the authorities commemorated this event with great style, families of missing persons decided to celebrate this historic date by organising a new demonstration in front of the Grande Poste in Algiers. On the occasion of this assembly, Ahmed Kaaniche of the Human Rights Watch paid a visit to SOS Disappeared at their office. Members of SOS Disappeared told him of the Association's history and activities, of the families' fight, of the consequences of banning these assemblies and of the families' demands.

#### Families open up on El Magharibia

TV channel El Magharibia went to SOS Disappeared on 24th October in order to film relatives of missing people open up about their experiences. 24 families recounted to the camera the circumstances surrounding the disappearances of their loved ones and spoke of their work alongside SOS Disappeared.

#### Meeting at the Swedish Ambassador's residence

Fatima Yous and Hacène Ferhati attended a meeting organised by Swedish ambassador Mrs Eva Emménus and the head of affairs in the Netherlands Mrs Isabelle Van Tol, at the residence of the former. The event took place around the projection of documentary "Justice for sale" which is about a Congolese lawyer's fight to defend Human Rights in her country.

#### Dining at the Canadian Embassy in Algiers

As part of judge Yves de Montigny's visit to Algiers, Madam the Ambassador Geneviève des Rivières invited SOS disappeared to dinner at the Official Canadian Residence with other Algerian associations on 22nd November. Merouane Bendjael spoke about the families of missing persons' fight for truth and of the harassment of those victims who refuse compensation.

#### Participation in seminar "Equals before the law"

SOS Disappeared has had proof of its credibility, which it has been working on over the course of the past few years, by being invited to a seminar organised by the Djazairouna and Tharwa Fadhma N'Soumeur associations on the international procedures against gender discrimination. This seminar was organised as part of the "Equals before the law" campaign. This was hosted by Ghania Graba, professor of law at the University of Algiers, and Karima Bennoune, professor of Human Rights at the University of California. Karima Bennoune made the most of passing through Algiers to show her written work on Algerian activist women to Nassera Dutour, on whom she had dedicated a chapter.

### PRESS CLIPPING

[Press Clipping of the month of October](#)

[Press Clipping of the month of November](#)

[Press Clipping of the month of December](#)

### PRESS RELEASE

[Algeria-Italy: Respect for human rights must be the agenda of the Italy-Algeria Summit of 14 November 2012](#)

[Algeria-Italy: Respect for human rights must be the agenda of the Italy-Algeria Summit of 14 November 2012](#)

[Algeria : the sentencing of the Human Rights defender Yacine Zaïd at first instance](#)

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