

Newsletter 48 July – September 2013:

Rally in Paris, Oran and Algiers for the International Day of the Disappeared

Loyal to tradition, CFDA and SOS Disappeared organised a series of event to celebrate the international day against enforced disappearances.

In Paris, the FEMED and CFDA organised a press conference for 29 August in the offices of Amnesty International. In addition to a legal presentation of enforced disappearances conducted by Olivier de Frouville, rapporteur of the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and Mououd Boumghar, professor of public rights at the University of Picardie Jules Verne, the conference focused on witness accounts. Rachid El Manouzi, Vice President of FEMED, told of his and his brother's disappearance in Morocco. Next up was Aurélie de Gorostarzu, in charge of the French Red Cross Restoring Family Links program, who presented her work with the missing persons' loved ones, consisting of gathering information on the missing in the context of war. The conference was attended by fifty people and allowed CFDA and FEMED to reach out to a large audience outside of their usual support group.

On 30 August, CFDA and FEMED organised a demonstration on Méilmontant Square for the second year running. Despite technical issues which prevented certain activities from taking place, the members of the two associations were able to engage with passers-by and present their activities surrounded by a photo exhibition and whilst distributing mint tea and oriental pastries.

In Algiers, the **rally** which took place on 1 May was very violent. The police tried to suppress the demonstration, families were attacked and many men were arrested. The police brutality once again proves the Algerian government's drive to silence the families of those who are missing. The determination of the families, however, is not showing any sign of weakness.

In Oran, members of the board organised a gathering in front of the Oran cathedral in which around twenty families took part. The procession headed towards the Victory Square before ending in front of the LADDH (Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights) office where a photo exhibition was set up. The day ended with a showing of "*Y a plus d'Amine*" (Amine is no more) by Felipe Canales and Omar D. which retraces the history of missing Algerians from Nassera Dutour's viewpoint on her quest to establish truth and justice.

CFDA took part in the 24th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva

CFDA was in Geneva from 11 till 13 September 2013 to present its report *Human Rights Puts Algerian Regime to the Test – The illusion of change* during a **side event** lasting two hours which assembled members of international NGOs and State representatives from Geneva. Mouloud Boumghar opened the event by addressing the general picture of the Human Rights situation in Algeria and recalling that the lifting of the state of emergency and the reform plan adopted in January 2012 have acted as a smokescreen for the Algerian government who has wanted to make us believe that the country has opened up to democracy. These measures have, however, led to the decline of Human Rights, their first victims being community activists and trade unionists. Nassera Dutour and Yacine Zaïd then recounted the physical violence and permanent harrassment to which members of the Algerian civil society are being subjected. In the same way, Marc Schade Poulsen's input as Executive Director of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network underlined the Algerian government's virtually systematic refusal to deliver visas to members of the international Human Rights groups.

Nassera Dutour further pointed out that the Algerian government has still not given a satisfactory solution to the issue of the missing in Algeria.

The collection of witness accounts has succeeded in bringing to light the double-talk being held in the Algerian government: an outward discussion advocating the opening of democracy on an international platform whilst attempting to silence the civil society by all means possible and not keeping to any commitments made at an international level.

Whereas Algeria maintains wanting to join the Human Rights Committee, the CFDA side event was an opportunity to make a list of concise arguments against its application.

CFDA also made the most of their presence in Geneva to lobby the State representatives, special rapporteurs and international NGOs into including the issue of enforced disappearances and the defence of Human Rights in any discussion with the Algerian government so that CFDA can finally have consultative status with ECOSOC. CFDA also met Aneke Koning from the Mission of the Netherlands in Geneva, Claudia Gross, assistant special rapporteur for Human Rights and the fight against terrorism, Patricio Silver, committed to Human Rights in the mission in Uruguay, David Rosenblum, representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the USA, Gerold Rollmer, committed to Human Rights in the Austrian mission, and Gerald Staberock, General Secretary to the OMCT, all of whom assured us of their support of CFDA's demands.

Training in international Human Rights law

Mouloud Boumghar and Gabrielle Citroni are again conducting training in Human Rights which took place on 27 and 28 September 2013 in Algiers. As well as the around fifteen participants who have been diligently studying international law since the beginning, newcomers, community activists, lawyers and law students have joined the group.

To bring the subject back to the international mechanisms for defending Human Rights, the tutors offered a quiz. Faithful to CFDA's desire to reinforce the active participation of young lawyers and students, the training continued with group work in order to reach an argumentative essay targeted at denouncing the non-conformity of ordinance no. 06-01 enacting the Charter of Peace and National Reconciliation with Algeria's international commitments.

Thanks to these exercises, the participants are able to more or less construct a rigorous legal argument based on international texts on Human Rights. Furthermore, the analysis of the Charter of Peace and National Reconciliation's implementing provisions allowed to inform and lobby the legal experts of this subject.

Human Rights Committee once again condemns Algeria of two cases of enforced disappearance

CFDA has received two new decisions from the United Nations Human Rights Committee reporting the Algerian State's responsibility. Communication concerning the disappearance of Farid Mechani and Dhamel Saadoun had been filed with the Human Rights Committee in June and August 2008 respectively.

The Committee highlights that the Algerian State is guilty of numerous violations of fundamental rights guaranteed by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: the right to not be subjected to torture, the right to freedom and security, etc. The Committee also denounced the impunity dedicated by the Charter of Peace and National Reconciliation and their provisions implemented forbidding families access to the truth and justice.

This decision acts as recognition of the families' suffering. Their determination will not falter, however, as long as the Algerian State does not offer a single satisfying response to the loved ones of the 8,000 missing Algerians.

The [press release](#) broadcast by CFDA on these two reports was largely covered by the Algerian press.

News in brief:

Protest gathering against the Charter of Peace and National Reconciliation was repressed.

On 29 September, families of the victims from the 1990s gathered peacefully on the occasion of the anniversary of the Charter of Peace and National Reconciliation. The objective of this peaceful event, organised by the Coalition of Associations of Victims of the 1990s (SOS Disappeared, Collective of Families of the Disappeared, Djazairouna, Somoud), was to question the new Minister of Justice and to remind him that the Charter sanctions impunity and deprives families of their rights to Truth and Justice.

A large police presence was deployed in the city to prevent any gathering. Organised in front of the unusual location of the Ministry of Justice, the demonstration was initially able to take place calmly. However, an hour later, more than ten police vans with police officers showed up and forcibly piled more than half of those present into their vans. **The police pushed around elderly family members by mistreating them and throwing them violently to the ground.** Ms Roumili, aged over 70, was knocked over. Ms Lakhel, who has heart problems, was knocked unconscious in the street by police officers.

Meeting with José Manuel Barroso in Algiers

CFDA was invited to meet with the President of the European Commission along with the civil society during their official visit to Algeria on 6 and 7 July 2013. In preparation for their visit, CFDA had sent Mr Barroso their report on the Human Rights situation in Algeria, asking him to echo the claims of the families of the missing and of the entirety of the Human Rights defenders to the Algerian government.

Although he reassured CFDA of his support in a letter, Mr Barroso publicly congratulated the Algerian Prime Minister for his democratic advances made possible by the political reforms of 2012 during the press conference which he held on 7 July. It is therefore still necessary for CFDA and the entirety of the Algerian civil society to tirelessly denounce at an international level the Human Rights violations committed by the Algerian government.

Rally in Oran on 3 July

Families in Oran organised a last demonstration before the month of Ramadhan on 3 July. Faithful to the monthly demonstrations, around twenty families were present and the gathering was able to take place peacefully without any police intervention.

Sharing the experience with Mexican Human Rights defender Alma Garcia

On 11 September, Alma Garcia, Mexican activist for defending the Human Rights of missing persons, met with Nassera Dutour at the CFDA offices in Paris.

Alma Garcia works in North Mexico with three associations defending the rights of migrants and the disappeared. She helps document the number of Human Rights violations suffered by Mexican and Central American migrants during their journey across Mexico to the United States.

Nassera Dutour presented the context of the enforced disappearances in Algeria and described the technique of collecting information and documenting the enforced disappearances implemented by CFDA since its creation as well as their lobbying efforts to international bodies.

Their discussions were intense and confirmed the necessity and drive of associations defending the rights of loved ones of missing persons to work together to denounce and fight against this invisible crime.

Reports

International Day of the Disappeared

<http://www.algerie-disparus.org/images/c-30.08.2013.pdf>

Side event at the Human Rights Committee

<http://www.algerie-disparus.org/images/c12.09.2013.pdf>

The Coalition of the Associations of Victims of the 1990s demands that the Charter hindering national reconciliation be repealed

<http://www.algerie-disparus.org/images/c-charte29.09.2013.pdf>

Police repression and arrests of a dozen families of victims of the 1990s in front of the Ministry of Justice

http://www.algerie-disparus.org/images/stories/CP_29_sept_13.pdf

Press releases

Press release for July

http://www.algerie-disparus.org/images/stories/Revue_de_presse/RP_Juillet_2013.pdf

Press release for August

http://www.algerie-disparus.org/images/rp_aout_2013.pdf

Press release for September

http://www.algerie-disparus.org/images/rp_sept_2013.pdf