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Newsletter no. 51 – April, May, June 2014

[Algeria once again condemned by the United Nations Human Rights Committee](#)

The United Nations Human Rights Committee has recently condemned Algeria for the 25th and 26th times for the [enforced disappearance of Ali Lakhdar Chaouch and Mohamed Mehalli](#) following individual communications made in 2009 by the Collective of Families of the Disappeared in Algeria.

Mohamed Mehalli, 62, was arrested by police officers whilst on his way to the market by car. Ali Lakhdar-Chaouch, 27, was arrested by members of the military security forces at the hospital where he practised as an orthopaedic surgeon.

Although very happy to learn of this good news, the families fear that the Committee's recommendations will be in vain. In fact, up until now, Algeria has never enforced the Committee's recommendations, nor have they initiated any effective investigation into the truth of the fate of the missing people whose documents have been brought before the UN Human Rights Committee.

The press conference organised by the CFDA in Algiers on 16 June was once again successful. Journalists of well-known newspapers in Algeria, such as El Watan, El Khabar and TSA, answered CFDA's call.

The families of the missing took the stage to give their own accounts and to share their hopes following these new condemnations.

A dozen press articles have been published on this subject, which has contributed to bringing to light this little known matter to the general public.

[Training in monitoring human rights violations](#)

Four training sessions in monitoring human rights violations were held at the end of March and beginning of April in Blida, Oran, Algiers and Laghouat in Algeria.

The training was led by a female trainer working in Geneva as a researcher for the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic. The training began with a review of basic concepts of international rights using their origins and the definition of the concept of human rights.

Using different practical exercises, such as role play, the participants studied each step needed to lead an interview as part of an investigation in human rights violations: how to collect and verify evidence, how to identify the applicable law, how to prepare for the interview, etc.

At the end of the training in Algiers, participants stated that they were going to lead an investigation in the field on the situation of the freedom of association by questioning different associations whose autorisation was rejected.

Participants in Laghouat, working for the Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights, stated that they would strengthen their information-sharing network.

In Oran and Blida, participants highlighted a number of women's rights violations and proved themselves to be especially motivated to continue informing and bringing awareness of these issues to the public.

[CFDA trains young lawyers in international human rights law](#)

In accordance with the wishes expressed by participants during the previous training program, torture was the main theme of this new training program which was held in Algiers on 25 and 26 April. The trainers presented the International Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, its implementation across various matters brought to the Committee against Torture. Participants work on a practical case using a video of a torture victim.

The training was alternated with expert speakers who were called upon by CFDA to strengthen the cohesion of the group and the work methodology. The two experts, Franziska Knechtenhofer and Yous Nouredine, from the Zurich-based company [Intermediation](#) in Switzerland, came to Algiers especially to observe.

The Intermediation experts also suggested several fun exercises to enable participants to be better acquainted, to relax and to identify their expectations and motivations. The participants collectively implemented a code of conduct and committed to respect the rules.

At the end of the training, each person in turn reported back on these two days. The participants confirmed that the training had been very interesting and that they felt they could call on the Committee against Torture and the special rapporteur against torture for support by writing a letter of allegation to the latter, for example.

[Training in interview techniques](#)

In continuing with the meeting of 13 November, which had welcomed representatives of the Peruvian Forensic Anthropology Team (Equipo Peruano de Antropologia Forense, EPAF) and the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team (Equipo Argentina de Antropologia Forense, EAAF) for the implementation of training programs for interview techniques and DNA sampling and the utilisation of the DNA databases, the first training took place in Algiers from 22 to 24 May.

The training, attended by around twenty participants (activists, doctors, psychologists, trade unionists, etc.) was given by a forensic investigator who has been working for EPAF for eight years.

After each participant had introduced themselves, the trainer ran through a process of the preliminary investigation and procedure to be followed for collecting information in the event of an enforced disappearance. He then asked participants to divide into teams of four and each group had to identify the challenges they could face during field interviews. Each group then had to present their work and the solutions they would consider using to overcome these obstacles.

The participants then worked together from the EPAF ante-mortem questionnaire to simulate an interview and to determine the relevant information to be retained.

Each group was very active and offered suggestions to adapt the EPAF form to an Algerian context to implement a plan of action for success in interviews and to not trigger memories which can be too painful for families of the missing.

[The Research Centre for Preserving Memory and the Study of Human Rights \(CRPMDH\) has opened its doors](#)

The inauguration programme of the Research Centre for Preserving Memory and the Study of Human Rights (CRPMDH) included a meeting and discussion which brought together around fifty people and was led by two guest speakers. Ahmed Hanifi presented his book “La folle d’Alger” [*The Crazy of Algiers*], a novel which deals with the fight of the families of those missing in the 1990s. Majid Benchikh, head of the law faculty in Algiers and former president of Amnesty International (Algerian section), took the stage to speak about the right to know about all the victims of enforced disappearance. The guests were then introduced to the virtual memorial site of the missing which has a compilation of more than a hundred files on the missing explaining the circumstances around their disappearances and the steps their families have taken.

The CRPMDH has more than 700 publications relating to human rights and journals available for free. Computers with an Internet connection allowing access to the database listing the Centre’s entire documentation have been set up for visitors wishing to do research or work.

Activities will be held in the future to inform and bring awareness to the public on the phenomenon of enforced disappearances.

News in brief

Opening of a new office in Constantine

A new SOS Disappeared office has opened in Constantine. In operation since June, one person has been recruited to work on the missing persons’ files. The region was especially affected by the phenomenon of enforced disappearances in the 1990s. CFDA would therefore

like to become closer to the families to create new files and to bring more awareness to their work in the south of the country.

Urgent appeals for the release of Mohand Kadi and Moez Bencir

Mohand Kadi, a young student and activist for the Youth Action Movement organisation (RAJ), and Moez Bencir, a young Tunisian who has been living in Algeria for many years and works in a publishing house, were arrested on 16 April whilst watching a peaceful rally as part of the Barakat movement, a movement against the fourth mandate of the Algerian president.

CFDA sent [many urgent appeals](#) to the special rapporteurs at the United Nations and the African Commission of Human and Peoples' Rights on behalf of the "Support Committee for the Release of Mohand Kadi and Moez Bencir". They were arrested on 16 April and charged with being in an "unarmed group in a public place which affects public order". After being placed in custody in the Serkadji prison, on 18 May 2014, the Abane Ramdane tribunal gave them a suspended prison sentence of six months. Mohand Kadi is appealing the sentence and the Court of Appeal will settle the affair in September.