

TRUTH AND JUSTICE FOR DISAPPEARED IN ALGERIA

NEWSLETTER

A plea to the European Parliament about the human rights situation in Algeria

The first meeting of the Sub-Committee for Political dialogue, Security and Human Rights, established in the framework of the European Union/Algeria Association Agreement at the last Association Council in June 2011, was held in Algiers on 03 October 2011. The CFDA, in partnership with the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (REMDH), the Algerian Human Rights League (Ligue Algérienne pour la défense des droits de l'Homme, LADDH) and the National Independent Union of Civil Servants (Syndicat national autonome des personnels de l'administration publique, SNAPAP) [addressed a note on the human rights situation in Algeria \(link in French\) to the EU ambassadors in Algiers](#). The ambassadors were reminded of the necessity of raising the human rights concerns at the Sub-Committee meeting and also, before the meeting, a consultation with civil society. This document had a very favourable reception and a consultation with civil society took place in the last week of September.

March against impunity

The [Coalition of associations of victims of the 1990s in Algeria has drawn up a declaration against impunity](#) calling on everybody who feels concerned to sign or to support this declaration. Widely circulated, the document was signed by many personalities, representatives of Algerian and civil society organizations as well as international and foreign organizations defending human rights. In addition the declaration was taken up by several newspapers and blogs. It made a call to support conflict victims by inviting them to a march on 8 October in Paris and a demonstration in Algiers. In Paris, the march started in Belleville and ended in the Place de la République where a tent had been set up to welcome the demonstrators. The presidents of FIDH and of EMHRN made speeches which once again stressed their entire support for CFDA's initiatives; this was preceded by a song about disappearances by the celebrated Algerian singer Sidi Cheik Bémol who had come along to support the march. In Algiers there were more than a hundred people, not only families of the disappeared but also human rights activists; the demonstration was encircled by the police. A young LADDH activist in Oran was arrested and questioned for several hours about the nature of his contacts with SOS Disparus and in particular about his contacts with Nassera Dutour and Hacene Ferhati.

Fiftieth anniversary of ACHPR

The meeting of the African [Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights](#), (ACHPR), from 18 to 27 October 2011, took place in the year of the fiftieth anniversary of the African Human Rights and Peoples' Charter. A forum of NGO's was followed by a conference on the theme of opportunities and challenges to the implementation of the African Charter; this brought together numerous African human rights defenders, representatives of international NGOs, ACHPR commissioners and experts from the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights and state representatives. During the NGO forum CFDA delegates participated in the "Group with specific interest in torture and conditions of detention". They became involved in a plea to the ACHPR commissioners to improve the ACHPR procedures for examining communications concerning individuals. This work rapidly demonstrated its value and a ACHPR working group was created which would essentially work on individual communications. In addition, in the ACHPR session, the CFDA worked on the compilation of two oral presentations, one on the general human rights situation in Algeria, another on freedom of expression. The CFDA particularly emphasized in these presentations the need to question the Algerian authorities on the draft legislations under examination, and to be sure that they respect fundamental liberties and guarantee change in favour of democracy.

European parliamentarians meet SOS Disparus

As soon as the EMHRN learned that the Maghreb Commission from the European Parliament would visit Algiers at the beginning of November it informed the other member associations: the CFDA, LADDH and SNAPAP, and organized a meeting with parliamentarians in Brussels. The subjects of discussion were the present situation in Algeria, plans for reforms, the expectations of civil society and also, and especially, forced disappearances. Following this, the CFDA and SOS Disparus were, for the first time, invited to the consultation meeting organized in Algiers by the European Commission between Algerian civil society and the visiting European parliamentarians. A special meeting also took place, only with families of the disappeared, at the main office of the European Commission delegation in Algeria. It was a unique event!

Nassera Dutour receives the Oscar Romero Human Rights Award

[Nassera Dutour, founding member and spokesperson of the CFDA, received the Oscar Romero Human Rights Award](#) on 13 November 2011 at the Rothko Chapel in Houston, USA. The award was for her extraordinary commitment and tireless efforts, since the disappearance of her son in 1997, to establish the Truth and Justice concerning more than 8000 victims of forced disappearances. At the ceremony where the award was presented Nassera Dutour declared that the victims of the 1990s would not obtain the creation of an independent and impartial enquiry unless there is a democratic change in Algeria. Nassera Dutour, the CFDA and SOS Disparus received numerous messages of support, notably from Juan E Mendez, Special Rapporteur at the UN on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Following the ceremony in Houston, Nassera Dutour made visits to Washington and New York to meet various well-known people from American state institutions and make them aware of the situation of families of the disappeared in Algeria.

The CFDA at the Festival Voix de femmes

A CFDA delegation visited Liege on the occasion of [the tenth Festival of 'Women's voices'](#). This festival is held every two years and meetings of women relatives of the disappeared are organized. Relatives met to speak about the strengthening of their network become officially recognised this year by the creation of an association called Waynoun. An open conference had been organized at which the CFDA delegate presented the circumstances of forced disappearances and the claims of families of the disappeared for the establishment of Truth and Justice. The CFDA also presented [a theatre play entitled the Beauty of the Icon, written by Fatima Gallaire and produced by Khadija El Mahdi](#) (link in French). On the penultimate evening of the festival Nassera Dutour appeared on the stage with other relatives of disappeared people.

European support for Algerian human rights defenders

CFDA representatives spent two days participating in working meetings organized by EMHRN. These meetings were looking at the possibility of creating a support group that could reinforce Algerian civil society organizations; this would consist of representatives of Algerian, French, Spanish and Italian civil society who could reinforce the abilities of Algerian civil society. It ended with a public meeting. This meeting proved particularly interesting and enabled actors of Algerian civil society to meet with French civil society such as the Human Rights League which is also a member of EMHRN

A delegation of American diplomats visits the office of SOS Disparus

Jason H Ulner, representative of the State Department, was in Algeria from 13 to 17 December accompanied by the Political Chargé d'Affaires from the American embassy. He visited the office of SOS Disparus, and had a very long discussion with its members. They discussed the difficulties of the policy of national reconciliation and the situation of families of the disappeared; they talked about the lack of recourse to justice and the harassment of families who refuse to follow the procedure for compensation - which requires a death certificate for the disappeared person, delivered by a court. In speaking about the Oscar Romero award - presented to Nassera Dutour - Monsieur Ulner said that this award honoured a militant woman who represented thousands who were struggling against disappearance and who were crying out for Truth and Justice in Algeria.

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Demonstration "All against Impunity in Algeria" in Algiers – October 8th 2011



March "All against Impunity in Algeria" in Paris – October 8th 2011 (Credits – Hacene Ferhani)



Families of disappeared say "No" to the new law on association, Place de la Grande Poste, in Algiers, December 10th 2011

SHORT NOTES

Anniversary of DUDH

On the occasion of the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, families of disappeared assembled in front of the main Algiers Post Office (La Grande Poste). They were there to say 'no' to the draft legislation on associations and to be remind about Article 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which consecrated freedom of association.

Bring the memory of the disappeared to life

As part of an initiative taken by scholars in Geneva, the CFDA was invited to participate to this study and sent a research project on memorial initiatives which had been set up, both with and without State support. A conference attended by CFDA was organized from 7 to 10 December 2011 entitled: Building up the memory of crimes against humanity. The CFDA was represented by Nassera Dutour. This conference was followed by a discussion about the follow-up of this project. Several proposals were put forward: a documentary, the publication of a book on this topic, an exhibition and so. The cycle of conferences should be completed in May 2012. Nassera Dutour will speak at a conference be based on the project presented by CFDA on 9 January 2012 at the University of Geneva.

Meeting of the International Coalition against Enforced Disappearances (ICAED)

CFDA, as one of the pilot members of the committee of [ICAED](#), attended a meeting which took place between 7 and 10 November. This meeting aimed to define the outline of the mobilization and advocacy for the ratification and respect of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. The ICAED had organized a parallel event about enforced disappearances and a delegation of the ICAED participated in a meeting with members of the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances; the Committee was holding its first session which was making its recommendations for the implementation of the International Convention.

1st November demonstration

On the occasion of the anniversary of the start of the Algerian independence revolution, which commenced on 1 November 1954, families of the disappeared - from various regions - answered the call of SOS Disparus to come and celebrate this day in their fashion. There were more than 130 of them at the Place du 1er mai, still clamoring to know the truth and to obtain justice for their children.

Sharing experience

The Cairo Institute for Human Rights studies invited Nassera Dutour, Spokesperson for the CFDA, to take part in [a conference on transitional justice](#) which was taking place in Cairo on 31 October and 1 November. She described the situation in Algeria, the impunity of the authors of grave human rights violations, the denial of the Truth and the lack of any recourse for the victims. She also spoke of the importance of providing a special place concerning the situation of the disappeared at the centre of any international justice process.



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PRESS RELEASES :

[International Human Rights Day : Families of the disappeared say no to the draft Law on Association](#)

[The mothers of the disappeared are leaving us without knowing the fate of their sons](#)

[Gathering of families of the disappeared on the occasion of the 57th anniversary of the launching of the revolution of November 1st 1954](#)

PRESS CLIPPING

[Nassera Dutour on the TV show « Maghreb-Orient Express » on TV 5 Monde « Algérie, un équilibre fragile ? », 20 novembre 2011](#)

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

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

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

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