

TRUTH AND JUSTICE FOR DISAPPEARED IN ALGERIA

NEWSLETTER

Algerian lawyers trained in Geneva

This training, which took place from 11 to 13 March in Geneva, completed a cycle of six training periods. Its objective was to train a group of Algerian lawyers about international processes for the protection of human rights. Its theme was that of the legal doubts and difficulties concerning disappeared persons, but it also concentrated on numerous other important matters; these included the lack of independent Algerian justice, the pressure, intimidation and harassment of lawyers, the new law about associations and the government bill relating to the role of lawyers. The participants were able to meet several persons active in United Nations institutions who explained what they did and replied to questions. From their side participants could practice the techniques of making a defence speech. They could explain the obstacles concerning human rights which Algerian civil society has to face and the difficulties that they meet in trying to ensure their role of advocate. Copies of 'The Alternative Charter for Peace, Truth and Justice' were distributed as well as the report by the Ligue des droits de l'homme: « Réformes politiques ou verrouillage supplémentaire de la société civile et du champ politique? » (Political reforms or blockage of civil society and the political system?).

Iskander Debbache arrested by the DRS

As a result of menaces against him Iskander Debbache, aged 58, was exiled for some twenty years in Argentina and in France, and did not return to Algeria until 9 January 2013.

He was immediately arrested as soon as he arrived at Algiers airport and was handed over to the notorious intelligence and security forces (DRS). Concerned about the consequences of arbitrary detention by the DRS, the CFDA appealed to the Algerian authorities to free Iskander Debbache and allow him to enjoy the rights guaranteed him by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. After he had been detained in secret for four days without knowing the reason for his arrest, M Debbache was freed on Saturday 12 January. Although CFDA was pleased about his release in good health, it strongly condemns arbitrary arrests of which many human rights defenders are victims. The CFDA [calls upon the Algerian government](#) to respect its international agreements and particularly the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Human rights activists and union representatives stopped at the Algerian frontier

Some 60 Algerian associations should have taken part in the World Social Forum in Tunis, a place to meet to exchange ideas and to reflect. However, 96 representatives of civil society, which included SOS Disparus, were prevented from leaving Algeria in order to go to the Forum. On 25 March, as from 3 am at the Layoun frontier post in the wilaya of Tebessa, the Algerian frontier police blocked two buses en route for the Forum. After six hours waiting in the cold and without sanitary facilities police notified the Algerian activists that they were not allowed to leave Algeria - although their documents were in order. Later, some members of the delegation, including Hacène Ferhati, an active member of SOS Disparus and brother of a disappeared person, tried to cross the frontier through Souk- Ahras, but in vain. Hacène Ferhati then returned that night to Algiers hoping to take a flight to Tunis. However, the frontier police at the airport, on both 25 and 26 March, refused to allow him to travel. Without giving any valid motive the police recommended him to go to the Direction générale de la sûreté nationale (DGSN), the police who are responsible for law and order in Algeria, to resolve the problem.

In order to denounce this violation of freedom of movement CFDA sent an [urgent message](#) to the President of the Working Group on Enforced Disappearances, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, the Special Rapporteur on the right to peaceful assembly and association, the President of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights at the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Mothers of disappeared arrested and badly treated on Womens' International Day

A demonstration, organised by SOS Disparus to mark the International Day of Womens' Rights, was planned to take place on the Place du 1er Mai, but at dawn the square was surrounded by police. Families who refused to turn back were immediately put in police vans and taken to the commissariat. Old people were not spared: M Millis (aged 85) and his wife, whose son disappeared on 9 September 1993, spent the day at the commissariat in the 9th arrondissement following their arrest by two police dressed in official uniforms. Young activists from Amnesty International, the association RAJ and the Mouvement de la Jeunesse Indépendante pour le Changement (MJIC), who had come to support families of the disappeared, were treated brutally and arrested by police. In total, more than 50 persons were arrested. Thanks to a ruse used by mothers who stayed hidden behind arcades, the demonstration - in spite of everything - could take place. They had to be just outside the Place du 1er Mai. To mark this day CFDA addressed an [open letter](#) to the President of the Republic calling for truth and justice; some of the letter was published by the press.

SOS Disparus gets more organised in Oran

Against all expectations families succeeded in assembling in Oran and holding their monthly march in a peaceful manner and without suffering any violence. Nevertheless one of the mothers of a disappeared person declared that one of the police officers who was surrounding the demonstration was the person who had tortured her in the Magenta detention centre. Although no violence took place, the simple presence of these officers, and the way they looked at the mothers, was sufficiently traumatising to dissuade some from participating in a demonstration in future.

Several journalists from El Watan and Liberté followed the march as far as the office of SOS Disparus. Articles appeared in the press about the disappeared and, in a general manner, about Algerian politics.

An alternative report on the implementation by France of the Convention against Forced Disappearances

France was the first country, on 11 and 12 April 2013, to be examined by the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances. CFDA collaborated with the association TRIAL, the International Commission of Jurists and the International Federation of Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture, in the writing of an [alternative report](#). This report underlines the feebleness of the legislation and the way that the French define the crime of enforced disappearance; it reminds the authorities of gaps concerning measures of prevention, enquiry, and control. CFDA participated in proposals for concrete and precise recommendations so that France takes measures guaranteeing respect for its international commitments.

CFDA denounces the Algerian government replies to the Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearance

The responses of the Algerian authorities to the Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearance were [made available to CFDA](#) on 10 January 2013. The Algerian government has not provided an adequate response about the 61 cases of enforced disappearance submitted by CFDA and on the contrary tarnishes the memory of victims in classing them all in the category: "Dead: armed elements within a terrorist group neutralised during antiterrorist operations." The files that CFDA has compiled and the evidence that it has received confirm that in the majority of cases the person was arrested by state agents from his or her home, or place of work, in the presence of witnesses.

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However, some mothers of the disappeared have managed to cross the Tunisian.



Gathering in Oran



Gathering in Algiers

IN BRIEF :

CFDA supports unemployed persons in Laghouat

Following the crackdown on and arrest of 17 activists who had met peacefully in front of the employment agency in Laghouat on 20 February, CFDA demanded that the Algerian authorities free them 'immediately and unconditionally'. This was done by [cosigning a press release](#) with seven other national and international human rights organisations: the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (REMDH), the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and the World Organisation against Torture (OCMT) formed by the FIDH, the Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights (LADDH), the Autonomous National Trade Union of Personnel in the Public Administration (SNAPAP), the Network of Lawyers for the Defence of Human Rights (RADDDH), Action for Democratic Change in Algeria (ACDA), and the International Committee of Support for Autonomous Algerian Trade Unionism (CISA). In addition, on 22 March, SOS Disparus joined in a day to remember victims of terrorism in Oran at the head office of the 'Young Reader'; it was organised by a citizens' collectif. The participants decided then and there to organise another meeting next year.

CFDA asks UN Human Rights Committee to follow up on its decisions concerning Algeria

Together with its partners, CFDA [denounced](#) the lack of implementation of 16 decisions taken by the UN Human Rights Committee which condemned Algeria. The organisations demand that, in line with the decisions of the Committee, the Algerian authorities carry out inquiries into crimes of enforced disappearance and summary execution and that those responsible be identified, pursued and punished and a complete and adequate compensation be granted.

CFDA condemns the restrictions on freedom of association

On 12 January 2013 Algerian associations and autonomous trades unions met at the Maisons des Syndicats in Algiers on the occasion of the anniversary of law 12-06 relative to associations. This meeting was initiated by Algerian members of the group in solidarity with Algerian civil society, of which CFDA is part. Its objective is to make an appraisal of trades union and association liberties. Those organisations present condemned the restrictions placed on freedom of association and on trades union freedoms by the law 12-06.

PRESS RELEASE

[Solidarity meeting between associations and independent trade unions about freedom of association in Algeria](#)

[96 Algerian Human rights defenders banned from attending World Social Forum in Tunis](#)

[Iskander Debbache released](#)

PRESS CLIPPING

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

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

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

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