

you cannot kill us,  
we are already dead!

**Algeria's Ongoing  
Popular Uprising**

# Anger among Algeria's Berbers

By Stephen Mayoux  
BBC correspondent

TIZI-OUZOU, Algeria— Violence has marred the Algerian parliamentary elections in the Berber-speaking region of Kabylia, about 62 miles east of the capital Algiers.

Local youth in the region's main town of Tizi-Ouzou spent Thursday rioting in front of polling stations, throwing stones at security officials and burning tires.

Children as young as 10 been taking part in the unrest.

Anti-riot units and plain-clothes policemen threw some stones back and fired tear-gas at the demonstrators.

The clashes erupted on Thursday morning when election officials tried to open polling stations.

## State of siege

For the past year protesters in the region had been in open conflict with the authorities, after a young student died while in custody of the security forces.

Political leaders in Kabylia have called for a boycott of the poll, a call that has been relayed in other parts of the country, especially in Algiers.

The authorities have accused demonstrators in Kabylia of using violence and intimidation to prevent potential voters from casting their ballots.

At a polling station set up in a primary school in the middle of one of Tizi-Ouzou's many council estates, the police were trying to drive demonstrators away using tear-gas.

The school was in a state of siege, surrounded by angry protesters who kept pelting stones on the building.

Elections officials had deserted the station and no one was there to cast their ballot.

The air was full of thick black smoke, mixed with the fumes of the tear-gas canisters.

## Government accused

Some protesters accused the police of trying to bus strangers into Kabylia to make them vote.



A riot police officer stands by a burning car during clashes in the Berber capital of Tizi-Ouzou, 62 miles east of Algiers, Algeria. Sunday April 29, 2001.

A local resident on the estate accused Algeria's government of making money out of the country's oil wealth while killing youngsters in the region.

"Our oil is mixed with our blood," he said, accusing the international community of ignoring the plight of the Algerian people.

Local activists say that 117 people have been killed by the security forces in Kabylia since the beginning of the trouble last year.

Officials speak of only 80 dead. Thousands have been injured.

Apart from the flashpoints around polling stations, Tizi-Ouzou has been largely deserted.

Its residents locked themselves up following a call for a four-day general strike.

## Fighting 'for democracy'

A young protester I met in the city's main square insisted that their revolt should now spread to the rest of the country.

"Algeria's problems come from the country's generals," he said.

"If people riot in the south, west and center of the country, they will have to go."

Most protesters insist that they are Algerians before being Kabyles.

But the authorities have been trying to portray the current turmoil as a purely Kabyle issue.

Demonstrators insist that they are fighting for democracy, for justice and for jobs, not only for the recognition of their culture and their Berber language, Tamazight.

## Further clashes

Villages outside Tizi-Ouzou have also been cut off from the rest of the region, and tree trunks and stones have been placed across the roads.

In one instance, demonstrators even dug a trench across the road to prevent police vehicles from reaching their village.

Clashes also erupted in several other towns of the region.

Violence has been rocking the region for more than a year now.

***The young rioters fought police and gendarmerie forces during several weeks shouting: "You cannot kill us we are already dead!" Treated as half dead by the Algerian society, they knew that they had to destroy it to start living.***

***-Jaime Semprun, "Apology for the Algerian Insurrection"***

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After running the gendarmerie out of their town, local youths in Tizi-Ouzou playfully occupy the remains of the station.

**CADC:** (Coordination of 'Aarsh, Daïras and Communes) A horizontal organization with a revolving presidency, which includes about 50 delegations, brought together on the scope of parish, town, and tribe. The CADC has opposed any dialogue with *le pouvoir*.

**CIADC:** (Inter-Wilaya Coordination of 'Aarsh, Daïras and Communes) The umbrella coordination of all the 'arsh delegates and citizen coordination committees of the towns

**CICB:** (Inter-Communal Coordination of Bgayet) Formed on July 19, 2001, on the basis that "there should not be any associations, corporations, or trade unions in the movement. There should be a popular structure: you come into it as a citizen, not as a doctor, trade unionist, etc." (*International Crisis Group* interview) (see also CPWB)

**CNS:** (Body for National Security) The country's riot police

**CPWB:** (Popular Committee of the Wilaya of Bgayet) At a CPWB meeting on July 19, 2001, a number of communal coordinations from the Soummam valley and the other rural districts seceded and established a new body, the CICB. At issue was the principle of representation within the movement. (see also CICB)

**DRS:** (Department of Intelligence and Security) The military intelligence service

**FFS:** (Socialist Forces Front) An authoritarian socialist party, it is one of two of Kabylia-based political parties (the other being the RCD). While more conciliatory towards the Islamists than the RCD, they consistently target the 'police-state' aspect of the regime and the political role of the army.

**FIS:** (Islamic Salvation Front) An Islamic populist party, it was the main opposition to the corrupted FLN. They won local elections and legislative elections in December 1991, the generals refused the democratic results and organized a coup. FIS leaders and activists were arrested, many tortured for months, some killed, the villages and cities who voted for FIS were victim of state terror: police and security forces arrested, killed, and tortured. Many tortured people who survived joined the Islamist terrorist guerrilla to protect themselves from the army and/or to get revenge.

**FLN:** (National Liberation Front) The main (nationalist) Algerian party, which is supposedly democratic, is in fact *the* party of the highly-corrupt ruling class. The role of the FLN is to control, at any price, the vital resources of the country (mainly oil) for its interests and for the interests of oil and gas industry. Historically, the FLN manipulated the memory of the struggle against French occupation. Leaders were nationalists with Stalinist influences. They now work for privatization with global capitalist institutions, notably the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

**GIA:** (Armed Islamic Groups) They are fanatic armed groups who are using 2 types of armed struggle: regular fighting against the army and terrorism and the mass murder of Algerian civilians. Many of the GIA are in fact manipulated by the Algerian intelligence services and the army generals (who are the real leaders of the country). In addition, some terror acts that are attributed to the GIA are in fact committed by army commandos dressed like Islamist terrorists. For instance they go into villages that voted for the FIS (main opposition to the FLN) and they kill people, torture, rape women, burn babies in front of their parents etc. Of course western intelligence services (especially French services) are aware of the Algerian state terrorism, but they support it as a means of social control and local

stability. With the same logic, one of the GIA strategies is to murder civilians at false army checkpoints. Most of the news to make it out of Algeria usually involves GIA offensives.

**MAK:** (Movement for the Autonomy of Kabylia) Unpopular, but media-friendly, nationalist autonomists hell-bent on keeping the movement regionalist (within the confines of Kabylia). Sadek Akrou, a CPWB leader in Bgayet, said: "We will not construct a house inside another house. Ferhat Mehenni [head of the MAK] is speaking for himself alone. We have always underlined, in our meetings, the national character of our movement... We are neither a movement for

independence nor a movement for autonomy. We are a national popular movement." By allowing intense and frequent press coverage the MAK and their platform, the regime has shown that it knows how to use the MAK to its advantage to limit the spread of the 'arsh movement.

**RCD:** (Rally for Culture and Democracy) Early on, this Berberist authoritarian party, along with articulating the identity and language issues, became the champion of a secularist vision of the state, not only opposing the Islamist movement but going much further in calling for a constitutional change to abolish Islam's status as the official religion. They presented the insurrection in Kabylia as a "cultural" insurrection.

**UGTA:** (General Union of Algerian Workers) This official union is integrated into the regime.

**URS:** (Republican Security Units) These are counterterrorism/special operations units of the National Security General Directorate sent to enforce public order and protect 'sensitive' sites (i.e.— gendarmerie barracks and polling stations).

**UNJA:** (National Union of Algerian Youth) A vassal of President Bouteflika

## Abbreviations

**Amazigh:** (plural 'Imazighen') Term used for Berber, meaning "free man"

**'Arsh:** (plural 'aarsh')(pronounced 'aroush') The various clans or extended families, an ancient and traditional network of assemblies and committees in Kabylia. For a decent exploration of the origins of the 'arsh, see the ICG report: [http://www.crisisweb.org/library/documents/report\\_archive/A400996\\_10062003.pdf](http://www.crisisweb.org/library/documents/report_archive/A400996_10062003.pdf)

**Berber:** (a Greek term meaning "foreigner") People who inhabit the North African region stretching from the Canary Islands to the Siwa Oasis in Egypt, made up of Kabyles, Chaouis, M'zabites, Tuaregs, and countless other groups. Berbers make up nearly 1/3 of Algeria's 30 million people.

**Daïra:** Administrative district made up of several communes

**El-Kseur:** (pronounced 'leqser') The Kabyle town where the coordinations adopted their now-famous platform of demands.

**Gendarmerie:** A group of police officers, *Gendarme:* a member of a police unit

**Hogra:** The condition of being excluded and held in contempt, a term that is used to indicate the arrogance and abuse of the rich over the poor, of the powerful over the population

**Kabylia:** Mountainous region of Algeria where the bulk of the Algerian Berber population resides (see map), the heart of the insurrection, *Kabyle* - an inhabitant of Kabylia, a Berber

**Le Pouvoir:** ('The Power,' or regime) Largely invisible military commanders who wield power in Algeria

**Sonelgaz:** The national electric and gas utility company

**Taiwan:** term used to describe the government and its collaborators, meaning 'pre-fabricated, fake, counterfeit.' (as in: 'Made in Taiwan')

**Tamazight:** (pronounced 'Thamazighth') The Berber language

**Tizi-Ouzou:** The capital city of the Kabyle region

**Wilaya:** Province

## Key Terms

# Introductory Notes

What is going on in Algeria?

In Spring 2001, the murder of the young Massinissa Guermah while in the custody of the gendarmerie, ignited a widespread rebellion across Algeria's Kabylia region.

The following texts speak for themselves in emphasizing the incredible development of the insurgent Algerians— from riot to insurrection to the calling into question of everything in Algerian society— a development marked by attacks on the repressive regime (*le pouvoir*) and its alternatives, the political parties (notably the RCD and FFS) and the extra-parliamentary Islamist groups. The militancy and exuberance of blockades, occupations, firebomb attacks, and mass rioting coupled with the resurgence of the horizontally organized village assemblies ('aarsh) and non-negotiable, impossible\*, demands has resulted in courses of action, such as election boycotts, that attack all forms of representation. 'Power and dignity can only come from ourselves' is the lesson echoing throughout Kabylia and rolling down from the highlands, with varied success, into the political heart of the country— its capital, Algiers.

The attempts by the insurgent population to encourage those outside Kabylia to contract the spirit of revolt have been widespread and deliberate. In "The Algerian Insurrection" (page 29), Heba Saleh explains, "At the beginning the RCD [Kabylia-based political party] tried to portray the uprising as one in favor of Tamazight [Berber language]... [and] in the course of [the protests] several RCD offices were ransacked." In article 9 of "The Code of Honor" (page 29), delegates pledge to "Give the movement national scope." The tremendous emphasis on the national, not *nationalist*, dimension of the revolt transcends the Berber, or ethnic, question. Saleh goes on to say, "Indeed, some observers have argued that, if anything, the recent protests prove the failure of identity politics in Algeria. The Kabyles have been emphasizing the grievances they share with all Algerians rather than the ones that set them apart." "The [Kabyle] youths, greatly in awe of the images of Palestinian youth, which the media broadcasts repeatedly throwing rocks at invading forces, started shouting, 'This is our Intifada!'" Not only did the Kabyles see their struggles linked to that of others, but, in this case, linked particularity to Arabs, those who have traditionally made up Algeria's *le pouvoir* who continues to threaten Berber culture. Perhaps the most telling course of action in the "Summary of the Meeting at Illoula Oumalou" (page 12) is "12. Creation of an internet site." This seemingly extraneous point holds a tremendous implication: *that the uprising could be relevant to those of us outside of Kabylia*. And the movement *has* spread. "Slogans such as 'Nous sommes tous des Kabyles,' ['We are all Kabyles'] were heard in Arab towns [in Algeria]" (Saleh).

Those of us who have an interest in determining the course of our lives, would do well to not only study this "spreading," but to implement it as well. They are demanding everything and so should we. Let's work to extend the revolt beyond the confines of Algeria, across the Mediterranean to Italy and France, across the Berber belt from Morocco to the Middle East, across the Sahara to the populous West African coast, across

the Atlantic through the Kabyle Diaspora in Canada and the U.S., and beyond!

Though romanticization is necessary(!), several curiosities of the movement arise, opening it up for a much needed critique. One, its peculiar humanist nature: strikes are not lacking, but occupations and transformations of the workplace are, leaving the means of production largely untouched. And two, the total absence of women in the 'aarsh: though it must be emphasized that the 'aarsh are not the entire movement and the movement, from which women are hardly absent, is not just the 'aarsh. Are these weaknesses dooming the uprising to ultimate failure, or is the capacity to confront these things and make the revolt total expanded in the wake of a social rupture such as this?

This is a collection of various texts from Italy, the U.S., France, and Algeria itself; from first-hand documents of the 'aarsh formulated in the tumultuous moments of revolt to news reports from the height of the insurrection to international letters of solidarity to maps to commentary and analysis to photos to history...

Think of this as a 'reader;' skip around if you want and read the different texts. A 'glossary' of key terms and abbreviations is in the front (page 4). In the back (page 30), we provide a comprehensive chronology mostly for reference, but also for storytelling's drama and excitement— but it is not a normal story... it is one with teeth, one that you may read, but one that has far more to be written. Perhaps the most important thing to glean from this collection is that it is not yet history; it is ongoing. It has no ending, and we would do best to keep it this way. This is all fresh. Even the statues of the martyrs serve as incendiaries and not petrifiers.

After a brief lull in 2003 caused by the imprisonment of many 'aarsh delegates and others, unrest is again rattling the whole of Algeria. The April 15, 2004, presidential elections (where Bouteflika triumphed again!) were once more met with a successful boycott (14% voter participation) and widespread disruption. Leading up to the elections and since then, cities and towns, both inside and outside of Kabylia, have experienced, with alarming frequency, riots and strikes around housing conditions, lack of electricity and water, unemployment, and police killings. And as the village assemblies continue to meet on a regular basis, the revolt shows no signs of slowing.

We unashamedly publish this booklet in solidarity with the insurgency in Algeria.

***-Against the isolation and co-optation of the Algerian revolt and for its proliferation!***

***-May the ruling classes and their collaborators throughout the world be confronted (as the Algerian le pouvoir, political parties, and Islamists have) by their own irrelevance!***

-firestarter press  
July 2004

\* This non-negotiation stance can only be understood in light of village assembly delegate Mohand Iguetoulène's comments: "The regime will never accept and will never apply Article 11 of the Platform. If you take its security forces away from it, bingo! ["ça y est!"]— the regime itself is finished!" (ICG Report)

- Around 670:** Arab conquest over much of North Africa, including present-day Algeria. A woman, Kahina, leads the Berber resistance.
- 1509:** Spain starts taking over control of important ports in Algeria.
- 1519:** Most of Algeria is conquered by the Ottomans, who are called for by the Muslims in order to liberate them from the Spaniards.
- 1830:** French occupation of Algiers, Oran and Annaba.
- 1834:** France annexes Algeria, and has soon taken control over other ports on the Algerian coast.
- 1840:** The number of Europeans present in Algeria passes 100,000.
- 1870:** Rebellion in the Kabylia happens at the same time as a war between France and Germany. The rebellion is cruelly suppressed, and the best soil of the Kabylia is taken from the population and given to European settlers.
- 1879:** Northern Algeria is declared part of France. While all Algerians are considered French subjects, they cannot hold public meetings, carry weapons, or move around the country without permission.
- 1920s:** Algerian nationalism gains popularity among those disappointed by not receiving full equality with the French, even after adopting French culture.
- 1945:** Algerians and French clash in Constantine. Several-thousand Algerians and over 100 Europeans killed.
- 1954:** National Liberation Front launches a revolt against French rule.
- 1956:** The fights spread to the cities. The French are gaining ground.
- 1962:** On July 3, Algeria gains independence from France, but not before 100,000 French and about 1,000,000 Algerians have been killed in the 8 years of fighting.
- 1963:** Ahmed Ben Bella elected as first president.
- 1965:** Colonel Houari Boumedienne overthrows Ben Bella, pledges to end corruption.
- 1976:** Boumedienne introduces a new constitution that confirms commitment to socialism and role of the National Liberation Front (FLN) as the sole political party. Islam is recognized as state religion. Boumedienne is elected president and is instrumental in launching a program of rapid industrialization.
- 1980:** "Berber Spring" rebellion against Arab cultural and political dominance is marked by the resurgence of the village committees, most notably in Tizi-Ouzou and Bgayet.
- 1988:** Serious rioting in Algiers and other cities against economic conditions as security forces kill around 500 youths across the country.
- 1989-1993:** Berber Cultural Movement marked by massive demonstrations.
- 1989:** A constitutional amendment allows political parties (other than the FLN) to be formed, giving rise to the FIS and both Kabyle-based parties, the RCD and the FFS.
- 1990:** The newly-formed FIS wins 55% of the vote in local elections defeating the FLN by a large margin.
- 1991:** Government announces parliamentary elections in June and plans changes to electoral system including restrictions on campaigning in mosques. FIS reacts by calling general strike. State of siege declared and elections postponed. FIS leaders Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj arrested and jailed.
- 1992:** Street gatherings banned and violent clashes break out in February between FIS supporters and security forces. A state of emergency is declared, the FIS is ordered to disband, and all 411 FIS-controlled local and regional authorities are dissolved. Newly-elected President Mohamed Boudiaf is assassinated. Violence increases and the GIA emerges as the main group behind these operations.
- 1997:** The first half of this year sees a number of very violent actions mainly by the GIA, leaving hundreds of civilians killed.
- 1998:** In mid-June, the highly political, and often sarcastic and polemical, singer Matoub Lounes, nicknamed 'the rebel' and unquestionably the great favorite of Kabyle youth, is mysteriously assassinated. Massive demonstrations erupt throughout Kabylia. A former leading FFS activist said in 2003, "What happened in 1998 was an alarm bell which the parties took no notice of; the population was escaping their control." In July, the young rioters set up forums of "rebels for freedom" in association with participants of today's CPWB.
- 1999:** Abdelaziz Bouteflika is elected as president after all opposition candidates withdraw from race in protests of unfair elections. He promises to better the image of Algeria, boost its economy, and put an end to the massacres. His "civil harmony" plan, which reintegrates those Islamists who were willing to put down their arms, is meant to bring peace to the country.
- 2000:** Attacks by the GIA and the armed wing of the FIS on civilians and security forces continue. Islamist violence has claimed over 100,000 lives in Algeria since 1992.
- 2001:** On March 28, less than a month before Algeria will explode in rebellion, oil workers, supported by numerous sectors such as the metalworkers, stage an impressive general strike that is met with much popular sympathy. Bouteflika, discountenanced by the audacity of the workers, is forced to slow down the locomotive of neo-liberalism and to consider some measures of reflation of the economy.

*Kabyles pay homage to the fallen singer.*



We are all  
Massinissa  
Guermah



A child from Kabylia is first and foremost a child from Algeria. To take away his life is an attempt on all Algerian people's lives. To initiate an attack on a teenager's life in the same space that represents the State's wavering authority is a serious matter. To call this 17 year-old adolescent, whose life had just been cut short, a thief is an outrage to this deceased child's honor and his family.

Why, in this case be indignant about the death of the young Massinissa in his father's arms? Why condemn and rebel against injustice and human rights infringements while those responsible remain stone-cold, deaf, blind, and dumb in the face of the suffering and "ill life" of the Algerian children? Not to hear the demands of the children of Kabylia— "no more hogra"— as legitimate is truly the display of a contempt strangely similar to that of Ali Benhadj\*, when he said, "Excuse me for being late, I had to perform my ablutions because I came back from Kabylia."

No, Mr. Zerhouni\*\*! Those who revolt against the absurd and unnecessary death of Kabylia's young, even if they do not live in Algeria, and I am one of them, do not all live in golden cages; they do not hatch any foreign plot and are not the henchmen of treason. It is certain that by living with friends, who indeed held or still hold residences on Longchamp St., Vermeil St., Auteuil, Neuilly, and Passy, you generalize from your vantage point.

No, Mr. Zerhouni! One *can* live in low-income housing, live in a housing project, or live among the "riff-raff and the unsuccessful" and still have the strength, the energy, and the courage to be indignant about the gratuitous death of the Algerian children. No, Mr. Zerhouni! You, a man of honor, are doing the dirty job of justifying the unjustifiable and pleading already lost causes because they go against the will of the Algerian people. The gesture that would fit a man of your caliber is to slam the door and salvage what is left of the honor and dignity of Algeria! You have nothing to prove, Mr. Zerhouni! Not you! Put yourself, for only a second, in the shoes of the father who has just lost his son, and tell me what would have been your human reaction. Would you not have damned even the air you breathe?

Remember these proverbs, Mr. Zerhouni: "Three things take away three others: the ladle from the pot, the bushel from the pile, and the babbling from the dignity." "One ounce of dignity is worth more than a quintal of honor." And these children are dying for Algeria's lost dignity and honor. Mr. Zerhouni, when will the kids' racket be?

-Latifa Benmansour  
May 3, 2001

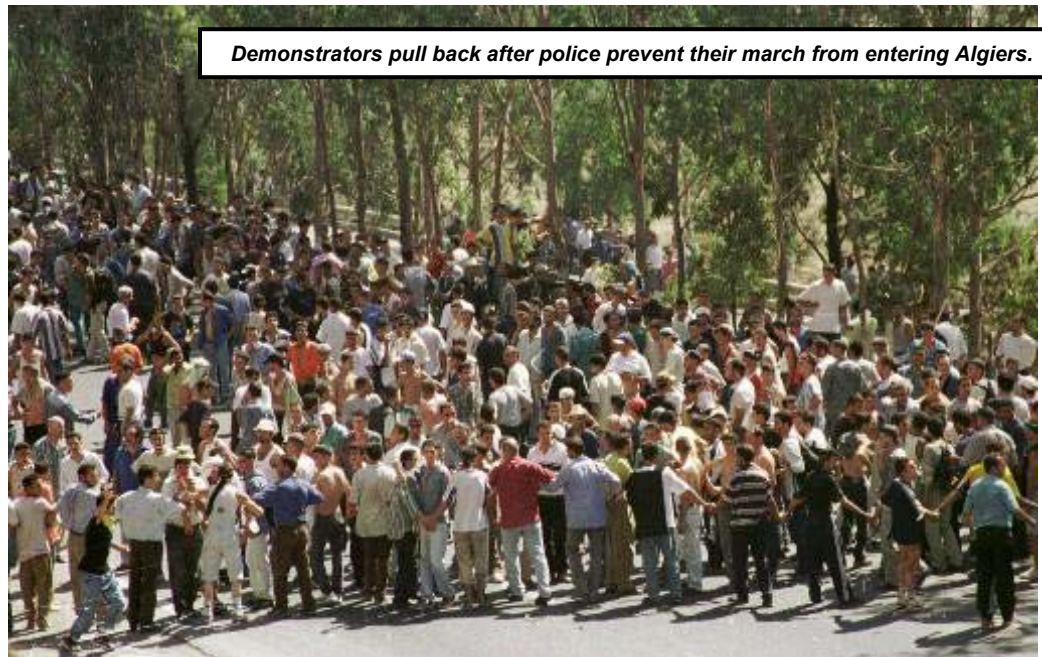
\* Ali Benhadj, the second-in-command of the outlawed FIS, recently served a 12-year prison sentence for "endangering national security."

\*\* Algerian Minister of the Interior, Mr. Nouredine Yazid Zerhouni's earlier declaration that Guermah was not a student but he was a 26 year-old "delinquent" added to the fury of Kabyles; Zerhouni later retracted it, explaining that he had been misinformed.

# Insurrection in Algeria

By Wolfi

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Riots began after police murdered a high school boy on April 18, 2001, in Beni-Douala, a neighborhood of Tizi-Ouzou in the region of Kabylia about 70 miles east of Algiers. Riots and demonstrations quickly spread to other villages in the region. Rioters attacked police stations and troop detachments with stones, molotov cocktails, and burning tires, and set fire to police vehicles, government offices, and courts. Government attempts to quell the uprising failed. From the beginning, the rebels showed an unwillingness to negotiate and refused all representation. By the end of April, targets of collective rage broadened to include tax offices, all sorts of government offices, and the offices of political parties. Rebels blockaded the main roads and looted government buildings and other property of the rulers. The entire region of Kabylia was in open insurrection. The state sent in its guard dogs to repress the revolt, leading to open conflicts with deaths and injuries on both sides.

By the end of the first week of May, the insurgent movement began to organize itself in village and neighborhood assemblies (the 'arsh) that coordinated their activities through a system of delegates who would be bound to a very interesting "Code of Honor" a few months later. The only political movement that might have had a chance of recuperating the revolt, the FFS very quickly showed its true colors by offering to aid the

President of Algeria, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, in organizing a "democratic transition."

The coordination of the 'arsh has been organizing demonstrations, general strikes, and actions against the police and the elections.

By mid-June, the rebellion had spread beyond the borders of Kabylia, and in Kabylia state control had been nearly completely routed. Offices of the national police were thoroughly devastated, and the police themselves were shunned. Because no one in the region would sell them food and other needs, the government was forced to ship in supplies to them by helicopter and heavily armed convoys.

At the end of June, the coordination of the 'arsh refused to meet with a government representative, clearly expressing the attitude of the insurgents. In mid-July the coordination of Tizi-Ouzou adopted the "Code of Honor" which required delegates to pledge themselves "not to carry forward any activities or affairs that aim to create direct or indirect links to power and its collaborators," "not to use the movement for partisan ends nor to drag it into electoral competitions or any other possibility for the conquest of power," and "not to accept any political appointments in the institutions of power" among other things. This pledge was put to the test almost immediately when unionists and partisans of the left tried to infiltrate the movement for their own ends.



The failure of this opportunistic attempt to hijack the movement was made evident during a general strike on July 26, when demonstrators chanted: "Out with the traitors! Out with the unions!"

Huge demonstrations continued. In mid-August, the insurgents banned all officials from the Soummam valley. This was not just due to a government celebration that was to occur there, but also because government officials had begun to contact certain unidentified delegates of the coordination who supported the idea of negotiation. Rather than weakening the struggle, this government ploy led the insurgents to ban all government officials from Kabylia. The minister of the Mujahideen had to cancel a trip to Tizi-Ouzou, and the minister of the interior was greeted with a rain of stones when he came to install a new prefect.

At the beginning of October, the government banned a demonstration that was intended to present a list of demands called the El-Kseur Platform to President Bouteflika. These demands mainly deal with relief of the immediate effects of government repression against the uprising (end of judicial action against insurgents, release of prisoners, etc.), but also include the demand for the immediate departure of all police brigades from the region. A massive array of counter-insurgency detachments was used to block the demonstrators.

The ban of this demonstration provoked further conflicts between insurgents and the forces of order.

On October 11, the inter-regional coordination (of the 'arsh and other self-organized assemblies and committees) decided that they would no longer submit the demands of their Platform to any state representative, that the demands were absolutely non-negotiable, and that anyone who chose to accept dialogue with the government would be banished from the movement. Disobedience was total: taxes and utility bills were not paid, calls to military service were ignored, and the upcoming elections were refused.

On December 6, some self-styled "delegates" claiming to represent the 'arsh

planned to meet with the head of government. In protest, a general strike was called in Kabylia. Sit-ins blockading police barracks turned into violent conflicts throughout the region, some of which lasted for three days. Gas company offices, tax offices, and the office of the National Mujahideen Organization were burned in Amizour. In El-Kseur, there were looting raids on a court and a judge's house.

The struggle continued throughout December and January with protests and road blockades. It intensified when a delegation from the 'arsh was arrested in front of the UN office in Algiers on February 7, 2002. On February 12, a general strike was called throughout Kabylia to protest the reappearance of police on the streets. The entire region was shut down. People assembled in front of the police barracks and there were conflicts.



*Security forces wrestle with Belaid Abrika, 'arsh delegate of Tizi-Ouzou, outside the UN office in Algiers.*

At the end of February, President Bouteflika announced that there would be elections on May 30. The movement responded by confiscating and burning ballot boxes and administrative documents. At the beginning of March, it called for a boycott of the elections throughout Algeria.

Bouteflika tried to appease the rebels by offering compromises, which were refused, and by moving police forces out of two major cities, but he followed this with mass arrests of delegates of the 'arsh. On March 25, security forces attacked a theater in Tizi-Ouzou that was being used as the office of the citizen coordination and 21 delegates were arrested. After police searches many other delegates went into hiding. Soon conflicts

broke out. The government issued 400 arrest warrants against delegates, leading to further demonstrations. Conflicts continued throughout April.

Despite government repression, the anti-electoral campaign of the 'arsh went forward in May with calls to action, marches, and the destruction of ballot boxes. Students demanding the release of prisoners greeted President Bouteflika with a rain of stones when he went to the University of Algiers on May 20. The next day the students occupied the university demanding the release of their comrades.

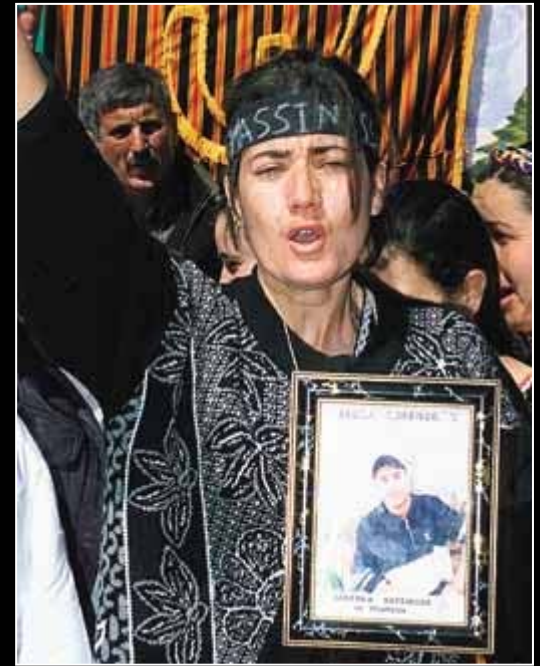
On May 30, Election Day, the entire region

of Kabylia had less than a 2% voter turnout. People showed their preference for direct action by barricading the streets, occupying the offices of the prefectures and the municipalities, and strewing the public ways with the remains of burned ballot boxes. A general strike paralyzed the region. There were conflicts with the police and election offices were attacked and destroyed. In the whole of Algeria, voter turnout was less than 50%, showing that the refusal of elections had spread beyond the borders of Kabylia.

All through June, rebellion and social conflict continued throughout Algeria. On June 19, the government again tried to derail



The banner near the back reads: "No dialogue with le pouvoir assassin."



***Radio Canada reported the huge demonstration in Tizi-Ouzou today, held in solidarity with the families of the young people whose lives were extinguished by the gendarmerie recently in Kabylia. The crowd was blanketed in black mourning: clothes, head bands, black flags floating over the crowd and seen from a distance with silver letters spelling out "ULACH SMAH" (no forgiveness)— like a black cloud swarming over the city, warning authorities that protests against the oppressive system will continue to pour until the cloud bursts in fury or the weather changes completely— the rain thoroughly cleaning the streets of its filth and rot before the sun will shine again.***

*-Blanca Madani, May 21, 2001*

the movement, authorizing movement prisoners to meet to discuss a proposal of a government emissary arranged through the mediation of two supposed delegates. The movement disowned these delegates, and the prisoners refused this government ruse to pressure the movement into negotiation over the El-Kseur Platform in exchange for the provisional release of those arrested. Instead, the prisoners issued a communiqué reaffirming their confidence in the coordination and their unwillingness to negotiate the demands of their Platform.

By August, violent conflicts and an ultimatum issued by the movement forced Bouteflika to pardon all the arrested delegates of the 'arsh. Upon release, the delegates declared that the struggle would continue.

In October, another election was called. The movement met it with a general strike and demonstrations. There were conflicts with the police everywhere. Once again, about half of the eligible Algerians boycotted the elections. In Kabylia, in spite of the participation of the FFS in the elections, 90% of those eligible refused to participate in the elections, and in the rest of Algeria, 50% of those eligible did not vote.

Toward the end of October, the authorities cracked down. Police raided various halls where assemblies and coordination groups met, and hundreds of insurgents and delegates were arrested. Some of the imprisoned insurgents began a hunger strike in late November. This expanded in December so that insurgents in prisons in Bugia, Tizi-Ouzou, and Bouira were hunger-striking. Thirteen of the thirty-nine who started the hunger strike were still fasting after forty-two days. They were placed in isolation to prevent them from "infecting" the other prisoners with their spirit of revolt. Throughout the hunger strike there were a number of demonstrations in

*In March 2002, security forces raid an 'arsh meeting point in Tizi-Ouzou, arresting those inside. Within hours, the town responds to the police, still inside, with fire and rocks.*



support of the prisoners, but many were severely repressed. The prisoners ended their hunger strike on January 13 at the request of comrades and family. It is hard to know where this will go from here. Repression has been intense, and it seems many people are growing weary, but the problems that provoked the uprising remain.

This insurrection is of great interest to anarchists. There have been no leaders, no parties, no charismatic spokespeople, and no hierarchical or representative organizations of any sort behind it. It has been self-organized by those in struggle, in a horizontal way, with specific guidelines to prevent the possibility of recuperation by parties, unions, politicians, or other unscrupulous individuals. And these guidelines have been actively reinforced by those in struggle. The movement has remained equally opposed to all of the contenders for power: the military, the government, Islamic fundamentalists, the left, and the unions. It managed to keep police "quarantined" to their barracks for long periods of time. It carried out two election boycotts. Once it even forced the government to release arrested comrades. And it carried out the daily tasks of an ongoing insurrectionary struggle. All this through autonomous, direct action. Now it is undergoing intense repression, and solidarity is needed.

# SUMMARY OF THE MEETING AT ILLLOULA OUMALOU

Obliged to respond to the grave events in our region marked by the regime's bloody and indiscriminate repression, civil society has gathered on this day in Illoula Ou Malou— thanks to a younger generation passionately attached to justice and freedom and appalled by exclusion, marginalization, and *hogra*— asserts its independence and autonomy from political parties and state institutions and refuses all forms of allegiance to or substitution of political groups.



*A village assembly somewhere in Kabylia*

This citizens' movement now being organized, essentially peaceful and resolutely democratic, is committed to a long-term struggle to achieve the following aims:

1. Prosecution of the perpetrators of the killings, brutality, and other excesses.
2. Immediate end to police questioning and intimidation, and the dismissal of criminal charges against demonstrators.
3. Immediate and unconditional departure of all gendarmerie brigades.
4. Definitive settlement to the claim concerning the denial of identity, culture, and language— the source of all the frustration— through the constitutionalization of Tamazight as the national and official language.
5. Protection for witnesses of crimes.
6. Acceptance of responsibility for the care of the victims.
7. Granting of the special status of 'martyr' to victims of the democratic struggle.
8. Postponement of examinations.
9. Implementation of an urgent socio-economic program for the region.
10. Dissolution of all commissions of inquiry set up by the regime.

## Actions envisaged in the short term:

1. One minute of silence every Saturday morning and every Thursday after school until the end of the school year.
2. Lit candles in memory of the victims until all demands are met.
3. Sit-in on Saturday, May 19, 2001 at 10 a.m., in front of the Department of Education in Tizi-Ouzou to demand the postponement of end-of-year exams so our children will not be penalized.
4. Black march on Monday, May 21, 2001 at 10 a.m., followed by a general strike and a march to Algiers.
5. Boycott of the Issad\* and parliamentary commissions.
6. Boycott of all national sporting, cultural, or other events.
7. Boycott of the international festival of youth and students.
8. Ostracizing of the gendarmerie until their definitive departure.
9. Erection of commemorative statues to the martyrs of April 2001.
10. Support and aid for the victims' families.
11. June 1, 2001 to be the date of collective commemoration of the 40<sup>th</sup> day of our martyrs.
12. Creation of an internet site.
13. Freedom of each Daïra to act autonomously.

In addition, we completely reject the criminal code reform imposed by the regime that places greater limits on freedom of expression.

We express our total solidarity with the press.

-Coordination of Committees of the 'Aarsh, Daïras and Communes, May 17, 2001

\* President Bouteflika appointed jurist Mohand Issad to head the National Committee of Inquiry into the events in Kabylia. Issad immediately stated to the press that he had accepted the appointment on the condition that he is given full authority. He also stressed that he was personally in charge of organizing the committee, designating the members, and deciding the methods of investigation, as well as choosing the people who would be heard by the committee.

# El-KseurPlatform

*We, the representatives of the wilayas of Sétif, Bordj Bou Arréridj, Bouira, Boumerdès, Bgayet, Tizi-Ouzou, and Algiers, together with the Combined Committees of the universities of Algiers, meeting this day, Monday, June 11, 2001, at the Mouloud Feraoun Youth Club of El-Kseur (Bgayet), have adopted the following common platform of demands.*

- For the state to provide urgent care to all injured victims and the families of the martyrs of repression killed during the events.
- For the civil courts to prosecute all the authors, organizers, and secret sponsors of crimes and for them to be expelled from the security forces and public offices.
- For the status of ‘martyr’ to be granted to every victim of the events, and protection given to all witnesses of the crimes.
- For the immediate departure of the gendarmerie brigades and the URS reinforcements.
- For legal proceedings against all demonstrators to be dropped and for the acquittal of those already tried during the events.
- For the immediate end to punitive raids, intimidation, and provocation of the population.
- Dissolution of the commissions of inquiry set up by *le Pouvoir*.
- Satisfaction of the Amazigh claim in all its dimensions (identity, civil liberties, language, and culture), without referendum and without conditions, and the consecration of Tamazight as an official national language.
- For a state that guarantees all socio-economic rights and democratic freedoms.
- Against the policies of the underdevelopment and impoverishment of the Algerian people.
- For all executive duties of the state and the security forces to be placed under the authority of democratically elected bodies.
- For an emergency socio-economic program for the entire Kabylia region.
- Against *hogra* and all forms of injustice and exclusion.
- For a case-by-case rescheduling of regional exams for all pupils who were unable to sit them.
- Establishment of an unemployment allowance of 50% the level of the SNMG [Guaranteed National Minimum Wage].

**We demand an immediate and public official response to this platform of demands.**

**ULACH SMAH ULACH**  
**[NO FORGIVENESS, NONE]**

# ***THE ALGERIAN UPRISING IS ALSO OURS.***

Insurgent Algerians,

The struggle that you have been carrying forward against all society's rulers since April 2001 is an example for us and for all the exploited. Your uninterrupted rebellion has shown that the terrorism of the state and the integralist groups, allied for a decade in the slaughter of the poor to the benefit of the rich, has not lessened your ferocity. You have understood that, faced with the infectious disease of military dictatorship and the plague of Islamic fundamentalism, the only choice is open revolt. To the union of two capitalisms, the liberal one that privatizes and fires people en masse and the bureaucratic-socialist one that tortures and kills, you have responded with the unity of a generalized struggle.

We can begin to imagine what it means for a state and its police to find themselves facing a mass of rebels whose posters warn, as occurred in June 2001, 'You cannot kill us, we are already dead.' But we can barely imagine what it means for a region with a few million inhabitants, like Kabylia, to have the police barricaded in their barracks, 'quarantined' by the insurgent population— where elections are deserted en masse and ballot boxes and political parties' offices set on fire and where the city halls are deserted and boarded up.

The politicians who sit in parliament without having obtained a single vote have revealed to all the lie of representative democracy and the arrogance of a power that is increasingly mafia-like. You have succeeded in shattering the plans of anyone who tried to portray your struggle as regionalist or particularist.

The universal content of your demands— such as that of the immediate and non-negotiable withdrawal of the police— can no longer be hidden.

The autonomy of your movement, organized horizontally in the 'arsh, can only unite all the leaders of Algerian society, and their accomplices in other countries, against you. A revolt without leaders and without parties will not even find favor among the professionals of international solidarity who, in this case, are deprived of charismatic figures or sub-commandantes to idealize. Up to now, you have only been able to count on yourselves. And the repression presses hard, with hundreds dead, thousands wounded and crippled for life, countless dispersed as refugees, and the torture and arrest of many 'arsh delegates and demonstrators— resulting in many prisoners on hunger strike and many insurgents forced to go underground.

Now, the radicalism of what you have already done needs to find other accomplices in the world, in order to break the information embargo and the murderous violence of the state. The bullets that strike are supplied by the Italian government and Italian industries, Eni in the lead. The weapons that are used against your demonstrations are often of Italian manufacture.

***COMRADES, YOU ARE NOT ALONE. MAY YOUR  
REVOLT EXPLODE EVERYWHERE.***

*-Some [Italian] Friends of the 'Aarsh  
December 2002*

# International Solidarity



In the wake of the insurrection and the ensuing repression, tens of thousands of demonstrators mobilized throughout the world in solidarity with the Algerian insurgents, including in several cities throughout France (Paris [left], Strasbourg, Lyon, and Toulouse), Canada (Montréal [above] and Ottawa), Morocco (Rabat and Salé), and the U.S. (Washington D.C. and New York). Solidarity demonstrations also took place in London [below], Brussels, Stockholm, Amsterdam, and Milan.



# Berbers Bring Algeria to Brink of Insurrection

**By Robert Fisk**  
**June 20, 2001**



Another Election Day in Tizi Ouzou

*There comes a time when the people have had enough. The fall of the Berlin Wall, the “velvet revolution” in Prague. And now Algeria.* Could it be that the citizens of a country that should be as rich as Saudi Arabia, a land of immense oil and gas wealth, the 10<sup>th</sup> largest nation in the world, are turning against the old men of *le Pouvoir* [the authorities]? For, what started as a Berber revolt in Tizi-Ouzou after the death of a schoolboy in police custody is fast turning into an insurrection.

Just read the Algerian press. *Le Quotidien d’Oran*, never a beacon of revolution in the Algerian media, put it very well this week. As riots consumed the cities of Algeria, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika remained silent. “Algeria, on the edge of insurrection... does not particularly seem to upset the President, who remains embarrassingly silent amid so dangerous a crisis,” the paper reported. In increasingly violent street demonstrations, *perhaps a million people were on the streets of Algiers at the weekend*, and at least 50, perhaps as many as 80, people have died, including two journalists. Yesterday, the government, accusing protesters of “dragging the country into chaos and anarchy,” banned all demonstrations in the capital.

Two years ago, Mr. Bouteflika was welcomed as the man who could be the *interlocuteur valable*— the “neutral mediator”— between the Islamist guerrillas and the eradicators of the military-backed government in Algiers. He was supposed to be the man who would “root out” the corruption that had permeated the government for so long. But when faced with the first riots in Tizi-Ouzou, provoked by the police-station killing, and demands that the Berber language be recognized, he announced that the violence was the result of a “foreign plot,” the last resort of Eastern European dictators for 70 years.

In reality, poverty, urban despair, and unemployment are driving the youth of Algeria to revolution. *In Algiers, where the young men and women sleep in three shifts in their homes because there is no other way to rest with so many crammed into so few houses, the Berber revolt in the hills was an inspiration.* Ignoring government statements that their demonstration would be illegal, they poured into the capital at the weekend, smashing shops and attacking government offices. The crowds overflowed the coastal highway and marched to the capital along the railway tracks.





**Bouteflika, Algeria's sleazy master-servant, with comrade Chirac**

It is not difficult to understand their anger. Even when the French ex-general Aussaresses boasted in a book of his army's torture and murder of young Algerian nationalists, the Algerian government was apparently so fearful of damaging its relations with Paris that it remained silent. While the French were expressing their disgust at the actions of this vile old Frenchman, Algeria's leaders— the inheritors of the land brought to them through so much suffering by the men

whom Aussaresses personally tortured— had no comment to make.

As long as the internal crisis involved only the Berber Kabyle region of Algeria, the government could present the violence as a foreign “plot.” But once the demonstrations embraced Annaba, Skikda, and other cities, it was impossible to deny that the youth of Algeria— and most of the protesters are in their teens or early twenties— were in revolt.

*Nor were the reasons difficult to understand. In Annaba, the cause of the demonstrations was a lack of drinking water. “We are at the end of our tether,” a protesters’ delegation told the Mayor of Annaba. “We have had enough of power cuts and we’re not going to go through the summer filling jerry cans. Do something or else it’s war!”*

Hocine Ait Ahmed, the head of the Berber FFS and one of the surviving leaders of the independence struggle, said of the President: “For as long as he serves the regime— and he has served it well— the army will protect him. The government, in its bunker, should undertake a re-examination and hold free elections for a constituent assembly.”

According to the former minister of communications and culture, Abdelaziz Rahabi, Mr. Bouteflika must call for a dialogue of all parties. “He has totally discredited all the state institutions— political parties, parliament, the government, and even the army which brought him to power,” he said. “He thought he would make himself popular by attacking these institutions but he has finally fallen into his own trap. *Now, the people believe nobody and want everyone to go.*”

**Tear-gas, water hoses, and live fire could not withstand the spirit of the youth.**



*The Algerian rebellion, like similar, though not as cohesive or far reaching insurrections in Britain, the US, etc., should not be looked on as an historical curiosity but as a stirring of possibilities, perhaps of things to come.*

*-Mario Buda, January 6, 2003*

At this very moment, Algeria is experiencing an insurrection that is progressively spreading throughout almost the whole country.

Its heart is in Kabylia, 62 miles east of Algiers, the capital. It took off following the April 18, 2001, cold-blooded killing of young Massinissa Guermah by police in the local cop shop. It is spreading now to the east of the country and is beginning to touch the West.

This uprising goes further than the uprisings of 1980 and 1988.

The government had managed to isolate the Kabylia in 1980. The intervention of the army and propaganda about a so-called claim to secession by the population of the Kabylia got the better of this “Berber Spring.”

In October 1988, the uprising of youth had been drowned in the blood of over 500 corpses. After the massacre, the regime encouraged the emergence of the FIS (the Islamic Fundamentalists). Afterwards, it was forced to concede democratic rights. But in the middle of the elections of 1992, it drew back from this democratic digression by means of a coup d’etat with its hardly disguised military structure.

Today, the regime is facing a groundswell from the roots.

The demonstration of June 14 in Algiers was the most massive demonstration ever organized since Algerian independence in 1962. People speak of almost a million demonstrators.

It was drowned in blood. Today, the regime is trying to play its strategy of tension and terror. According to an official report of June 12, there had allegedly already been 56 people shot dead, including 1 gendarme, and 305 civilians wounded by bullet shots. More than 1500 men from various sections of State security (cops, army, etc.) had allegedly been wounded— which gives you an idea of the incredible level of the confrontations. This list does not include those hurt or killed during the course of the march on June 14 and the dozens of daily confrontations since then: dozens killed and more than a thousand wounded.

The uprisings have spread to all urban and industrial areas of the east and even a bit in the southeast of Algeria. In the West, the first demonstrations are now appearing in Oran and Relizane.

Above all, the uprisings involve youth. They are the majority of the population (70% of Algerians are under 30 years-old) and suffer the experience of misery everyday— the official unemployment level is 28% and hits youth especially hard. It is mainly them who, with unprecedented courage, confront the gendarmes and the riot cops in dozens of towns and countryside areas. Officially, more than 54 cop shops have been set fire to. That speaks volumes for the fury of Algerian youth.

The small farmers and inhabitants of the country areas also play an important part in this general uprising. It was the traditional village councils— the ‘aarsh— of Kabylia (linked to the coordinations which are flourishing in the neighborhoods and counties) who took the initiative to call the national demonstration of June 14. We know of some villages being pushed back by the guns of the gendarmes as they pursued the demonstrators back to where they came from.

In the end, it is the people of the cities, amongst them the workers, who have a determinant role. Coordinations have sprung up in the districts, the village communes, and the counties and are connected through an inter-county structure, at first in Kabylia, but also in the East and now in the West in Oran and Relizane. One can find lots of junior and secondary school teachers and trade unionists there. Today, they make up the framework of a resistance movement putting forward demands at a national level. They have elaborated a platform of 15 demands mainly dealing with democratic rights, but also cultural rights.

Ulach  
Smah

(No Forgiveness)

Hassan Berber

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Translated by  
B.M. Combustion  
London, WC1N 3XX  
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Translating this doesn't mean that I'm in agreement with the illusions about democratic rights.

It is difficult to imagine the enormity of the split between the population and the government. The inter-county coordination had their platform delivered to the president by two children, because it had vowed not to lead any negotiations with the representatives of the State.

The street fights must not eclipse the fights for liberty and democratic rights that are breaking out everywhere. Structures independent of official organizations are appearing: students, women, and committees for democratic freedoms, especially freedom of the press (which those in power are trying to gag with a new law they voted for in mid-June). Given the enormity of the housing crisis, the homeless and those with poor housing have occupied thousands of flats with the active help of the general population. There have even been demonstrations to force the authorities to open the beaches of Moretti and the *Club des Pins*, normally reserved for State dignitaries, for the whole of the population!

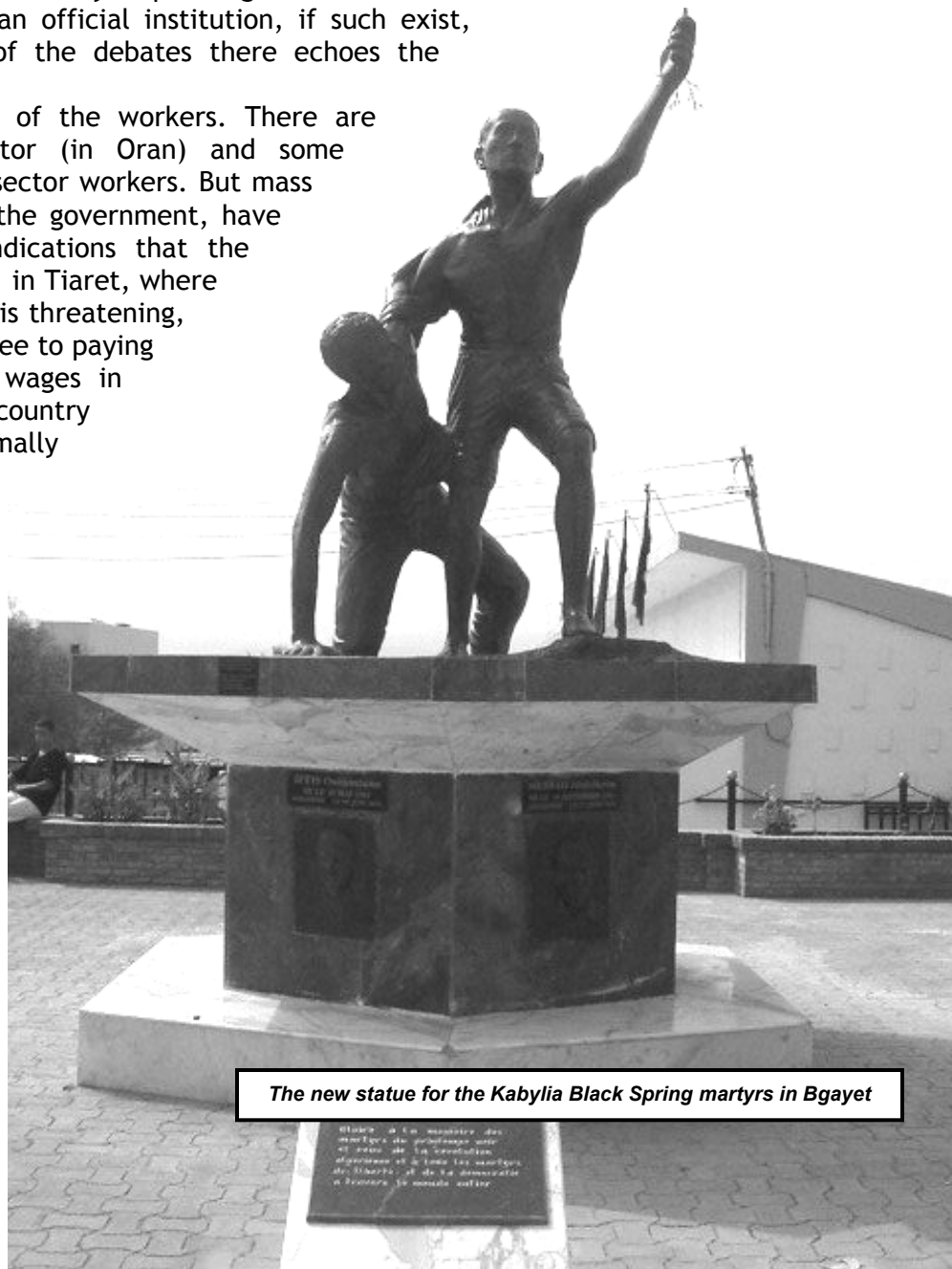
The social base of the regime is crumbling at great speed. In Oran, the capital of the West, the UNJA, could not hold a demonstration as it had planned, despite all the official means put at its disposal. At the last moment, it had to resort to a pathetic, poorly attended sit-down. The UGTA, the official union that is integrated into the regime, is forced to take up part of the demands of the population (i.e.– the freedoms demanded, the recognition of Berber as a national language, etc.) and to denounce plans for privatization, redundancies, and the seriously depressing cuts in the social welfare budget. Even in parliament, an official institution, if such exist, there's open protest. The violence of the debates there echoes the violence in the streets.

The Big Unknown is the attitude of the workers. There are certainly strikes in the health sector (in Oran) and some demonstrations of teachers and state-sector workers. But mass strikes, which could finally finish off the government, have not appeared yet. Yet there are indications that the regime has fixed its eye on this danger: in Tiaret, where the anger is rumbling and the uprising is threatening, the council decided, on June 20, to agree to paying public-sector workers three months' wages in advance. This is unprecedented in a country where, on the contrary, people normally have to put up with having to wait several months to be paid.

The Algerian uprising needs our solidarity. A lot of people in France think that the violence in Algeria is a part of the Algerian "national character." This is untrue. The savagery there is that of the government and the rich, isolated in the face of the mass of a people who struggle— struggle for freedom.

The Algerian community in France is a couple of million strong. Hundreds of thousands work in the industries and services or are amongst our workmates in McDonalds, where we all submit to the same fate. The struggle for freedom for the vast majority of Algerian people must be translated into our mass solidarity in France.

June 22, 2001



The new statue for the Kabylia Black Spring martyrs in Bgayet

*The traveler who found herself visiting Kabylia, in northwest Algeria, in the past few years would certainly be surprised at the deteriorated condition of the police stations. The things standing out on the horizon are only the deserted and looted remains of the sinister buildings that once inspired so much fear in the locals. Indeed, the police have had to abandon their posts in the region, driven out and stoned by the insurgent population.*



## **Dialogue Between Dream and Memory**



**from the Italian 'one-off' publication,  
*Quale Guerra? [Which War?]***

January 2004

In the spring of 2001, the killing of a student— which happened precisely in one of those stations— made the rage of the population, which was scarred by the worsening economic situation and the arrogance of the country's military masters, explode. The movement born from these events has involved all the region's inhabitants and has been organized in a horizontal manner in village assemblies, where decisions are made through unanimity. Without leaders and autonomous from parties, this movement has been able to keep the forces of the state in check for two years, chasing the police out of their territory, sabotaging elections, and attacking the offices of administrative and judiciary power.

In every corner of the planet, insurrectional flare-ups follow one after another but always seem fated to burn out much too quickly. What is surprising about the Kabyle insurrection, however, is its duration. So let us try to take a look at the totality of the circumstances that have allowed them to resist for so long.

At the time of the uprising, life in the villages had not yet been totally conquered by capitalist modernity nor been completely demolished by past state socialism. The habit of autonomy and the mastery of subsistence techniques has survived and, with this, the meaning of concrete dialogue among inhabitants. Since they still have the tools in hand for acting well and the capacity for using them, it is easier to discuss what they want to obtain and how. Relationships of mutual solidarity and common pride are still alive together with a collective memory that carries within itself the marks of an age-old tradition of resistance to every invader.

Thus, the revolt has been able to avail itself in concrete spaces of direct dialogue and self-organization, broadening the networks and social relationships of the life of the villages. At the same time, it has occupied an ideal space, fishing out from history



Some of the 10,000 women on the May 24 demonstration

*One of the most beautiful moments was the women's demonstration in Tizi-Ouzou on May 24 [2001]. The demonstrating women started by preventing the very official "Association of Widows and Daughters of Martyrs of the Independence War" from joining to their demonstration; then they expelled Khalida Messaoudi, adviser and, in her own words, "militant companion" of Bouteflika [president-dictator], by insulting her. She just left the RCD and came here pretending to get a new political image: "As she was trying to slip into the procession, jeering raised. 'Khalida out!' shouted some women. 'Khalida Lewinski!' screamed others. She had only just been evacuated to Algiers." (Liberation, May 26-27, 2001.) Finally, after manifesting their contempt for the media-democratic auxiliaries in such a way, they did not hold back against the Berberists [nationalist autonomists] when they also prevented followers of the [Movement for] Autonomy of Kabylia [MAK] from joining the demonstration.*

*-Jaime Semprun, "Apology for the Algerian Insurrection"*

the ancient organizational model of the tribes— the 'aarsh— that reached its peak in the struggle against the French occupiers in 1871. Uniting these two levels that were already present in their reality, even if in a disconnected way, these rebels have found what every revolt must be able to build very quickly if it is to survive and strengthen itself— and what more and more often must be invented from nothing.

It is noted that every insurrectional rupture is an opportunity for learning something— the opening of a space in which to experiment with freedom and get to know its enemies. The 2001 Kabyle uprising exploded at the end of a twenty-year journey through innumerable risings, in which the history of Algeria has been the history of the struggle of the Algerians against the hogra. A twenty-year period in which the rebels, uprising after uprising, have learned to call governments by their right name, murderers. A twenty-year period in which Algerians have been able to directly examine the morality of the Islamic fundamentalists, so much so as to be horrified by it. A twenty-year period in which parties, which seek to profit from the rage of the exploited in order to cut themselves a slice of power, have been exposed for what they are, traitors.

In short, a twenty-year period in which the insurgents have been forced to rediscover the necessity of acting for themselves— in which the problem of self-organization has been posed by the reality of the struggle itself.



People defy gendarme vehicles.



Dialogue with assassins is not an option.

# The Grand Camouflage

While repression strikes the revolutionary movement of the ‘arsh in Kabylia, silence about this movement continues for months in France, broken only by scarce pieces of information usually accompanied by lies and slander.

Thus, when the RCD and later the FFS, compelled by force, end up adopting the instruction to boycott the election, it is announced to us in the papers, *Liberation* or *Le Monde*, without even a mention of the fact that it was the ‘arsh who had decided three months ago to actively refute the elections and who kicked this off by burning ballot boxes, destroying administrative documents, and urging all Algerians to join their offensive.

Speaking of the leaders of the French state, right and left blurred, no disgraceful act can come as a surprise: we know the ties of oil and blood that link them with the masters of Algeria. But beyond those most directly interested in the perpetuation of a state of profitable affairs, it is the kind discretion of those here with the monopoly over speech (various politicians, intellectuals, and media personalities) and the indifference of the rest of the population (undoubtedly too busy driving themselves stupid with all the means provided to them... for this purpose: 400,000 young applicants for imprisonment in *Loft Story 2* [a French version of *Big Brother*]!) that allows *le Pouvoir* of Algeria to imprison, torture, and assassinate.

Since the time when the Parisians would not even bat an eyelash when the police massacred Algerians in the street, the shame to be French has never been as strong as it is today. We can only wash away this shame by denouncing the repression and by fighting, by any means, the different partnerships that the enemies of the autonomous organizations of Kabyle insurgents have here. These enemies, as everyone on the ground knows, are also the owners of the opposition and the bureaucrats of the discredited political parties, and, in the climate of a crisis, they hope for the luck of being called to sit at ‘a government of national unity.’

The Algerian State then works with a police tool it has already seen fail repeatedly— the operation ‘of appeasement,’ particularly, the production of a dialogue with the ‘arsh delegates of ‘Taiwan.’\*

The illusion of certain gendarmerie brigades changing their positions, not unlike the 'recognition' of the Berber language, could not fool anyone in Kabylia and certainly not suffice for those who tasted liberty by taking affairs into their own hands in assemblies of the villages or neighborhoods. To quote a rioter of Tizi-Ouzou on March 24: "For one year, we have had time to reflect. The whole of the power structure must vanish. Otherwise, our problems will never see any resolution."

This bureaucratic-military power, which, through mutating, manages to continue Mafia-like co-opting and purging, will have succeeded in surviving for forty years, beginning with the structural repression of attempts at self-management during the first months of independence.

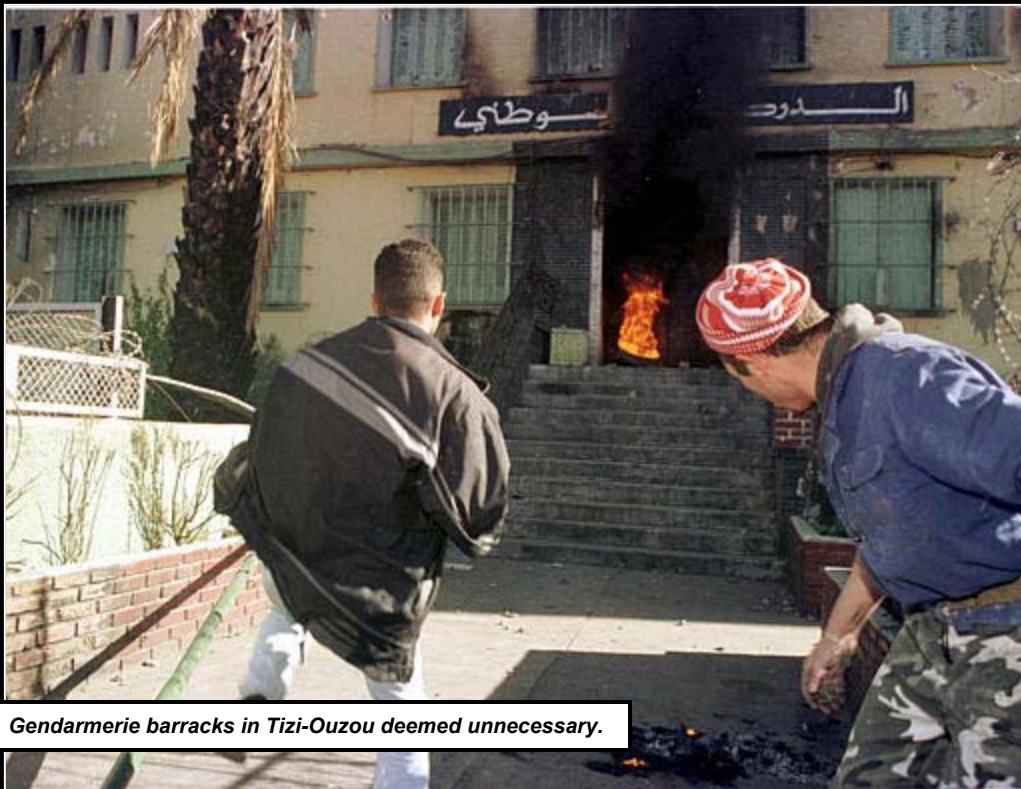
Now, after all of these years of systemic destruction of the land in the name of national interests, of homicidal chaos in the name of order, and of general impoverishment in the name of economic efficiency, only one solution remains that could effectively address the problems of Algerian society: in Kabylia and everywhere, this is the base organizations that ensure direct participation of all in the community affairs. "The solution of the 'aarsh is the horizontal restructuring of Algeria with a revolving presidency to assure a democratic system," Ali Gherbi, delegate of El-Kseur, declared with icy irony a few days before being arrested.

The example offered to the entire world by the 'arsh of Kabylia: freedom, but also dignity, the firmness of purpose, and the courage founded in the collective exercise of responsibility in a common struggle. Neither the repression, nor the slander, nor the extraordinarily organized confusion will succeed in making us forget. We do not have a short memory. And if a voter, informed through the Internet, says that this form of collective organization and solidarity has no place in a truly modern society, we respond that it is for precisely this reason that, according to us, this society merits death.

-Some French Friends of 'Aarsh  
Paris, April 6, 2002

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\*These are the 'arsh delegates  
who sold out and have entered  
negotiations with *le Pouvoir*.



Gendarmerie barracks in Tizi-Ouzou deemed unnecessary.

***The dismissal of all the political representations was constant during the insurrection, and it was one of the most slandered aspects of it. The offices of the two parties (RCD and FFS) that could hope to get a profit from such a movement were among the first to burn in Tizi-Rached, as well as the bank, the social security building, and the tax office, on April 26 [2001].***

-Jaime Semprun, "Apology for the Algerian Insurrection"





# Algerian

## *Middle East Report #220, Fall 2001*

In the past ten years of political crisis, Algerians have been wary of public protest. Terrorized by relentless violence and impoverished by structural adjustment, they have repeatedly given the impression that what they want most is the chance to get on with their lives quietly. Despite the cancellation of one election and the staging of several fraudulent ones— not to mention wholesale public-sector downsizings and devaluation of the currency— the streets remained calm and mass protest looked like an unlikely prospect.

But in the summer of 2001, a new defiant mood set in. The killing of a Kabyle youth, Massinissa Guermah, in the custody of the gendarmerie in April, precipitated the longest wave of rioting in the history of independent Algeria. The worst of the unrest was confined to the Berber-speaking region of Kabylia,

where the protests originated, but in June and July there were repeated disturbances in much of eastern Algeria, including several provinces whose populations speak Arabic rather than Berber.

In these places, rioting was sparked by what had hitherto been tolerated as normal occurrences, such as abusive treatment by officials, corruption in the allocation of local resources or long interruptions in the water supply. Batna, Biskra, Khenchela, Oum-el-Bouaghi, and Tebessa in southeastern Algeria, and Annaba, El-Tarf, Skikda and Souk-Ahras in the northeast, were among the many places where riots were reported.

Predictions in June that riots would engulf the country have not been realized, but in

*By Heba Saleh*





# Insurrection

late July numerous minor outbreaks of unrest were still occurring in Kabylia, evidence of the new, less acquiescent mood which seems to be an enduring legacy of events in the early summer. It is not clear whether the protests will lead to any qualitative political change. Algeria's military-backed authorities have always pointedly rejected pressure from the street. Beyond redeploying roughly 600 gendarmes and initiating a nominally independent inquiry, the authorities thus far have shown no inclination to formulate any political response to the demonstrations. President Abdelaziz Bouteflika suggested vaguely that plans for a revision of the constitution could include the question of the status of Tamazight. But language was not the central point at issue in the unrest.

The absence of a nationwide opposition party capable of maintaining the momentum of the protests, and translating popular anger into clear demands for specific reforms, continues to endow the authorities with a huge advantage. Some observers in Algiers, however, believe the military authorities have

noted the message of alienation and frustration emanating from the streets. "Undoubtedly a [political] initiative is being prepared," said an Algiers-based analyst. "There might be differences of opinion [within ruling circles] about its nature and extent. But it will be based on a conference to prepare for next year's elections which would produce laws to be respected by all parties." Others, however, are less certain. "This is all still in the realm of speculation," said a former Algerian minister now in opposition.

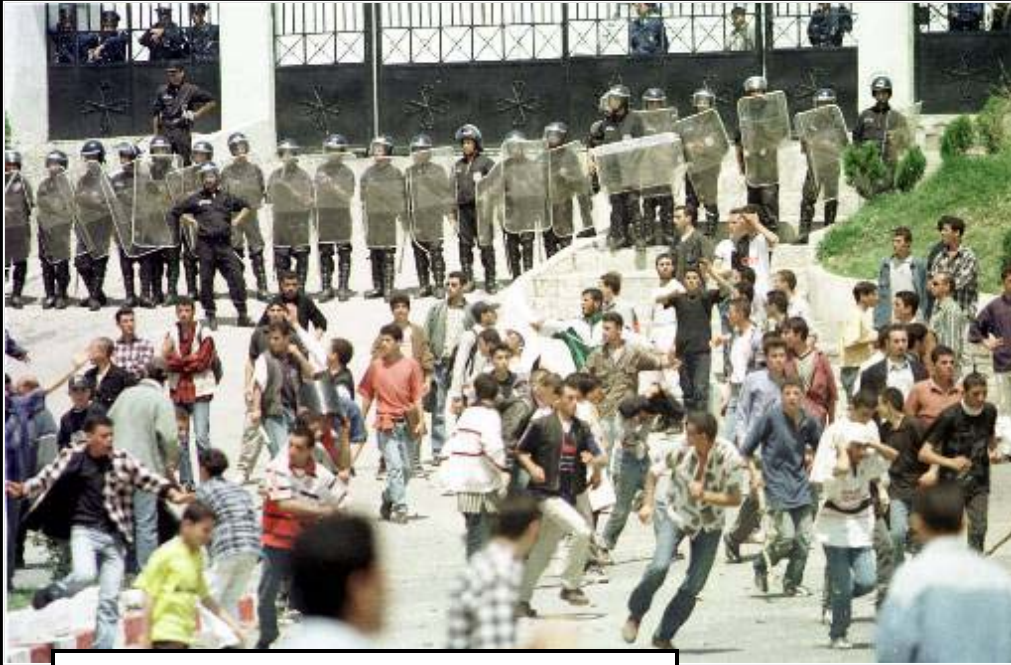
## Unconventional Demands

In Kabylia, ruthless repression was the first reaction of the authorities towards the demonstrations which erupted after the killing of Massinissa Guermah. The gendarmerie repeatedly fired live ammunition at unarmed protesters and killed over 50 of them in the first two weeks, setting the stage for an extended wave of protest. In May and early June, hardly a day went by without a march

or a sit-in. Women, lawyers, doctors and civil servants all organized protests.

The two main Kabyle-based political parties, the FFS and the RCD, also stepped in, organizing their own events after having been initially overwhelmed by the vehemence of protests. The RCD withdrew from the coalition government to signal its displeasure with the regime, while the FFS organized two marches in Algiers on May 3 and May 31, the second of these drawing an estimated 200,000 people.

But neither party appeared able to harness the anger of the population to exert clearly focused political pressure. By June, a new organization called the Coordination of 'Aarsh, Dairas, and Communes had assumed effective control on the ground in Kabylia. This organization brought together grassroots leaders from the region's various tribes ('aarsh) and districts (dairas) as well as municipalities. The leaders explicitly dissociated their organization from the



*The furor of the running street battles has not lessened— from 2001 (above) to 2003 (below) to today.*



*As the economic and social marginalization of young people has deepened, a crucial development has been their tendency to act defiantly on their own initiative... Veterans of the 1980 Berber Spring and the Berber Cultural Movement (MCB), previously much respected for their own militant activism, [had lost influence over the youth of the region]. Saïd Boukhari, an MCB veteran recounted, "On April 16, 2001 [two days before the Guermah shooting], I was giving a talk at Draa El Mizan with two friends... We had the feeling that there was a new generation which was saying to us: "You have had your time, with your slogans about 'democracy' and 'rights.' You have gotten nowhere with all that; it is now up to us to settle the problem. Allow us to fight it out with them. We thank you, but we know what we have to do."*

*-"Algeria: Unrest and Impasse in Kabylia," International Crisis Group*

political parties, and tended to reject attempts to impose a conventional political direction on the protest movement. Their list of demands included the withdrawal of the gendarmerie from Kabylia, punishment of those who had shot at demonstrators, an economic program for the region and official status for Tamazight.

### Divide and Conquer

But if the brutality of the much-hated gendarmes and, by extension, the state which employs them, was the immediate cause of the unrest in Kabylia, it was clear from the beginning that the anger of the rioters was aimed at much more than the gendarmes. The youths who demonstrated for weeks on the streets of Tizi-Ouzou, Bgayet, and the numerous smaller towns of the Kabyle heartland have had enough of what Algerians call *hogra*. Young Kabyles experience local government representatives as corrupt and repressive, and the ruling circles in Algiers appear uncaring and unable to address the joblessness and the acute housing shortage which deprive most young Algerians of hope for a better future. In the eyes of the young demonstrators, *hogra* is all they get from the state. The social and economic grievances underpinning the unrest allowed it to spread elsewhere in the country. Slogans such as

“*nous sommes tous des Kabyles*” [“we are all Kabyles”] were heard in Arab towns.

This solidarity was the reverse of what Algeria’s military rulers were hoping for. From the start, they tried to stop the contagion from spreading, first by ignoring the unrest, then by trying to portray it as a strictly regional affair. State television initially promoted the explanation that the Kabyles were motivated by their long-standing demand for official status for the Berber language. Algerians say broadcast interviews with demonstrators were edited so as to drop all reference to anything other than the region’s cultural demands. Then the government changed tactics, opting for a divisive approach which clearly aimed at turning the rest of the country against the Kabyles.

The starkest example of this was coverage of the enormous June 14 demonstration in Algiers staged by the Coordination of ‘Aarsh, Dairas, and Communes. That massive protest had drawn several hundred thousand— by some estimates a million— Kabyles to Algiers. Describing the Kabyle protesters as looters, TV played extensive footage of fights and the destruction of property during the march in Algiers. An interior ministry official praised the youths of the capital for having “defended their honor” against acts of sabotage by the Kabyle demonstrators. Despite a ban by the interior minister, the organizers insisted on presenting a list of demands at the presidential palace. The protest turned violent when the marchers tried to breach a police cordon blocking access to the palace, and the police fought them off with water cannon and tear-gas. Angry protesters burned cars and attacked buildings.

### Uncertain Future

The Kabyles insist that the authorities planted infiltrators who sowed



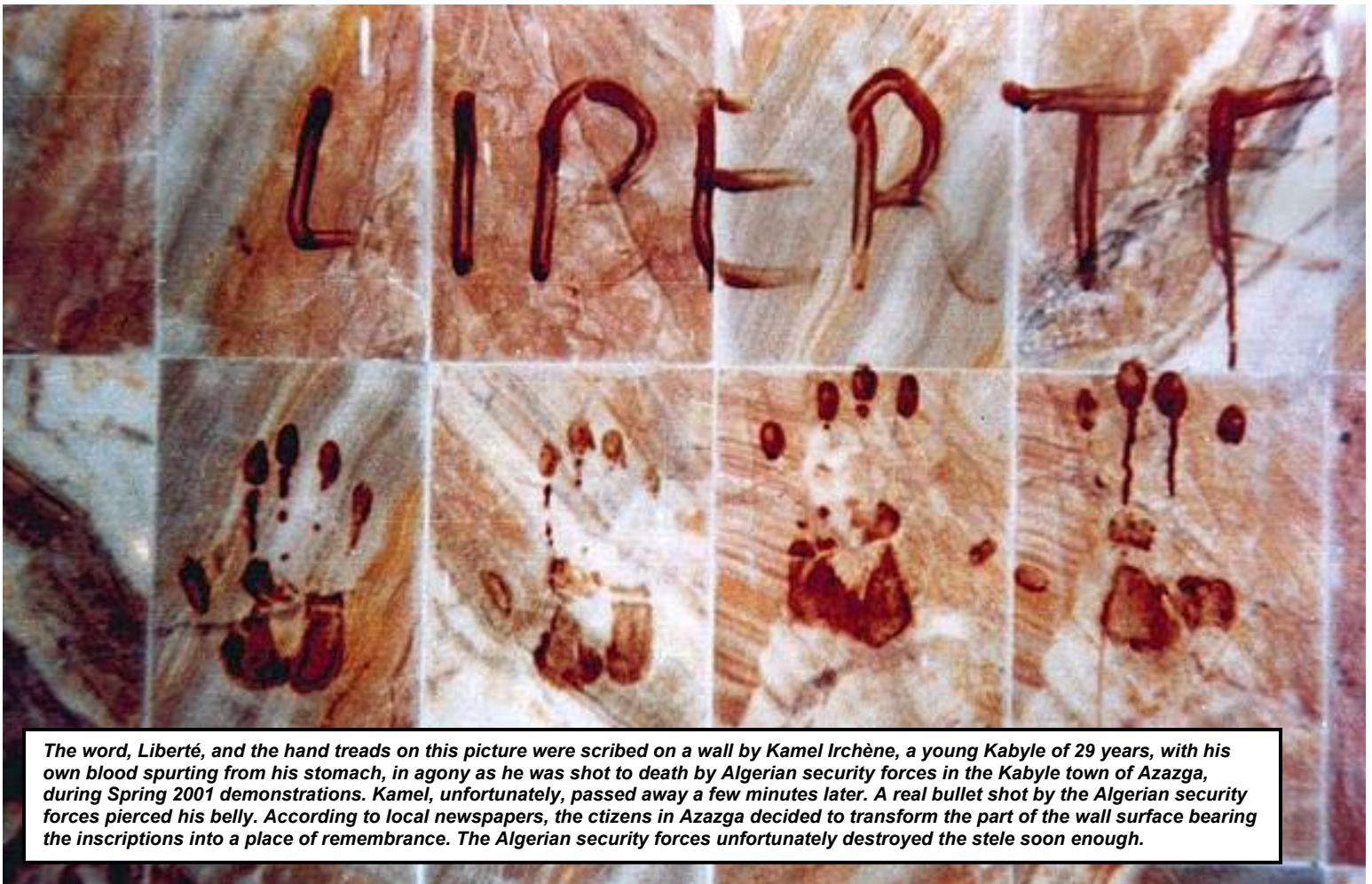
Graffiti in Tizi-Ouzou reads, “HONOR THE MEMORY OF THE YOUNG MARTYRS OF APRIL 2001”

mayhem among their ranks, instigating the attacks on property and provoking fights with inhabitants of the capital. It is hard to prove these allegations, though it is clear from the tenor of television coverage that the authorities believed that the more the protesters disgraced themselves, the less likely it was that others would identify with them.

The attempt to play on divisions in Algerian society has so far been mostly unsuccessful. Indeed, some observers have argued that, if anything, the recent protests prove the failure of identity politics in Algeria. The Kabyle demonstrators made it clear that recognition of the Berber language, though still a demand, was nowhere near the top of their agenda. At the beginning the RCD tried to portray the uprising as one in favor of Tamazight, but clearly failed to assert its leadership of the protests, in the course of which several RCD offices were ransacked. Indeed, despite the gains it had made in Kabylia during the 1990s because of its extreme anti-Islamist positions, the party now appears to have gone completely silent.

Similarly, calls for autonomy in Kabylia from the fringes of the Berberist movement also have been explicitly disavowed by more representative figures. The Kabyles have been emphasizing the grievances they share with all Algerians rather than the ones that set them apart. Unfortunately for them, the other regional party, the FFS, which has always promoted a democratic inclusive approach to Algeria's political and cultural problems, has had little success in its attempts to forge a national base.

All this leaves the future of the protests uncertain, while Algeria's military-backed authorities, long reported to be rife with factional disputes, appear united again. There are fewer attacks in the press on President Bouteflika, putting an end to rumors that the military commanders who brought him to office plan to oust him. Rumored firings at the top of the military hierarchy have not occurred. This closing of ranks may not mean that the rulers' internal power struggles have been settled, but it can only make the job of whatever opposition there is all the more difficult.



*The word, Liberté, and the hand treads on this picture were scribed on a wall by Kamel Irchène, a young Kabyle of 29 years, with his own blood spurting from his stomach, in agony as he was shot to death by Algerian security forces in the Kabyle town of Azazga, during Spring 2001 demonstrations. Kamel, unfortunately, passed away a few minutes later. A real bullet shot by the Algerian security forces pierced his belly. According to local newspapers, the citizens in Azazga decided to transform the part of the wall surface bearing the inscriptions into a place of remembrance. The Algerian security forces unfortunately destroyed the stele soon enough.*

# Code of Honor

for the delegates of the 'aarsh

The delegates of the movement pledge to:

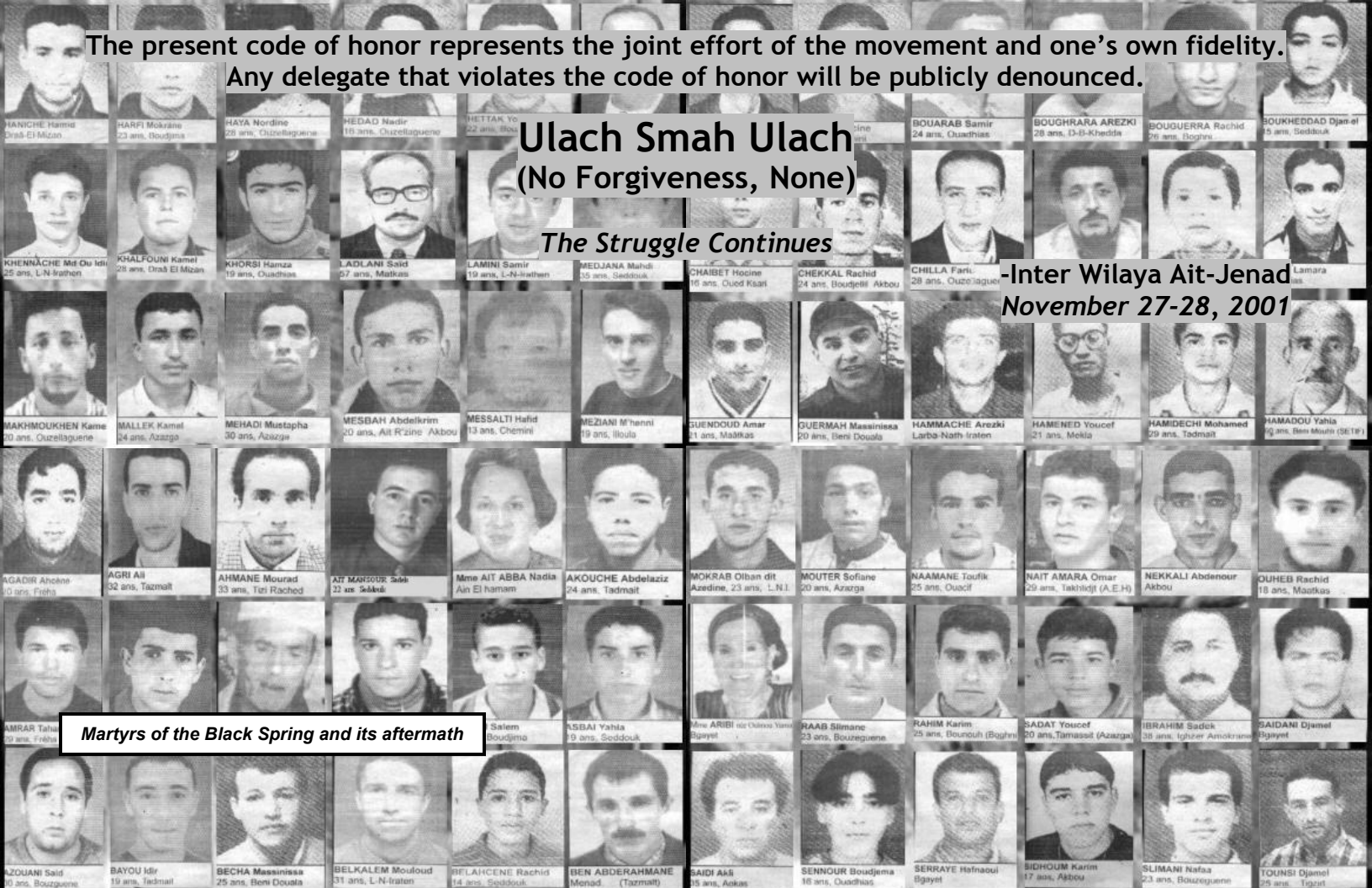
1. Respect the terms of the Coordination of the 'Aarsh, Daïras, and Communes announced in the chapter of directive principles.
2. Honor the blood of the martyrs of the 2001 Black Spring by continuing the struggle until the claims of the El-Kseur Platform are met and by never exploiting their memory for political ends.
3. Resolutely respect the peaceable spirit of the movement.
4. Never carry out any activity or action aimed at creating direct or indirect ties to *le Pouvoir* or their collaborators.
5. Never use the movement for partisan ends, and never tarnish it by manipulating people in order to solicit votes for an electoral competition or for any other possibility of obtaining power.
6. Never seek to obtain any electoral mandate without first achieving the claims of the El-Kseur Platform.
7. Never accept a political position (elected or appointed) in an institution of power.
8. Prove yourself civic-minded and respectful of your peers.
9. Give the movement national scope.
10. Never make any statements to the media in the name of 'Aarsh, Daïras, or Communes.
11. Demonstrate appropriate solidarity toward all persons who are objects of intimidation and judicial threats, pressure, and persecution, as one can suffer grave consequences for participation in the movement.

The present code of honor represents the joint effort of the movement and one's own fidelity. Any delegate that violates the code of honor will be publicly denounced.

**Ulach Smah Ulach**  
(No Forgiveness, None)

*The Struggle Continues*

-Inter Wilaya Ait-Jenad  
November 27-28, 2001



**Martyrs of the Black Spring and its aftermath**



# CHRONOLOGY

of the Algerian Insurrection

## 2001

April 18: Initially, uprisings in Beni-Douala, in the province of Tizi-Ouzou within the Kabylia region (62 miles east of Algiers), follow the assassination of a high school student by the gendarmerie. According to the official version, he is killed by an accidental burst of machine gun fire (*six bullets!*) from the hands of a gendarme.

April 19: The uprisings spread to multiple villages in Kabylia resulting in dozens wounded and enormous material damage. In Amizour, in the province of Bgayet (155 miles east of Algiers), protests against the detention and arrest of three youths for proclaiming slogans hostile towards *le Pouvoir* transform into a rebellion as clashes break out in the entire Little Kabylia region.

April 21: In Beni-Douala, El-Kseur, and Amizour, assailants hurl molotov cocktails, rocks, and burning tires at gendarmerie stations.

April 22: In Amizour, in spite of appeals for calm sent out by the head of the FFS, protesters attack a detachment with rocks and set fire to two gendarmerie vehicles, the Daïra (office of the prefect), the registry office, and the courts.

April 23: An anti-insurrection unit is sent from Tizi-Ouzou toward Beni-Douala— a 12-mile distance.

April 24: In an attempt to calm the waters, authorities announce the suspension of the Bgayet security forces' second in command. The arrest of the paramilitary officer behind the fatal shots in Beni-Douala and the establishment of a special program of

economic aid in this region seek to diffuse the general unrest. Meanwhile, appeals are made to calm the assassinated youth's parents, who are determined to "initiate judicial proceedings."

April 25: Clashes occur in the cities of Sidi Aich, El-Kseur, Tazmalt, Barbacha, Seddouk, and Timezrit; fires are set at the offices of the nationalist Kabyle political parties. In Barbacha, the tax offices are burned. The primary roads between Algiers and Bgayet are blockaded. The barricades erected by the insurgents impede traffic in a 37-mile perimeter.

April 26: The renunciation of political representatives is a constant of the rebellion, and is also one of the most slandered aspects. In Tizi-Rached, the offices of two parties, the RCD and FFS (who had been hoping to garner some advantages from this movement), are among the first to be set on fire, along with the bank, the Social Security office, and the Internal Revenue office.

At the end of the week of conflicts, the fighting is widespread in all of Kabylia. The number of targets hit continues to grow: the burning of the tax offices, the prefecture, the offices of the center for national identity protection, etc. The rioters also multiply as the exploited loot what they need. In a few days, the entirety of every city and village of Kabylia is boiling.

April 28: Conflicts in the small cities and villages. Imposing protests in Bgayet: the house of culture, the bus station, and the State Property office are destroyed. In all, this is the bloodiest day since the beginning of the insurrection— about 30 victims among the protesters. A journalist for *Liberation* observes, "40 to 60 members of the security forces were killed on April 26 in a conflict to the south of Tebessa."

Early May: Ten-thousand women march in Tizi-Ouzou eloquently expressing a rejection of the patriarchal universe built on the right of seniority and the exclusion of the women. The women of Bgayet and Azazga also demonstrate in the thousands.

May 3: Competing with marches in Algiers called by the apparatuses of the FFS and the RCD, student mobilizations in Oran and Algiers, initiated by a coordination of autonomous student committees, courageously hold their own, in spite of a hundred casualties and an impressive police presence.

May 4: Ten-thousand students gather at the government palace in Algiers where they read out their platform to the television cameras— small beer compared to the bloodthirsty drama in Kabylia, but nevertheless important.

May 5: The movement begins to structure itself; they assemble the primary coordinations of



**"FFS=  
GENDARMERIE"**

-graffiti in Tizi-Ouzou, May 31, 2002

**"FFS-traitors:  
we know you."**

-graffiti in Tizi-Rached, January 19, 2003

**"FFS=DRS"**

-graffiti in Bgayet, January 24, 2003

*In Kabylia, the 2% voter participation in the May 2002 elections did not mean that residents failed to show up at the polls. They just showed up to sack them (inset).*

villages and neighborhoods.

May 7: There are large protests in Bgayet.

May 12: The FFS, in a small compromise with *le Pouvoir*, shows its true colors and disillusionment to everyone by presenting a memorandum to Bouteflika, the head of the State, the head of the army, and the head of the DRS that essentially suggests the organization's support for a "democratic transition."

May 21: The coordination of the 'arsh organizes a protest in Tizi-Ouzou of close to 500,000 people.

May 23: In Kherrata, a large stockpile of goods discovered at the house of an ex-official of the gendarmerie is burned.

May 24: Ten-thousand women march in Tizi-Ouzou denouncing the police violence over the last several weeks.

June 10: In Khenchela, an official, who is strutting about in a noisy, high-powered car, scornfully addresses a girl. Attacked by youths from the neighborhood who rush to defend the girl, he exclaims, "What can I take from you all today?" only to hear the response, "Nothing more than before." The military official is beaten and his car destroyed. One hour later, he appears with about 30 soldiers armed with assault weapons. After the battle, the military is forced to retreat, and the revolt spreads throughout the city. They erect barricades and the post office, the prefecture, and two supermarkets are sacked. The entire city is devastated.

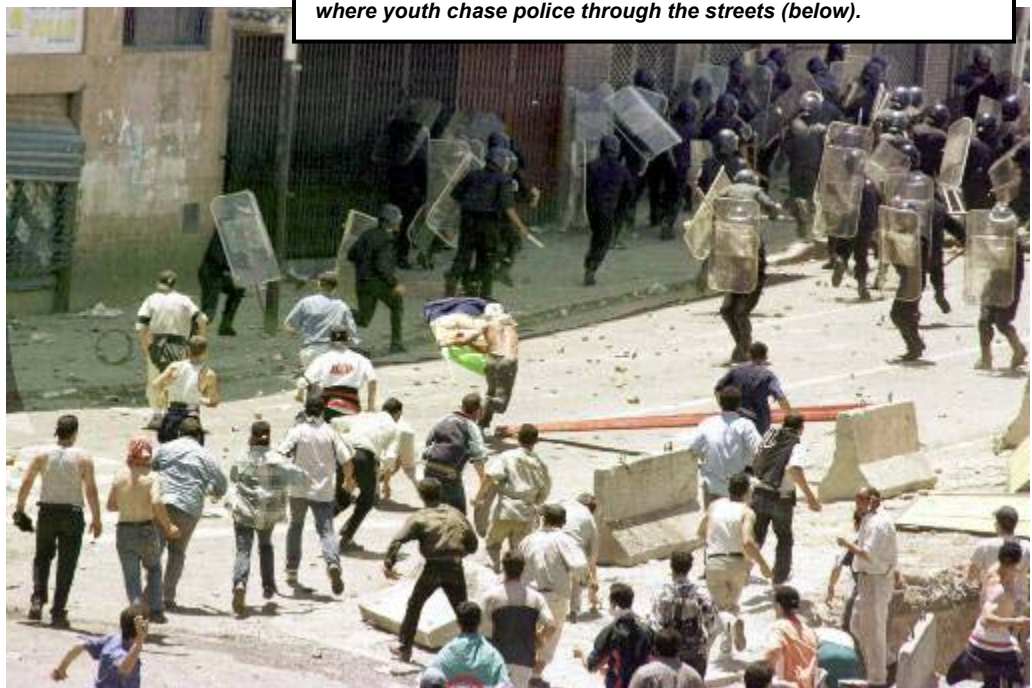
June 11: The representatives of the wilayas of Sétif, Bordj Bou Arréridj, Bouira, Boumerdès, Bgayet, Tizi Ouzu, Algiers, and the collective committees of the universities of Algiers, gather in El-Kseur and adopt a common platform of demands (El-Kseur Platform).

June 12: Uprisings explode in Khenchela (345 miles east of Algiers), in Aures (one death), in Ain Fakroun (340 miles east of Algiers), and in Sour El Ghozlane (80 miles south of Algiers).

June 14: Violent clashes in Algiers until 1 o'clock in the morning in the Plaza of May, between the defiant



*Residents take cover (above) as clashes erupt between police and some 10,000 women taking part in the May 24 demonstration. Three weeks later on June 14, the spirit of the rebellion spreads from the mountains of Kabylia into power's stronghold of Algiers, where youth chase police through the streets (below).*





exploited and the anti-insurgency police. Several sheds are plundered. From diverse origins, these protests unite from 500,000 to 2 million insurgents. The revolt largely exceeded the confines of Kabylia and was not subdued for nearly 45 days.

Mid-June: The ruling classes admit to the total loss of control of the situation in Kabylia. Practically all the national gendarmerie detachments offer the same show: shots through their portals, walls knocked over, facades set afire, doors smashed in... And all around rests their destruction, which, in turn, is burned and used with low-hanging pylons and trees block all the roads that carry the detachments. In the villages, the traders refuse to serve the gendarmerie. The boycott is total. Thirty-six of the detachments counted in Kabylia were sent in from Algiers (via helicopter or heavily armed convoys).

June 18: A mandate from the government forbids every form of assembly and protest in the capital (Algiers).

June 19: Banned from demonstrating in Algiers, 100 women gather in Ain-Benian (west of the capital) to protest against the regime's fierce repression.

June 29: The inter-provincial coordination refuses, during a meeting, to meet with a government representative who is sent by the state's ruling powers.

Mid-July: The committee of the wilaya of Tizi-Ouzou adopts a "Code of Honor."



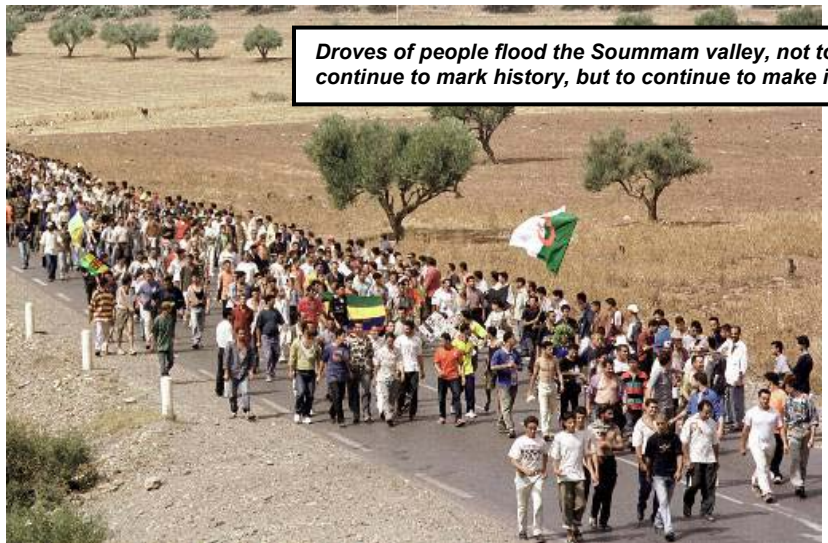
*The June 19 protest in Ain-Benian: the revolt has spread to the whole of Algeria.*

July 17: In Bgayet, agitators provoke a schism in the citizen coordination committee by attempting to infiltrate with unions and partisans of 'the left.' (This faction keeps the name of 'popular committee.') The inter-communal coordination denounces the bid at hijacking and the abandonment of the principal objectives. The coordination calls for a general strike to occur on July 26; this leaves the public to settle the matter. One of the slogans at the demonstration is "Out traitors! Out syndicalists (unionists)!"

August 8: A national demonstration by the 'arsh is impeded and barricaded at the port of Algiers.

August 20: In Ifri Uzellaguen, a 100,000 strong demonstration of participants from throughout Kabylia is held. The date and place are significant. In this valley, in the heart of Kabylia, the Congress of the Algerian Revolution against France met for the first time, between August 20 and September 10, 1956. This Congress was the first attempt at a national body of laws for the revolution, converting guerilla warfare into self-sufficient legitimacy. At this meeting, Abbane Ramdane (who was later assassinated) came out in opposition to domination by an 'outside' army (in this case, the FLN). This remembrance is not meant to be a trite commemoration. For example, on August 14, in the course of a meeting at El-Kseur, a delegate of Akfadou (after reminding congress of the supremacy of civil society over the military and of the local over the outside) stated, "We are of the civil society; they are of the military. We are of the region; they are of the outside." The slogans adopted for the march ("1956-2001, the struggle continues." and "Give the populace its history back."), which are not part of the typical pattern of the annual celebration (organized by the head of state in Mascara), endorse the decision to

prohibit officials from the Soummam valley. This dissemination of the public's views initiates new contact with some delegates not identified in the coordination of the wilaya who were holdouts for the idea of negotiation. The move, however, had the opposite effect than they had hoped: it reinforced the determination "to forbid the presence of any official in Kabylia." The Minister of the Mujahideen, who earlier renounced going to Tizi-Ouzou, and the Minister of the Interior, arriving to the assign a new prefect, were both greeted with stones.



October 3: A few un-mandated delegates meet with head of government, Ali Benflis. They are subsequently denounced and ostracized for engaging in this dialogue.



October 5: Protesters attempt to deliver the 15 demands of the El-Kseur Platform to President Bouteflika and demand the State lay down their arms, but an anti-insurgency detachment stops them at the gates of Algiers. The government forebodes two marches called for July 5 and August 8. In response to this umpteenth prohibition, tension mounts in the entire region.

October 10: Clashes between groups of youth and the CNS in El-Kseur. In Amizour, protesters are blocked from the main streets of the town. In Aokas, youth are baited into clashes at the exits of the schools.

October 11: The inter-wilaya coordination (that met with all of the 'arsh delegates and the citizen coordination committees of the region's towns) decide not to argue further with state representatives concerning the El-Kseur platform. At this point, the platform becomes non-negotiable. Additionally, they institute a ban on people who are willing to engage in dialogue with the government. The disobedience is complete: taxes unpaid, gas and electric bills unpaid, military draft notices ignored, and all expired registration renewals for the next election refused.

November 1: The inter-provincial coordination organizes a national protest in Ighil Imoula (Tizi-Ouzou).

December 6: To protest against a second encounter between the head of government, Ali Benflis, and a group of (counterfeit) delegates, which consists of un-mandated representatives of the 'arsh later to be denounced as "opportunist and unscrupulous usurpers," the coordinations call for a general strike in Kabylia and organize sit-ins in front of the dorms of the hated gendarmerie. Within a few hours, these sit-ins transform into violent encounters with the armed forces that, in many cities and towns, endured for more than 3 days. In Amizour, the discontent citizens burn the Sonelgaz headquarters, the tax office, and the National Organization of the Mujahideen office. In El-Kseur it is the house of a magistrate that is chosen and sacked, despite the intervention of the CNS.

December 21: The coordinations post the names of the “pre-fabricated delegates” all over Kabylia, denouncing them as “traitors” and exposing them to recriminations. A personality from Bgayet who had acted as go-between with the December 6 group has his house burned down.

December 29: Angry demonstrations take place in various communities and settlements in the province of Ain Berda because of the chronic lack of gas, potable water, and electricity. In response to this deficiency, the youth begin again to barricade the primary roads.

***More than ever, the population is mobilized and interdependent. There is a dash of compassion without precedent, which rose from the health of the hunger strikers. What now remains is to capitalize on this passion, knowing that there is a snowball effect. It is felt that something will occur. Protestations grow louder and louder, and there is a sense of awakening...***

*-Mouloud Boumekla (Coordination of Tizi-Rached), January 5, 2003, Le Soir D'Algerie*



*The challenge to le pouvoir is not met lightly.*

## 2002

January 22: The main streets are blockaded against protesters in the region of Annaba, at the Tunisian border.

February 7: A delegation of 'arsh is arrested in front of the seat of United Nations Organization in Algiers. They arrive shortly following news that a group of young people has been assaulted at the Sonelgaz headquarters. Upon entering, they are met by the CNS with tear-gas. The protesters respond to the gendarmerie detachment by again launching rocks and molotov cocktails. Conflicts continue into the night.

February 12: The coordination committee from Tizi-Ouzou orders a general strike in all of Kabylia to protest the reappearance of the gendarmerie in the streets. They make the announcement based on the experience with the bloody tumult of April 2001. The region is paralyzed; businesses and schools shut down, public offices deserted, shops closed, and traffic at a standstill. The public assemblies in front of the gendarmerie headquarters quickly erupt into conflicts, particularly in Tizi-Ouzou, Azazga, Freha, Akbou, Seddouk, and Sidi Aich.

February 26: In response to President Bouteflika's announcement setting the election date for May 30, the movement of insurgents burns ballot boxes and administrative documents.

Early March: An appeal is made for all Algerians to unite and boycott the elections.

March 12: Bouteflika announces that Tamazight will be recognized again as a national language, although it will not become the *official* language in Kabylia. The gendarmerie units are moved outside of the cities but they remain in the region; the title of 'victim' (but not 'martyr') is attributed to the dead in light of the events of April 2001 (referred to as the 'Black Spring'). These resolutions do not satisfy the population. After several days, the presidential declarations provoke battles with gendarmerie detachments in the capital and in many other communities. One dies and dozens are wounded in Tizi-Ouzou.

March 23: The Algerian state makes another attempt to solve the crisis. By transferring gendarmerie detachments in Tizi-Ouzou and Bgayet they hope to demonstrate the beginning of an end to police occupation. The gendarmeries depart from these two cities and are relocated in nearby communities. Then, unexpectedly, mass arrests of 'arsh delegates are ordered.

March 25: Detachments of the CNS assault the Kateb-Yacine theater in Tizi-Ouzou, seat of the civilian coordination, and 21 delegates are arrested for possession of prohibited arms and illegal occupation of a public place. Many other delegates go into hiding after police search their homes. The city appears as if is under siege. Several hours after the arrests, with the police still inside the seat of the 'arsh coordination, the first violent clashes begin.

March 26: Arrest warrants are issued for 400 other delegates from all the provinces— the accusations concern unauthorized organization to challenge the constitution.

March 27: A demonstration demanding the immediate liberation of the prisoners is blocked and repressed.

March 28: To thwart a demonstration called for by the 'arsh in Tizi-Ouzou, police open fire in the streets of the city until the early hours of the morning. Tear-gas is employed to confine people to their homes. The demonstrators continue decrying *le Pouvoir*, the



A protester displays the El-Kseur Platform alongside pictures of the martyrs on the 1-year anniversary of Guermah's killing.

blockades, and the violence. Among the demonstrators, three are killed and dozens wounded.

April: The arrests provoke a fight to obtain the liberation of the prisoners: sit-ins outside the tribunal, attacks on the barracks, demonstrations by university students, and the refusal of thousands of students to attend school until their detained teachers are released.

Early May: The assemblies resume appeals, demonstrations, and the burning of ballot boxes as part of the anti-electoral campaign.

May 20: Rocks, thrown by students calling for the release of the prisoners, greet President Bouteflika, who is at the University of Algiers to celebrate the 'Year of the Student.' Several arrests follow.

May 21: Students occupy the university demanding the release of their comrades. The President pardons the prisoners in a gesture to invite calm and discourage the boycott of the elections.

May 30: In Kabylia, the elections have virtually no site: officials from the prefecture and occupied municipalities are barricaded in the streets and ballot boxes are burnt on major streets to condemn the 'shameful elections.' A general strike paralyzes the entire region and chaos and clashes with the police provoke more deaths and hundreds of injuries. In Tizi-Ouzou, anger breaks out as soon as the ballot boxes appear in election posts; they are assaulted and destroyed by thousands of dissidents. Similar scenes take place in other cities, notwithstanding the massive concentration of security forces.



*The terms for negotiation are set— in Tizi-Ouzou (below) and in the presidential palace in Algiers.*



*In Melbou... more than 6,000 people organized a march yesterday morning to protest against repression. In front of the local squad team they have chanted: "Houkouma Taiwan [counterfeit government], if you want war, we are ready."*

*-World Amazigh Action Coalition, May 26, 2001*

At the end of the day, the percentages of voter participation are 1.84% in Kabylia and 46.9% in all of Algeria. The refutation of the elections is not a local occurrence— it surpasses the confines of the region.

June: The environment remains explosive not only in Kabylia, but also in the other regions of Algeria, and the turmoil appears to have no end. In the East and South and in several neighborhoods in the capital, violent outbursts occur as frustration mounts with the lack of water. Streets are blocked and public buildings burned.

June 17: The city of Boukadir (130 miles west of Algiers) is a theater of turmoil without precedent.

June 19: The movement detainees are permitted to convene in a penitentiary room to discuss an informal proposition by a government emissary, who is accompanied by 2 self-styled mediators who had renounced the movement. The detainees refuse to write a letter to the coordination committee delegates in Tizi-Ouzou asking them to accept

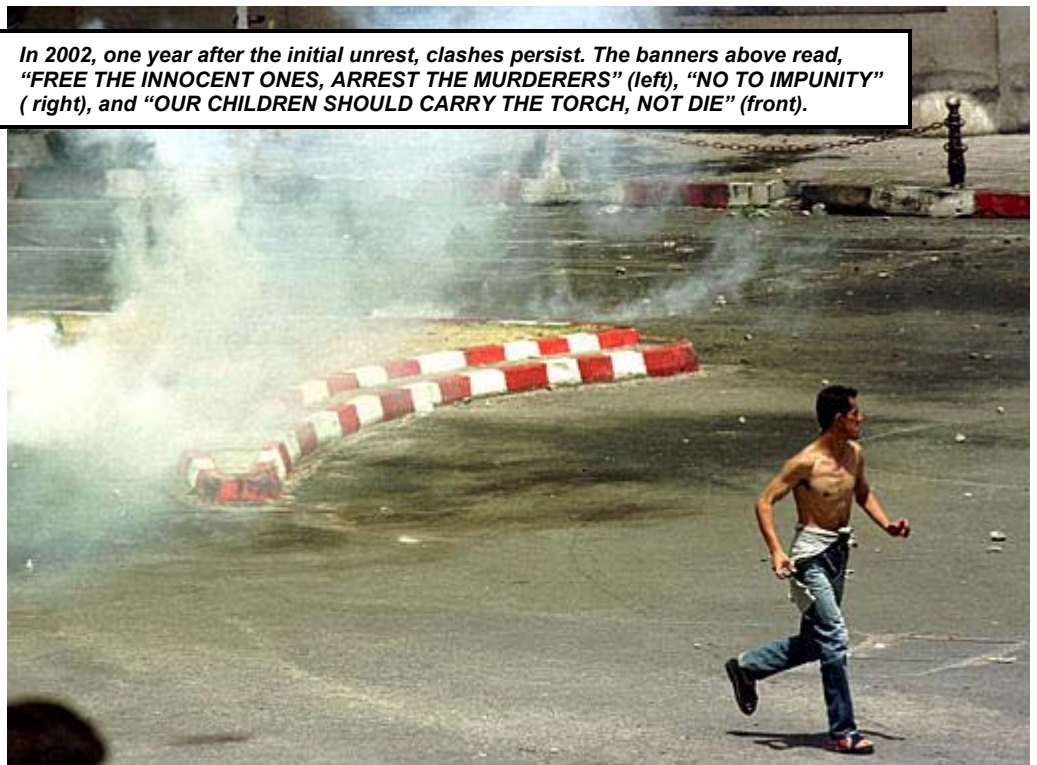
negotiations over the El-Kseur Platform in exchange for the provisional liberty of all those under arrest. In a communiqué, they instead reaffirm their loyalty to the citizen committees and express irritation that their own liberation and that of the other detainees is dependent upon negotiating the El-Kseur Platform.

August: Following violent encounters, several accidents, and the ultimatum sent out from the movement on July 25, President Bouteflika pardons all the detained ‘arsh delegates. As they exit the prison, they call out that the fight continues...

October 5: The anniversary of the bloody revolts of October 1988. A general strike accompanies demonstrations on the eve of the elections. Pacification forces impede the scheduled marches in the capitals of the provinces. Hard clashes with the police in all localities: many suffer wounds from firearms and dozens are arrested, particularly in Bouira and in Bgayet.



In 2002, one year after the initial unrest, clashes persist. The banners above read, "FREE THE INNOCENT ONES, ARREST THE MURDERERS" (left), "NO TO IMPUNITY" (right), and "OUR CHILDREN SHOULD CARRY THE TORCH, NOT DIE" (front).



October 10: Fifty percent of the Algerian population rejects the government by boycotting community and provincial elections. In Kabylia, despite of the participation of the FFS, less than 10% votes.

October 13: The police raid the Palace of Justice in Tizi-Ouzou, where, in a classroom, 'arsh delegates are inside supervising a political process. The police arrest them after beating those who resist. They are accused of having impeded the administering of the elections several days prior.

November 26: Twenty-seven detainees, 7 of whom are delegates, initiate a hunger strike in Bugia.

December 3: Seven days into the Bugia hunger strike, 5 detainees begin a hunger strike in Tizi-Ouzou.

December 6: Seven detainees join the hunger strike in Bouira.

## 2003

January 4: A general strike, called by the 'arsh coordination in order to expedite the liberation of the political prisoners, paralyzes the entire Kabyle region.

January 6: Roads are blocked throughout Algeria.

January 7: Thirty-thousand people march in Paris in support of the 'arsh.

Early February: Inhabitants of the Tadjenant community, in the province of Mila (250 miles east of Algiers), sack government buildings and the Daira building (containing the prefecture) and destroy local administrative offices, the seat of the UGTA, and the headquarters of several political parties. Also, the Sonelgaz headquarters is sporadically the recipient of arson attacks by demonstrators. Meanwhile, in the eastern part of Algeria, in the province of Skikda, the population of the Salah Bouchaour community descends on the streets and obstructs all traffic. The inhabitants of this community had been making claims for



*A January 12 jail solidarity demonstration in Tizi-Ouzou begins with a standoff (above) and ends with several thousand protesters fleeing (below) the ensuing police violence.*

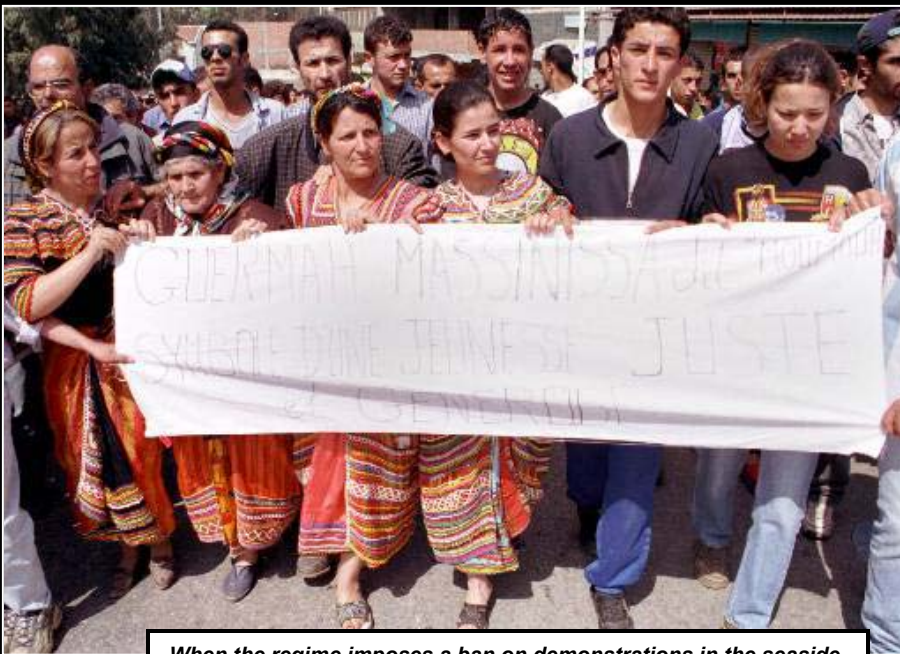




access to the electrical grid that the government had promised them. The citizens state that it is unacceptable that this promise has not been realized after 40 years of independence. Their community still lacks energy while local officials use state funds to construct expensive villas for themselves and their friends.

In the province of Chlef, 125 miles west of Algiers, tension is high in these days. In the community of Zeboudja, 12 miles from the capital city of the province, thousands of residents sack the homes of the Daira leader and the union head. The demonstrators surround the homes after observing that the community generators supply them with electricity while the rest of the region suffers without it during the harsh winter.

In the province of Ain Defla, 155 miles west of Algiers, the inhabitants close down the municipality and forbid access to the union and its associates. They protest because, since the



When the regime imposes a ban on demonstrations in the seaside capital of Algiers to prevent a repeat of the June 14 (2001) protest that drew 1 million people (top photo), the 'aarsh respond by announcing the date of the next demonstration.



***The movement is lucid and will remain so. We will strike to prove that our movement seeks neither to seize power nor to resort to weapons, but to arrive at the satisfaction of the El-Kseur platform...***

*-Mustapha Mazouzi (Coordination of Tizi-Ouzou),  
January 5, 2003, Le Soir D'Algerie*



country's independence in 1962, the government has ignored their concerns. According to them, the roads into their district are impassable for vehicles and pedestrians, especially in the winter. The village also lacks potable water, an elementary school, and connection to means of transportation. The children must walk long distances if they want to continue attending classes.



In the Kabyle region, the stalemate between the government and the 'arsh continues. A daily sit-in, calling for the release of the political prisoners, continues outside the region's prison, while a demonstration is planned for March 2, the day that France's President Chirac will be visiting Algeria.

February 5: In Tizi-Ouzou, a demonstration headlined by a speech by Massinissa Guermah's father and calling for the release of the prisoners is brutally attacked by the URS.



*The Berber Spring's 23<sup>rd</sup> anniversary commemoration on April 20, 2003, brought thousands to the streets of Tizi-Ouzou. The banner above reads: "The struggle continues for a worthy life for everyone."*

The youth respond to the police attack and subsequent tear-gassing with a blitz of molotov cocktails. Foot chases follow, and after 5 minutes, the URS regains control of the city.

February 28: The UGTA declares a two-day general strike.

May 24: President Bouteflika, while visiting a region severely damaged by an earthquake, is shot at and ends his visit after only 5 minutes.

Late June: Newly-appointed, hardliner Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia's offer of dialogue with genuine 'arsh representatives is met with a stony response. Weary of devious government maneuvers, the 'arsh demands clear, official commitment from Bouteflika to meet the conditions set out in the "El-Kseur Platform." Only then, they say, can they consider opening talks with the government.

# 2004

January: Angered over unpaid wages, Chinese immigrant construction workers erect road blockades near Tiaret on several occasions and trash a police car in one incident. The workers try to hold a protest march to the Chinese embassy in Algiers, but are stopped by police who later arrest 10 of them.

February 22: In Ouargla, young people angry about unemployment and poverty and a visit from President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, rage through the streets attacking institutions and fighting police. Young rebels erect burning barricades in the streets and assault shops, a hotel owned by the state hydrocarbon company Sonatrach, and the main government building. Riot police used tear-gas to break up the rebellion.

February 26: Youth set up barricades in the streets of Algiers and riot after a policeman kills one of their friends at a garbage dump. The murdered youth had been searching through the trash for fireworks to sell on the street.

February 29: Riots rock the Jijel region in northeastern Algeria during the weekend as protesters attack public buildings to show their anger toward chronic unemployment and toward electoral corruption in light of next month's presidential election. In Settara, residents attack state buildings, build barricades in the streets, torch the regional state representative's home, and ransack the town hall and regional government office. At this point, one in three Algerians of working age is unemployed.

March 9: Over the course of a few days, riots break out in the towns of Skikda, Tizi-Ouzou, and Bouira. Angry over unemployment, water shortages, and the upcoming elections, young

***The riots were about much more than the demand for identity. They were a revolt against long-standing oppression and against economic and social conditions; they were a sign of an entire generation losing hope.***

*-Blanca Madani, "Loss of Hope," World Amazigh Action Coalition, May 3, 2001*



**When the social "peace" of Algeria's regime becomes so unbearable, the people resort to social war.**



people attack town halls and other administrative buildings.

March 18: In Tizi-Ouzou, a general strike is coordinated by the assemblies of the 'arsh to undermine the upcoming April 8 elections. Several hundred people march through the city, clash with riot police, and are tear-gassed.

March 20: The beginning of national election campaigns is marked with general strikes in Tizi-Ouzou, Azazga, Fréha, Timizart, and Ath Djennad. In Tizi-Ouzou the police try to block a march and are met with a rain of stones. The police respond with tear-gas, and one cop is injured in the battle. Ten people are arrested.

March 30: A popular wave of anger overtakes the town of Menea as young people block highway RN01 and smash windows of stores. Police are overwhelmed and have to call in reinforcements from other areas. More than 1,000 young residents burned down an employment agency at the beginning of the week, vowing to stop the upcoming elections by force.

March 31: President Bouteflika is forced to flee Tizi-Ouzou after his car is pelted with stones upon his arrival and rioting breaks out during a speech he attempted to deliver regarding the upcoming elections. He has not visited the town in years. Hundreds of residents, chanting "*Le Pouvoir = Assassin!*" and "Not any votes!" knock down electrical posts and barricade streets. Rocks and molotov cocktails are thrown at riot police. The "forces of order" intervene with tear-gas and water cannons, arresting at least 12 people. Many are injured by rubber bullets and hospitalized, and six cops are also wounded. All businesses and schools in the city close down as a general strike is called against the election and Bouteflika's visit. Outside the police headquarters in Bgayet, a demonstration is held in opposition to the police repression of the 'arsh and the "electoral joke." There were also "disturbances" when President Bouteflika visited the town on March 22.

April 4: After a march through the city of Akbou and several speeches, a crowd of young people make their way to the police station and clashes break out. Burning barricades are built to counter police tear-gas, and the police themselves are pelted with rocks.

April 8: On the day of national elections, a general strike brings Tizi-Ouzou to a halt. In the towns of Fréha and Rafour, young people destroy ballot boxes, barricade streets in front of polling stations, and throw rocks at police who, in turn, respond with tear-gas. In Gantas, children block roads with burning tires and other material. In Azazga, young people destroy ballot boxes and burned the ballots. Molotov cocktails and rocks are thrown at police in Akbou, and the cops fire off tear gas. Clashes between youth and police also break out in the towns of Sahadj, El-Asnam, and El-Adjiba. As soon as the election results become known, youth spontaneously gather in the streets of Barbacha and proceed to set the local Popular Communal Assembly (elected government) building on fire. The Minister of the Interior reports that 612 vote offices are "devastated or prevented from opening." Officials say voter turnout in Kabylia is about 14%. When news breaks out in Algiers that President Bouteflika is re-elected (having routed his chief opponent Ali Benflis), riot police, using tear-gas, immediately suppress spontaneous demonstrations against electoral corruption.

April 18: Hundreds of young people in Skikda build 13 road barricades in an ongoing battle against poverty, industrial pollution, and an increase in public transit fares. "Everyday we pass in front of the industrial park. We breathe its fumes, but we do not have the right to work there," says one youth.

April 19: Young people invade the town hall in Bordj Bou Arréridj, expelling civil servants and shutting the institution down. Anger boils over because of horrible housing conditions and lack of government aid after a flood, among other things.

April 20: General Strikes and demonstrations mark the third anniversary of the Algerian insurrection. In Bouira, people chant "*Le Pouvoir = Assassin,*" and "If you want war, we are not afraid of it." Thousands of students, both male and female, walk out of classes and march through the streets of Boumerdès. General Strikes take place in Tizi-Ouzou, Fréha, Azazga, and Bouzaguene. Male and female students at the University of Bouzareah in Algiers try to hold a solidarity



*Tear-gas and 'tanks' fill the streets, while the regime muffles the journalists. So, in protest, the journalists flood the streets demanding freedom of the press (left).*

demonstration but are surrounded by riot police and water cannon trucks. Some students manage to break through the police lines briefly, but police reinforcements prevent them from taking the streets.

April 22: Thousands of people march through the streets of Amizour during a general strike to commemorate those killed throughout the course of the ongoing insurrection.

April 24, In Diar El-Baraka, a large number of families refusing to be evicted from their homes and placed in new housing, use rocks and molotov cocktails to resist the police who come to evict them. Sixty-four people, including many police officers, are injured in the 4-hour-long battle. In the morning, the families set up checkpoints at all the city entrances and burn tires in the street. A spray-painted slogan on wall reads, "We want decent housing." Now the residents threaten to shut down the local government's headquarters.

April 26: A general strike and march in El-Kseur commemorate the youth killed by police during the 3 years of insurrection. At the end of the demonstration, a group of youths throws rocks at a police station. In Khemis Miliana, unemployed young people, rejecting any attempts at dialogue with the authorities, gather in front of the local government's offices and demand all elected officials leave the area immediately. They also set up a blockade on the RN4 highway. Meanwhile, the Algerian government deports at least nine of the Chinese immigrant

***“Our oil is mixed with our blood,” one protester said.***

*-BBC, May 31, 2002*

construction workers it had arrested at a demonstration in January, accusing them of committing "acts of anarchy" in a struggle against their employer.

May 4: In Bordj Emir-Khaled, community residents padlock the front door of the local government office, shutting it down and demanding the departure of all elected officials.

May 5: Residents in Birkhadem block the RN1 highway and besiege the local government building in anger at the ongoing bulldozing of buildings to further "development." Police arrive to break up the highway blockade and confrontations with residents take place.

May 13: In Bordj Bou Arréridj, hundreds of unemployed youths block two major highways, the RN5 and the RN45, using burning tires, large stones, and trucks, which dump a large quantity of sand on the roads. The blockades are maintained for 12 hours, and police forces are attacked when they arrive to open up the roadways.

May 14: Rioting in Tkout enters its second day after a police officer shoots and kills a teenager on May 13 in the nearby village of Taghit. A spontaneous demonstration of almost all the town's residents erupts after the murder, including a blockade of the RN31 highway and an ultimatum for the departure of all police and military units from the area. The next day the rebellion continues, but police forces encircle the city, search houses, attack people at random, and make 100 arrests. In response to the repression, a gendarmerie barracks is set on fire.

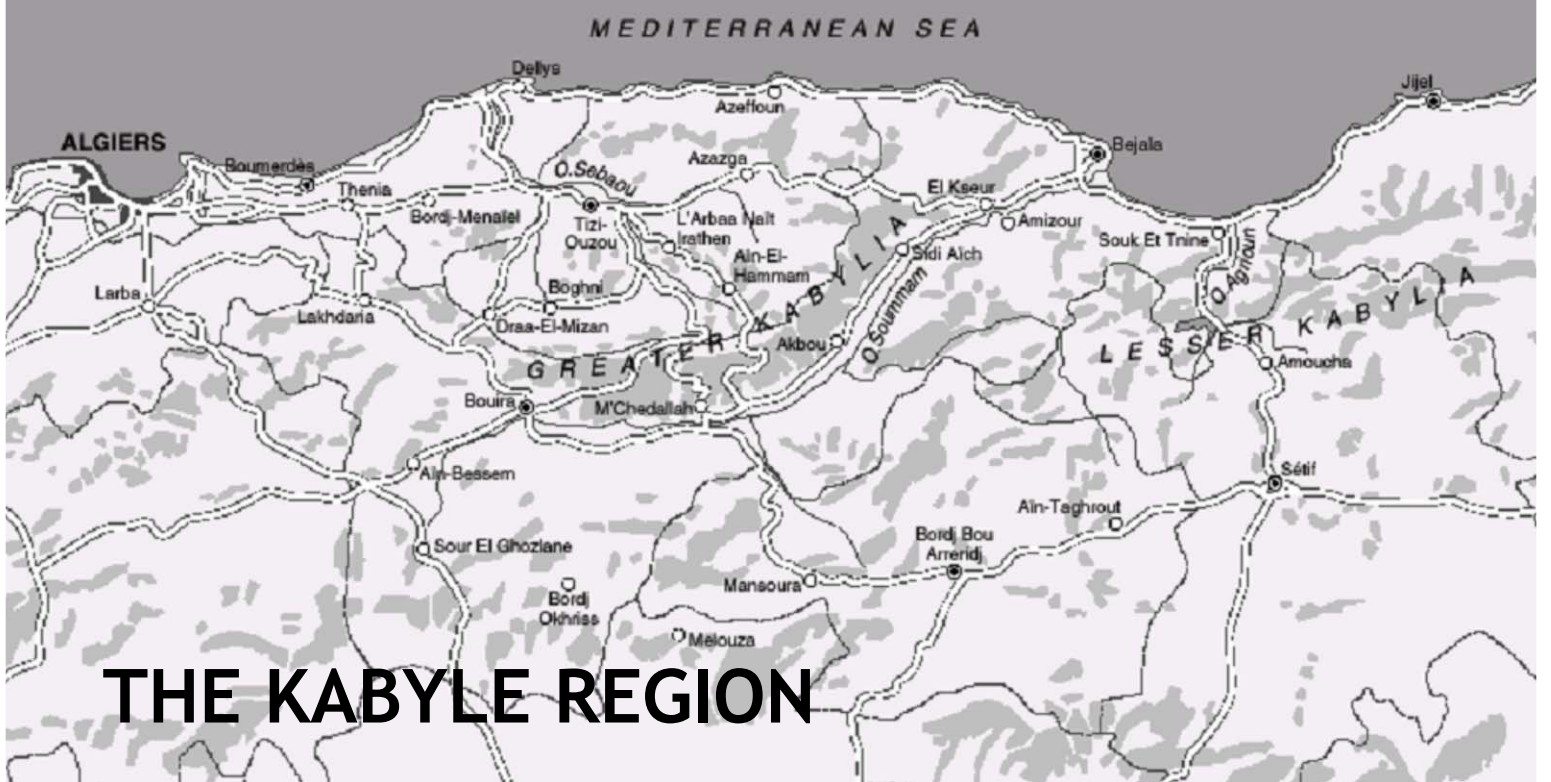
May 17: Residents of Ouled Ben Abdelkader, angry over poor housing conditions, set fire to local government buildings.

*Sources: AP, AFP, BBC, Algeria Interface, Kabyle.com, Socialist Workers' Party, Guerra Sociale, Insurrectionary Anarchists of the Coast Salish Territories, and numerous others*





# ALGERIA



# THE KABYLE REGION

# **For more information and for up-to-date news:**

## **Algeria Interface**

*News Dispatches in English and French*

[www.algeria-interface.com](http://www.algeria-interface.com)

## **CADC**

*Coordination des 'Aarsh, Dairas, et Communes (French)*

[www.membres.lycos.fr/aarchs](http://www.membres.lycos.fr/aarchs)

## **CICB**

*Intercommunal Coordination of Bgayet (French)*

[www.multimania.com/cicbgayet](http://www.multimania.com/cicbgayet)

## **Guerra Sociale (Social War)**

*Italian , French, and English Messages of Solidarity*

[www.guerrasociale.org](http://www.guerrasociale.org)

## **Apology for the Algerian Insurrection**

**By Jaime Semprun, 2001**

*Edition de l'encyclopedie des Nuisances*

*60, rue de Menilmontant, XXe arr.*

*Paris*

**complete French text:**

[www.bibliolib.net/Semprun-Algerie.htm](http://www.bibliolib.net/Semprun-Algerie.htm)

**partial English translation:**

[www.geocities.com/cordobakaf/algeria.html](http://www.geocities.com/cordobakaf/algeria.html)

**We are working to publish a complete English translation of this book in the near future.**

**For more on women in the context of this rebellion, see these March 2002 articles published in the Algerian daily, *El Watan* (French):**

***"La protesta au féminin à Tizi-Ouzou"***

***"Les archs misogynes"***

[www.algeria-watch.de/farticle/revoltelfemmes\\_archs.htm](http://www.algeria-watch.de/farticle/revoltelfemmes_archs.htm)



**"WE WILL CONTINUE THE FIGHT. THEY MUST PAY THE PRICE. NO FORGIVENESS, NONE."**



*You can feel from her rough and ready handshake that she is used to handling stones. She has been handling and throwing them for a whole year now. Her voice, too, has a rough edge as she leans into the car with a guffaw: “Hey, this lot is from the security forces.” Just a joke, maybe, but a reminder to us journalists in the car that she is ready for anything.*

*Her name is Tassadit. Everyone in Kabylia has heard of Tassadit from Azazga. She has made a place and a name for herself among the lads in the street battles fought against the gendarmes in Azazga. As often as not, she has led them.*

*This cheery, plump-cheeked teenager is a figure of the Kabyle Black Spring of April 2001 and plainly proud of having held the street against gun-toting grown-up security forces...*

*-Reporter El Kadi Ihsane, upon arrival in Azazga on April 26, 2002, the first anniversary of the death of 6 young people shot by paramilitary gendarmes in that town. Algeria Interface*