

“No forgiveness”

Algeria: July 2001



The following text was written in June 2001 and translated by me in July 2001; a very incomplete chronology of events in Algeria at the end of this text were added on 4/9/20.

“Ulach smah” (“No forgiveness”)

July 2001

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

Its heart is in Kabylie, 100 kilometres east of Algiers, the capital. It took off following the cold-blooded killing, on 18th April 2001, of young Massinissa by police in the local cop shops. It's 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 Kabylie in 1980. The intervention of the army and propaganda about a so-called claim to secession by the population of the Kabylie 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 had been forced to concede democratic rights. But in the middle of the votes 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 the 14th of June in Algiers was the most massive demonstration ever organised 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 12th 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 doesn't include those hurt or killed

during the course of the march on the 14th of June 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 to the South-East of Algeria. In the West, the first demonstrations are appearing now, in Oran and in Relizane.

The uprisings involve youth above all. They are the majority of the population (some 70% are under 30 years old) and everyday suffer the experience of misery: officially the unemployment level is 28% and hits youth especially hard. It's 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 *aarchs* - of Kabylie (linked to the co-ordinations which are flourishing in the neighbourhoods and counties) who took the initiative to call the national demonstration of 14th June. 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's the people of the cities, amongst them the workers, who have a determinant role. Co-ordinations have sprung up in the districts, the village communes and the counties and are connected through an inter-county structure, at first in Kabylie, 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 movement of resistance putting forward demands at a national level. They have elaborated a platform of 15 demands mainly dealing with democratic rights, but also cultural rights.

It's difficult to imagine the enormity of the split between the population and the government. The inter-county co-ordination had their platform delivered to the Presidency by 2 children, because it had vowed not to lead any negotiations with the representatives of the State. The street fights mustn't eclipse the fights for liberty and democratic rights which are breaking out everywhere. Structures independent of official organisations are appearing: students, women,

committees for democratic freedoms, especially 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, thousands of flats have been occupied by the homeless and by those who are in poor housing, with the active help of the 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 national organisation of “youth” – the vassal of President Bouteflika - the UNJA (National Union of Algerian Youth), couldn’t 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 Algerian General Workers Union), the official union which is integrated into the regime, is forced to take up part of the demands of the population (for example, the freedoms demanded, the recognition of Berber as a national language, etc.) and to denounce plans for privatisation, 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 echo the violence in the streets. The Big Unknown is the attitude of the workers. There are certainly strikes in the Health Sector (in Oran), some demonstrations of State sector workers and of teachers. But mass strikes which could finally finish off the government haven’t 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 20th, 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 MacDonalds, 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.

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(translating this doesn't mean that I'm in agreement with the illusions about democratic rights)

Chronology

16/1/18:

Algeria, Bouira: riots, door of admin offices attacked, injuries, following sit-in against housing policy “...dozens of protesters, from several communes of Sour El-Ghozlane, gathered in front of the headquarters of the daïra to demand the posting of the list of 350 social housing for this important daïra of the wilaya. After a sit-in of more than 45 minutes, where no noticeable incident was recorded, things escalated when protesters wanting to smash the daïra's door, forced their way into the office of the head of the daïra. ...riots broke out. Beaten by police batons, the demonstrators responded by throwing stones. The main artery of the city was barricaded by the rioters with tires and other motley items in flame.”

14/1/18:

Algeria, Tizi-Ouzou: students riot after cops block march; more than 5 student departments on strike; dominant ideology tries to divide foreigners and non-student sections of the population from Tunisian students “...the final straw of students' anger which led students to improvise a march in the evening of last Sunday, is the fact that foreign citizens at the university have easy access to the inside of the university residential area where they engage in acts of aggression and theft against students.” More [here](#) “...security within the space of the university, improved housing conditions, free access to university libraries and the introduction of campus hygiene rules in line with the academic spirit, were also among the demands...But other sources close to academia say that this event is far from conforming to the real demands of the student population. Bad living conditions of the students is claimed to be, in fact, only a pretext, the demonstration being the expression of a merciless struggle between the various bidders for obtaining the very lucrative markets that the university offers. The food supply market for university restaurants is indeed a gold mine”.

3/1/18:

Algeria, Algiers: doctors clash with cops **More here** “Algerian police prevented doctors from taking part in a protest outside the Mustafa Pasha Hospital in Algiers on Wednesday. The protesters’ demand include improved working conditions in the country’s hospitals and for the government to reconsider compulsory civil service....A number of protesters were injured in the scuffles and arrested.”

19/12/17:

Algeria, Bouira: barricades set up on main roads following violent cop repression of peaceful demo over banning of local language “... all the schools in the wilaya of Bouira are still paralyzed by the strike that began more than a week ago. The climate remains tense.In the late afternoon, young people, demanding the release of those arrested and rising against the decision of the public authorities to prohibit any march to the chief town of wilaya, proceeded to close the highway section with the help of burnt tires, tree trunks and other odd objects. Barricades were erected in the towns of El Esnam and El Adjiba, paralyzing car traffic.”

14/12/17:

Algeria, Bouira: major motorway barricaded with burning tyres & tree trunks No explanation for the reasons behind these protests, but I presume it’s the same as those in Kabylie on 11th December – **clashes between cops & university/high school students as high school students organise strikes against the marginalisation of the local Amazighe language**

11/12/17:

Algeria, Kabylie: clashes between cops & university/high school students as high school students organise strikes against the marginalisation of the local Amazighe language...video

26/11/17:

Algeria, Ouargla: youth severely injured by cops during riots against electoral fraud

23/11/17:

Algeria, Tindouf: riots against phoney elections “The clashes intensified when young rioters attacked the headquarters of the Tindouf administrative court. Several offices of this state structure burned... the rioters were expressing their anger at ballot box stuffing... *Algerie Part* [media outlet] is continuing its investigations to identify the precise reasons for this sudden popular anger that erupted in a region hosting many strategic military units of the Algerian army” Not sure how independent this action was, as some of it seems to be linked to some Islamist Party.

20/10/17:

Algeria, Batna: 1000s clash with state over unfair housing allocation “The city of Batna experienced a climate of war during the day yesterday. The display of the list of beneficiaries of 2135 social housing units by the Batna district has set the city on fire which in less than an hour turned into a real battlefield between hundreds or even thousands of protesters and the security forces trying to protect the headquarters of the **daira** and other public buildings, local sources said. Protesters who blocked all arteries leading to the seat of the *daira* denounce the manner in which the list of

beneficiaries of social housing was “confiscated”. They accuse the head of the daïra and the members of the commission for studying the files of applicants for housing of not being correct in the treatment of the requests. In other words, they believe that people in need have not been selected ... “Angry young people have tried to close the national road to express their dissatisfaction”. “

4/10/17:

Algeria, Oum El Bouaghi: young woman killed in heavy clashes between cops & youths after 19-year-old man dies following cop torture Algeria is still under a state of emergency, prohibiting all demonstrations

20/9/17:

Algeria, Reggane: clashes as youths protesting unemployment close job centres

15/8/17:

Algeria, Sidi Yahia: 2 trucks belonging to property developer torched after landslide kills 10-year-old following previous warnings of potential landslide

26/7/17:

Algeria, Laghouat: 2nd night of riots over housing and land allocation “According to local sources, the protestors who cut National Road No. 1 to traffic as well as the Boulevard 1iere novembre 1954 accuse the administration of favoritism and clientelism. “The protesters believe that the beneficiaries of housing and lots of land are not the real needy of the city,” says our source. Wealthy people and others who do not live at all in the town of Laghouat are included in the list, while the children of the city who live in poverty are excluded from housing as well as land lots”

22/7/17:

Algeria, Béjaia: riot after cops stop Kabylie cultural conference

20/7/17:

Algeria, Bejaia: over 600 workers arrested as 5000 cops stop march against state energy company

5/3/17:

Algeria, Bordj Bou Arréridj: 25 cops injured as main police station is attacked following funeral of guy who died in police custody

4/1/17:

Algeria, Tazmalt: clashes with cops as demonstrators demand release of those arrested

3/1/17:

Algeria, Kabylie: Bejaia – 2nd day of uprising – roads barricaded, government buildings burnt, shops looted...part of Directorate of National Education wrecked & burnt...various small towns, regions and communes that previously abstained from striking join strike; major roads blocked by burning tyres, tree trunks etc.; gendarmes attacked in 3 major areas...Akbou: demonstrators

set fire to premises of the Tax Inspectorate; in Tazmalt, HQ of national insurance office, of Sonelgaz (national gas company) & sales outlet of mobile operator Ooredoo smashed up and set fire to; Seddouk – young demonstrators set fire to Ooredoo outlet...Salafists declare demonstrations, strikes etc. “Haram” – ie sinful and forbidden, whilst one of the Salafist leaders says the movement is “blasphemous” and declares a Fatwa against the demonstrators and strikers *“The strikes and demonstrations are the intrigues of unpious people who are dragging Muslims into anarchy”*

2/1/17:

Algeria, Kabylie: in Bejaia, clashes, cars and fronts of buildings attacked, as small shopkeepers and market holders go on general strike against increased taxes and state control...several buses burnt, roads blocked...new HQ of Academy and a BNP bank wrecked and looted; burning barricades, mini-buses burnt, cop riot van overturned; transport workers belatedly join strike... local offices of National Society of Tobacconists & Matches and electrical goods store looted... Chorfa: police station stoned...in Tichy, another police station stoned; in Amizour, major road barricaded; in Bouira, cops stoned...Sidi Aich: yet another police station stoned ...Ain Benian: burning barricades... Superficially, if one is dominated by outdated concepts, one could dismiss the catalyst for this as just a trivial petit-bourgeois protest, but obviously it's gone way beyond this. Moreover, it should be clear that increasingly proletarians have been forced into what was traditionally petit-bourgeois work or now work in previously obviously proletarian work now classified as “self-employed” (and thus, technically “petit-bourgeois”). Whilst this development takes different forms in different parts of the world and in different periods of time, it might be useful to look at these 2 texts, dealing in part with this in the UK, on this site: “true confessions of a market trader” & “uk fuel protests: looks as though we’ve got ourselves a convoy (2000)” [SF]



Bejaia

19/12/16:

Algeria, Bejaia: riot outside Directorate of Education (its windows broken) as 1000s of primary, middle & high school students protest reduction of winter holiday from 15 to 10 days. *“In addition to throwing stones, tires were burned and Molotov cocktails were used. The clashes paralysed part of the city closed to road traffic. If calm returned in the late afternoon, tension remains alive around the*

*Directorate of Education where high school students decided to camp” ...[high school students on strike in 10 schools in Boumerdès, and high school students’ demos in Constantine & Annaba...](#)
[Setif: another high school demo](#)*



Bejaia: Directorate of Education gets breath of fresh air

29/11/16:

[Algeria, Setif: rioters demanding reconnection of natural gas supply force closure of town hall](#)

7/11/16:

[Algeria, Algiers: 5 cops serious hurt in riot resisting evictions](#)

1/10/16:

[Algeria, In Guezzam: riots with burning barricades after soldier kills young man](#) “This comes just four days after riots were triggered in Oued Souf by citizens denouncing in particular higher electricity prices. On top of this, these people had protested against the preparation of taxes to be imposed on “high energy” air conditioners.”

22/9/16:

[Algeria, Ait Naoual Mezada \(north of Setif\): confrontations with cops, highways blocked, in protest against place school is to be constructed](#)

27/6/16:

Algeria, near Setif: riot over delay in social housing allocation and it being limited arbitrarily; motoway closed *“Considerable damage was caused to signage and advertising, as well as highway street lights. According to information gathered from local citizens, in addition to the delay in the distribution of such housing, officials announced that there has been change in the assigning of apartments.”*

12/6/16:

Algeria (Tizi-Ouzou, Kabylia) : hundreds organize picnic in square during month of Ramadan to protest against “climate of terror against those who don’t fast” (in french). *“We have to put a stop to this : they can’t force everybody to go to heaven”*. Some political rackets wanting autonomy of Kabylia or the independence of this region (traditionally less religious than the arab provinces of Algeria) were present.

27/4/16:

Algeria, Tuvirett (Kabyle): peaceful student demo attacked by cops

24/4/16:

Algeria, Lesnam (Kabyle): riots after youth is hospitalised in critical condition caused by brutal cops Apparently this involves supporters of the MAK, a political party “fighting” for Kabylean autonomy, not a perspective we support at all.



Lesnam, Kabyle, Algeria: still very far from [this](#)

23/3/16:

Algeria, Setif: main road blocked with burning tyres and rocks, clashes with cops (lots of injuries, including 1 cop hospitalised) in protest against lack of water and gas

18/1/16

Algeria (Batna): 5th consecutive day of rioting against transfer of solar energy company to another region

4/1/16:

Algeria, Hazoua: unemployed youths close the border with Algeria in movement against unemployment, demanding redistribution of agricultural land

8/4/15:

Algeria, Kais: stones v tear gas, as those excluded from housing list blockade main road

19/3/15:

Algeria, Azazga: climate of war as mayor is imposed on town by the central states's riot cops

1/3/15:

Algeria, Salah: shale gas riots – local administration building set alight (in French)...40 cops injured (in English) “Protesters set fire to the headquarters of In-Salah district and the residence of the district chief, as well as part of a police dormitory and a police truck.” ...Tamanrasset: anti-shale gas riots spread (in English)

28/2/15:

Algeria, Salah: riots against shale gas/fracking (video [here](#) and [here](#))

28/1/15:

Algeria, Laghouat: 2nd night of clashes between cops and mainly unemployed youths, with cops firing tear gas and rubber bullets (this, in an area of very highly carcinogenic chemicals; see [here](#))

14/1/15:

Algeria, Mostaganem: daïra of Sidi Lakhdar burned and ransacked on 4th day of “uprising” “... clashes between demonstrators and the police resulted in 10 injured, including three in serious condition, 25 arrests and the ransacking of the headquarters of Daira and the adjoining housing function, as well as the destruction of furniture and documents and other computer equipment. On the fourth day of the uprising of the people of Sidi Lakhdar, the event that was meant to be peaceful degenerated into clashes between protesters and security forces. According to corroborating testimonies, long before sunrise, members of the riot squad intervened to dislodge the people camped outside the gates of the daïra....shortly before noon, when the fighting reached its peak, ten were reported injured, including three seriously. Parents report ... a young demonstrator...had to have his leg amputated. According to several witnesses, he was crushed by a

vehicle of the security forces. While thousands of protesters of all ages continued to flock to the site of clashes, police managed to arrest 25 demonstrators....The headquarters of the daïra facing the police station was soon taken over by the demonstrators, who burnt two cars, and unceremoniously sacked the administrative offices. Another group then attacked the head of daïra housing who miraculously managed to evacuate his family. The latter had remained locked in during the first three days of rioting....On the main street that leads to the Daira, the protesters decided to ostentatiously sit a few meters from the riot squads. Others have settled on waiting room chairs taken onto, and blocking, the street. The night promises to not bode well. ...All speak of provocation on the part of law enforcement. All maintain their main demand is the departure of head of daïra and the establishment of a ministerial inquiry. On the way back, we passed no fewer than 12 riot squad vehicles who have returned from Sidi Bel Abbes to lend a hand to those already there. The night could be very agitated in this charming seaside city, whose streets are littered with cobbles and stones brought by tractors from the countryside” [SamFanto note: I’m having internet problems; when they’re sorted I’ll be able to do a bit of research into exactly what this uprising is about.]

4/1/15:

Algeria: movement against shale gas spreads to 3 towns

21/12/14:

Algeria, Baraki: very heavy clashes with cops as mass eviction from and demolition of old part of town begins

14/12/14:

Algeria, Tebesbest: town hall partially burnt in furious confrontation over land distribution

“Administrative documents and equipment were destroyed in the fire...It all started on Saturday night when the worst off people got wind of the list of beneficiaries of plots of land allocated by the municipality as social aid. ... the angry protesters barricaded the road with tires that they set alight. The intervention of the police turned to confrontation. Clashes that lasted all night, increased in the day with the burning of the town hall....protesters put forward social demands related to drinking water supply and allocation of land...These incidents happened ten days after the deadly riots that occurred in the town of Nezla in the same daïra of Touggourt, and for the same reasons, riots that resulted in thirty dead and as many wounded.”

30/11/14:

Algeria, Bejaia: several streets around the prefecture barricaded in movement about social housing allocations; stones thrown at cops but cops keep their distance

28/11/14:

Algeria, Touggourt: 2 killed as demonstrators storm police station “The violence erupted after residents protested against the delay by the authorities “in allocating land plots, construction and connection to drinking water”...protesters blocked a main road leading to the huge Hassi Messaoud oil field nearby. The security forces intervened with tear gas and batons to disperse the

protesters, who then headed towards the police station, trying to seize it. It was at this point that the two protesters died...”

20/10/14:

Algeria, Algiers: 100 or so rioters block tunnel in protest against housing allocation policies

14/10/14:

Algeria, Oued el mar: riots over last 2 days because of long delays in installation of gas and electricity; HQ of the local municipal council stormed

27/9/14:

Algeria, Chlef: gendarmes clash with players and supporters after they go onto pitch at amateur football match



15/8/14:

Algeria, Algiers: riot over housing, rocks flying

28/6/14:

Algeria, Biskra: residents block main intersection in protest against lack of water supply

8/6/14:

Algeria: clashes with cops over housing problems spread to different areas “Clashes broke out Sunday afternoon in Laghouat, when dozens of young people, having previously taken part in a sit-in in front of the daïra to raise claims related to housing, improvised a march to the headquarters of the province and demanded to meet the leaders of the administration. The situation escalated into clashes with police that have spread to other areas, including that of Esseddiqya. This protest resulted in a dozen policemen being injured before calm returned in the late afternoon.”

17/4/14:

Algeria, Kabylie: youths attack election con and democracy’s cops “...groups of youths seeking to disrupt voting in the Bouria region, southeast of Algiers, ransacked polling stations in three

localities shortly after they opened at 0700 GMT, with the police firing to disperse them....Forty-one people were injured in the unrest, including 28 policemen” [Video](#) here: “We’re not supporting anyone, we’re not with either candidate. **We’re fed up with Power. We’re fed up with this system. We’re fed up with everything in Algeria.**” (more [here](#) and [here](#) in French...less than 17% turnout in most areas of Kabylie)

5/4/14:

[Algeria, Kabylie: violent clashes with cops over election cons](#)

18/3/14:

[Algeria: student movement in Berber area block roads with burning tyres](#)

4/9/13:

[Algeria: clashes between protesters and cops as demo against water shortages surround town hall](#)

