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## MOURAD DHINA

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF ALGERIA'S FUTURE

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#### Foreword

*This is a very short biography of Mourad Dhina, who remains in detention at the Prison de la Santé in Paris for his possible extradition to Algeria. This biography was written hastily to meet the need of the public to learn more about the man the Algerian military regime is trying again to neutralise and tarnish.*

*This is an unauthorised biography, first because it has not been read and approved by Mourad Dhina, and secondly because it is unlikely he would have authorised it had he been asked beforehand. He is utterly unpretentious and does not like to talk about himself.*

*This account would not have been possible without the contribution of family members, friends and colleagues. They are all thanked for the valuable information and insights they provided.*

*The facts reported in this biography were corroborated by the acquaintances of Mourad Dhina. We bear full responsibility for any error in this text.*

Hoggar Institute  
January 31, 2012

Mourad Dhina was born on the eve of Algeria's independence, on 6 August 1961, in Blida. He is the fifth in a family of five sisters and four brothers. He comes from a well-known family in Laghouat, a town at the gate of the Algerian Sahara, whose history is woven with spirituality, resistance to French colonisation and intellectual vitality.<sup>1</sup>

## **Family background**

When Mourad was born, his father, Mohamed Dhina, was under arrest in Blida. This detention came after a series of internments at the camps of Ain-Oussera, Bossuet in Sidi-Bel-Abbes, and Arcole in Arzew, which followed his arrest just after the national strike on 28 January 1957, on the eve of the debate of the Algerian issue at the UN. Mohamed Dhina – born in Laghouat on 23 February 1920 and died on 10 November 2000 – was an independence activist of the first hour. As secretary of the Democratic Union of the Algerian Manifesto (UDMA) of Laghouat, a party led by Ferhat Abbas, he wrote and raised awareness for the national cause and strived politically with Mohamed Bensalem for the independence of Algeria. Two months after the declaration of 1 November 1954, Laghouat joined the armed struggle. Mohamed Dhina, who had joined the National Liberation Front, contributed to the structuring of the first nucleus of guerrillas in the region, a core which expanded into groups of mujahideen in the Gaada Mountain in the chain of Djebel Amour (Aflou).<sup>2</sup> Because of his revolutionary activities in the Wilaya VI, he was targeted by the colonial army and the armed militias of Bellounis controlled by the French.<sup>3</sup> His cousin, Tahar Dhina, died in battle at the time.

At independence, Mohamed Dhina became the first sub-prefect of Laghouat before taking up the same post in Touggourt. He was subsequently demoted to the level of special representative and sent to Médéa, a penalty inflicted on him by Ahmed Ben Bella for his friendship and support of Colonel Chaabani. This sanction ended in August 1965<sup>4</sup> when he was appointed secretary general of the Wilaya of El Asnam, then Ouargla until November 1971,<sup>5</sup> after which he was appointed secretary general of the Wilaya of Batna, a position he held until his retirement.

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Left picture: Laghouat UDMA elected councillors in 1947. Mohamed Dhina, with a fez, is standing second from the right. Right picture: With Colonel Mohamed Chaabani on the day of independence in Laghouat.

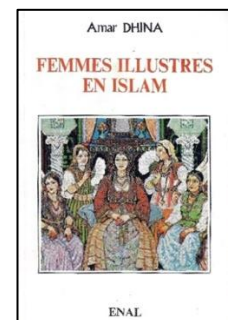
Mohamed Dhina is the second son of Abdelkader Dhina, one of the first indigenous teachers who graduated from the *Ecole Normale d'Instituteurs d'Alger-Bouzaréa* in 1896. Although talented, he did not continue his studies to avoid French naturalisation.<sup>6</sup> Two other sons of Abdelkader Dhina were successful academics.



Abdelkader Dhina

Atallah Dhina, a former director of education of Laghouat, a doctor of history from the University of Paris, taught at the Institute of History of the University of Algiers, of which he was also a director. He has published numerous books and articles.<sup>7</sup>

Amar Dhina, the eldest son of Abdelkader, born on 9 April 1902 at Laghouat and eighteen years older than Mohamed, is particularly important to



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mention because he took charge of the education of Mourad. After primary and secondary education at Kourdane and Médéa, respectively, he went to the *Ecole Normale d'Instituteurs d'Alger-Bouzaréa*, where he graduated as a teacher.<sup>8</sup> When Sheikh Mubarak El Mili, sent by the Association of Ulama, came to teach in Laghouat in 1927, Amar left his job as a teacher to assist Sheikh El Mili in his education and awareness raising mission. He studied the Arabic language and assisted Sheikh El Mili in the drawing of maps for the latter's impressive work 'The History of Algeria'.<sup>9</sup> Amar then went to France to study pedagogy.<sup>10</sup> From 1933 to 1940, he taught in Miliana while pursuing a higher education. He later taught at the Modern College of Blida,<sup>11</sup> and passed the higher education *agrégation* in Arabic language and literature in 1951.<sup>12</sup> After independence he was appointed General Inspector of Arabic education at the Ministry of Education and taught Islamic civilisation at the University of Algiers.<sup>13</sup> A humble and devout man, a fine teacher and an erudite — he was much interested in history, geography, astronomy and painting as in his own field of expertise — he dedicated his entire life to teaching and research until his death in December 1987.<sup>14</sup> He has published numerous books and articles.<sup>15</sup> In recognition of his achievements, the Amar Dhina Technical College of Laghouat is named after him.



From left to right: Atallah, Amar and Mohamed Dhina

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It was in this spiritual, intellectual and patriotic environment that Mourad grew up. He was educated mainly by his eldest uncle, Amar Dhina, with whom he had lived in Blida and had awakened his mind and natural curiosity. His father, in turn, had taught him courage and the sense of responsibility.

**The scientist**

Mourad Dhina attended Blida's Ibn Rushd high school. As a talented student he obtained in 1979 outstanding high school grades which won him a reception and award by the then President Chadli Bendjedid. He



Institute of physics, University of Algiers

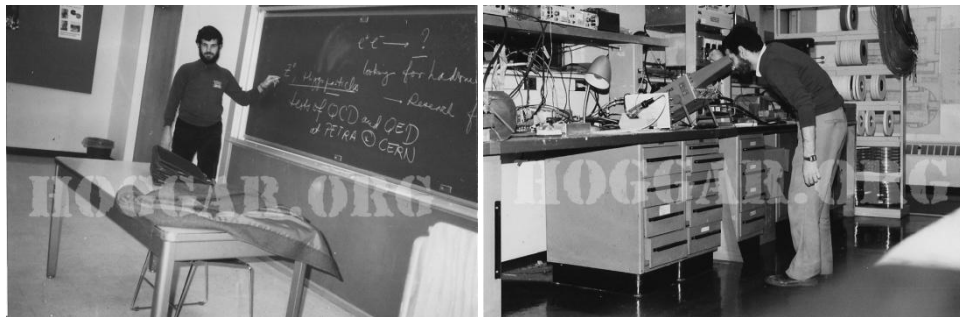
then embarked on a four-year graduate course in physics at the University of Science and Technology of Algiers, which he completed in June 1983. Having achieved the top grade in the physics course, he was awarded a scholarship to study physics at the post-graduate level in the United States.<sup>16</sup>

In the autumn of 1983 Mourad Dhina left Algeria for the United States. He attended a short English course before joining the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) near Boston, one of the best universities in the world in science and technology. He completed a master's degree in Physics in one year (1985) and then went on to study for a PhD with the group of Professor Samuel



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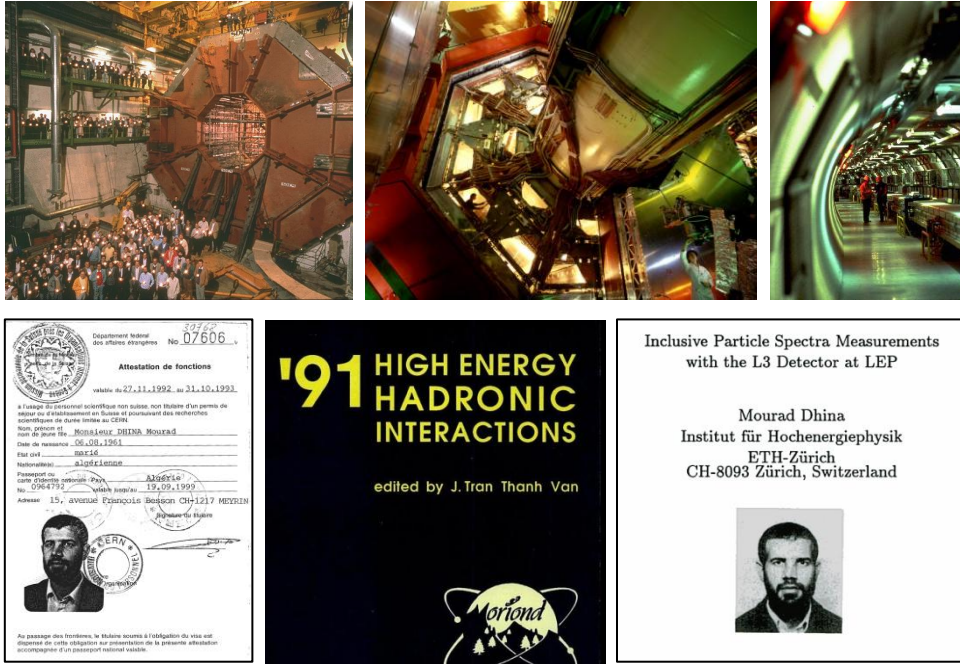
Ting, Nobel Laureate in Physics.<sup>17</sup> His thesis in experimental particle physics, led by Professor Min Chen, focused on the measurement of the strong force through hadrons produced by electron-positron collisions at high energies. The electron-positron collider (PETRA<sup>18</sup>) used by Mourad Dhina for his measurements was at DESY (*Deutsches Elektronen-Synchrotron*<sup>19</sup>), the largest German Research Centre for Particle Physics in Hamburg. Mourad Dhina completed his PhD in April 1987, within less than two years.<sup>20</sup>



In July of that year, Mourad Dhina was recruited as an experimental physicist at the prestigious Department of Physics of ETHZ,<sup>21</sup> the Federal Polytechnic School in Zurich. He contributed to the work on the L3 detector of LEP (large electron-positron collider), the most powerful accelerator at the time, with a perimeter of 27 km and passing one hundred meters below the CERN site, between France and Switzerland. Mourad Dhina worked as part of an international team of physicists which carried out dozens of experiments for measuring the parameters of the electroweak force, testing theories of the electromagnetic and strong forces, searching for the Higgs

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boson and exploring the existence of new particles and forces.<sup>22</sup> He has contributed to dozens of scientific papers.<sup>23</sup>



Despite being engaged in exciting research at the forefront of fundamental physics, Mourad Dhina did not succumb to the temptation of careerism or the cult of individualistic success. Since leaving Algeria, he had taken a keen interest in raising the scientific level of research in the country and had debated extensively with fellow countrymen on how to achieve this aim. He took an active role in the ANTA<sup>24</sup> project, a network of Algerian engineers and researchers in North America, Europe and in Algeria who joined efforts to facilitate the transfer of technology to the country. Mourad Dhina initiatives included a blueprint to form a national group of experimental physicists, securing funds to train Algerian physicists at CERN, a proposal for developing an advanced telecommunication

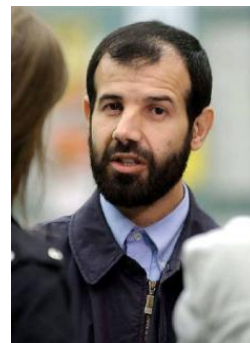
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network, the acquirement of computers for students, and the volunteering of technical advice etc.<sup>25</sup> His efforts and the problems he encountered, when dealing with the national institutions through which he had sought to contribute to technology transfer, convinced him that science and technology cannot take root and flourish in a political environment that subjugates men and minds.<sup>26</sup>

These activities occurred during the 'democratic recess', a sarcasm used to denote the premature 'Algerian Spring' between 1988 and 1991. In October 1988 Algeria had been rocked by youth riots which were put down by the army.<sup>27</sup> Hundreds of Algerians were killed and hundreds were tortured.<sup>28</sup> The army, which seized power after independence, then tried to re-legitimise itself by pretending to agree to a democratic transition. It withdrew from the Central Committee of the sole party (FLN) and appointed a defence minister to fake a disengagement from the political control of the country. A new constitution (1989) enshrining multiparty democracy and the independence of justice was adopted, censorship declined, and private newspapers and civic associations mushroomed. This was a moment of optimism, and a whole generation dreamt of being able, at last, to build an Algeria worthy of its history.

### **Opposition to the coup**

The interruption of the democratic transition shattered those dreams, and disrupted the life of Mourad Dhina as it did for millions of Algerians. On 11 January 1992 the army carried out a coup. The first free and fair parliamentary elections since independence had given the majority to the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), and this did not fit with the democratic facade the army had planned for. The army cancelled the elections, removed





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President Chadli from office and replaced him with a High Council of State, and then began the destruction of the FIS. Thousands of FIS leaders and members, and real or imagined supporters were arrested, deported and detained without charges and court indictments in camps in the Sahara desert. Many of them were tortured. Scattered and radicalized fragments of the party responded to state violence by counter-violence and started killing policemen, soldiers and officials. Thus, Algeria plunged into a spiral of violence which got worse and worse and would lead, a decade later, to the death of at least 200,000 person<sup>29</sup> (500,000 according to the president of the Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights, Me Abdennour Ali-Yahia<sup>30</sup>), hundreds of thousands of political prisoners and almost as many victims of torture,<sup>31</sup> between 12 000 and 20 000 disappeared,<sup>32</sup> tens of thousands of injured, 1.5 million of internally displaced persons,<sup>33</sup> and hundreds of thousands of exiles.

Despite not being a member of the FIS by that time, Mourad Dhina condemned the military coup and resolved to oppose it. The cost of political integrity under dictatorship is often death, prison, exile or isolation. Even living abroad such a stand carried risks, as the coup was supported by the French State and Western powers, and a massive propaganda aimed at demonising those who opposed the generals' putsch started. Mourad Dhina got first involved in a campaign to raise international awareness about human rights violations in Algeria and he organised several demonstrations. When the generals dissolved the FIS in March 1992, Mourad Dhina decided, in response to this injustice, to join the party. He joined the FIS in Europe as an activist and soon achieved a prominent status through his competence, discipline, consensual approach and dedication. He became a respected voice and influential figure among the leaders of the party.

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On the first anniversary of the coup in January 1993, he organised a meeting with Abdenour Ali-Yahia in Geneva, to raise awareness and discuss arbitrary detention, internment camps in the Sahara and the systematic torture of political detainees.

In 1994, Mourad Dhina and a small group of friends set up the 'Hoggar Print' publishing house, which issued many reports on the human rights situation in Algeria, and would become later the 'Hoggar Institute'. He learnt the offset operating technique and printed himself the first publications of Hoggar, including the three volumes of the *Livre blanc sur la répression en Algérie*,<sup>34</sup> a publication banned in France when it was released.<sup>35</sup>



## **The years of endurance**

Immediately after his appointment as interior minister in late March 1993, Charles Pasqua started to hunt Algerians opposed to the coup. His campaign targeted a number of Algerians. Some were arrested, detained in the Folembrey camp and then deported to Burkina Faso. Mourad Dhina left the French town of Saint-Genis where he had been residing, and found refuge in Geneva. He lost his job at CERN, located on the Franco-Swiss border, and partially controlled by the French state. From



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that moment onwards, Mourad Dhina and his family, who were not granted political asylum, experienced a precarious life that was to last more than ten years.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to these difficulties, Mourad Dhina became the target of smear campaigns by the putsch regime, its media and supporters in Europe. The propaganda orchestrated by the army, now in 'genocidal gear',<sup>37</sup> crippled by fear large sections of society. Fear for one's life or being exposed to media vilification, financial worries about one's family and self-interested political calculation were sufficient reasons to leave the FIS at the time, but Mourad Dhina remained steadfast on the principles that had motivated his stand.

It is the fate of principled opponents of dictatorships to endure the pillory of their propaganda. Mourad Dhina was first accused, in 1994, of providing logistical support, and even weapons, to armed groups in Algeria, on the basis of a report by a police officer in Geneva. It turned out later that this officer was conspiring with an Algerian intelligence officer operating in Switzerland, and that together they had fabricated a list of dozens of Algerian citizens living in Switzerland, several of whom were extra-judicially killed later in Algeria. The two agents were arrested in December 1994. The Swiss Federal Court found them guilty of 'espionage and political intelligence

**Des témoins accablent l'inspecteur genevois  
accusé d'espionnage au profit de l'Algérie**

Deuxième journée du procès qui se déroule à huis clos au Tribunal fédéral: les parties civiles ont démonté l'argumentation de la défense. Un témoin, qualifié de capital, a raconté pourquoi le policier l'avait renvoyé en Algérie, où il a été torturé.

and violation of official secrecy' and sentenced them, on 5 November 1997, to prison and to pay Mourad Dhina 'compensation for moral tort'.<sup>38</sup> At the same moment, the Algerian military ordered a judge to sentence Mourad Dhina in absentia to 20 years imprisonment and instructed the diplomatic corps to seek his extradition.

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The Algerian media attacks suffered by Mourad Dhina often involved labelling him a 'terrorist'. In response to this libel, he said:



« I know my father, peace be upon his soul, was called a 'fellaga', a 'terrorist' and a 'criminal' by the French colonialists, because he would not accept humiliation and to submit to the occupation. France has left our country, thank God. Insults and labels to degrade the value of human beings and to criminalise them are common place. This method has been used by despots against their opponents since the dawn of time. Even the prophets, peace and blessing upon them, have not escaped this kind of abuse. My conscience is clear in this respect. I do not consider myself a terrorist. I have never undertaken an action which violates the rights of people, especially the weak, the victims, and the oppressed who suffered the most from the war imposed on the Algerian people by those who consider themselves the guardians of the people. »<sup>39</sup>

To suggest that he is an 'uncultured' and 'obscurantist' fundamentalist, the propaganda mongers deployed also the accusation against Mourad Dhina that he did not want to condemn the 'murders of intellectuals'. Indeed, there are serious allegations which attribute these murders to Algeria's military intelligence (DRS).<sup>40</sup> In response to these claims Mourad Dhina explained:

« We should mourn all the dead and denounce all the crimes. I am the first to denounce the crimes that have led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of our fellow Algerians. [...] At one point, I spoke of 'leftist intellectuals', it must be noted that in the video there was a break. I mentioned 'leftist intellectuals' during a debate, not broadcast in the documentary, between me and the interviewer, on their identity. The journalist had said that they were 'leftist intellectuals'. I said: 'Listen, it is your opinion, and if you insist on naming them as such, so be it. [...] I do not accept double standards. We

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should not talk of the death of X while forgetting that of Y, whatever may be their identity. For me all the Algerians killed in the tragedy we have lived through deserve respect and we need to know the truth surrounding their fate. I do not accept the labels used here and there. [...] The facts are misrepresented to suit a certain power, and to please some political circles. I do not engage in over politicking at the expense of victims. We must denounce all crimes. And today it is not enough to denounce, and this is where I challenge the so-called intellectuals and democrats. Come with us and let us seek the truth about what has happened in our country. The truth cannot be overlooked. I am personally committed to establishing the whole truth about the war, and I shall accept whatever verdict of this quest for the truth, because we owe it to the memory of all victims.' »<sup>41</sup>

### **Searching for a solution to the crisis**

The psychological pressures of Algeria's generals served only to strengthen the will of Mourad Dhina to find a realistic and balanced way out of the deadlock in Algeria. He had a significant input in the formulation of the FIS position in the discussions, between Algeria's main political forces, that led to the signing, in Rome in January 1995, of the 'Platform for a peaceful political settlement of the Algerian crisis', commonly known as the 'National Contract of Rome'.<sup>42</sup> This platform adopted the principles of rejecting violence to gain or remain in power, civilian control of the army, full acceptance of the principle of political pluralism, respect and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and Islam, as well as Amazigh and Arabic cultures as the basic elements of Algerian identity.<sup>43</sup>

In October 1997, Mourad Dhina became the spokesman of the Coordination Council of the FIS (CCFIS). The CCFIS published on 11 January 1999 the 'FIS Manifesto for justice and peace in Algeria'<sup>44</sup> which outlines a vision for the restoration of peace and justice as well as the political reforms to be undertaken — particularly those relating to civil-military relations — to safeguard the freedoms and human, political, and socio-economic rights of Algerians.<sup>45</sup>

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Whereas this manifesto speaks of rights, Mourad Dhina thinks in terms of duties, and he regards the resources and opportunities that life has made available to him as no more than a source of responsibility. He makes himself available to all initiatives to build bridges between Algerian intellectuals and politicians, who are widely perceived as a particularly fractious lot divided by ideological or political differences, fear or personal ambition.

In June 2000, he took part in a symposium, attended by Algerian political figures, on the 'Actual dimensions of the Algerian crisis' and co-signed the 'Geneva Declaration' for the resolution of the Algerian conflict.<sup>46</sup> This declaration calls for



From left to right: Mohamed Harbi, Mourad Dhina, Abdennour Ali-Yahia and Abdelhamid Brahimi

giving up 'the facade of pluralism and mutual demonization' and 'clientelistic and police management of politics', and to 'restore dialogue between Algerians' and 'launch a genuine national reconciliation' process which respects 'the obligation of memory, truth and justice'. To overcome the crisis, it advocates a consensus 'around four major non-negotiable principles: respect for multi-party elections, freedom of the press, independence of justice, effective legal equality of citizens without discrimination'.

## **The FIS aggiornamento**

In 2001, Mourad Dhina was asked by Madani Abbassi, President of FIS, to organise the party Congress. On 3 and 4 August 2002, the Congress of the 'Martyr Abdelkader Hachani' took place in Europe and appointed Mourad Dhina as the interim chief of the FIS National Executive Board. This conference, held in difficult conditions and a very tense post-September 11 context, was described by many observers of the Algerian political scene as an important step in the life of the FIS which adopted, at last, basic institutional texts: statutes, rules and a political platform.<sup>47</sup>



At the invitation of the Ireland Algeria Solidarity Group, which had launched in February 2002 the 'Dublin Initiative for a Peaceful, Just and Political Settlement in Algeria', Mourad Dhina later outlined in the Irish Parliament a proposal to end the crisis, which was based primarily on the principles of the 'National Contract of Rome'.<sup>48</sup>

In 2003, Mourad Dhina oversaw the publication of *FIS du peuple: Politique, droit et prison en Algérie*,<sup>49</sup> which is a legal, political and human justification for the release of the FIS leaders and all prisoners of conscience in Algeria.

On 13 October 2004, a year after the release from prison of the president and vice-president of FIS, Mourad Dhina announced his

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resignation from the party. In a statement released to justify this departure, he invoked 'organisational dysfunctions' of the party and the non-compliance 'by principle or in practice, with the texts and decisions of the party, and sometimes the unwillingness to refer or conform to the regulations in the day to day management and policy positions'.<sup>50</sup> Thus, Mourad Dhina left the FIS when he realised that 'after several attempts to establish institutional work procedures within the FIS, we must recognise that these attempts have failed'.<sup>51</sup>

After his resignation from the FIS, Mourad Dhina continued to express publicly his position in an independent manner. He maintained a critical view of civil-military relations and expressed the opinion that the 'national reconciliation charter' of the regime aimed at enshrining impunity.<sup>52</sup> Despite his resignation from the FIS, his steadfast positions on such key issues earned him, on 20 June 2005, a new life sentence in absentia, on the basis of ludicrous confessions extracted under torture from a citizen arrested in Algiers.

Mourad Dhina took the time to deepen his knowledge on effective methods of bringing about a profound political change in Algeria. This reinforced his conviction that only a wide alliance, beyond ideological differences, could force the military to accept the people's sovereignty.



This motivation spurred him to take part in discussions with Algerian citizens from various backgrounds. Of these exchanges was born, in April 2007, the Rachad – pronounced Rashad – movement.<sup>53</sup>

### **The Rachad alternative**

Mourad Dhina and his colleagues conceived Rachad as a movement, not a party, because





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they believe that the current political system does not allow for real political activity and Algerians cannot freely choose their delegates to implement the programme for which they get elected.<sup>54</sup> Rachad seeks to establish the 'rule of law and good governance' in which 'political authority is legitimate, civil, sovereign, just, social, provident, participatory, effective, transparent and accountable'.<sup>55</sup> To achieve this goal, Rachad adopts 'non-violent means' and 'intends to involve all segments of Algerian society'.<sup>56</sup> Rachad is a movement led in a collegial manner.<sup>57</sup>

Since the setting-up of Rachad, the military regime has continued to use the stick and carrot policy against Mourad Dhina and other members of this movement. On the one hand, the generals have been using their diplomatic and media tools to smear him as a dangerous terrorist and pressure the European states to extradite him to Algeria. On the other hand, they have been promising him, through many emissaries, including ministers and ambassadors, many privileges if he were to join the regime, as other political opponents have done before. Just as he had faced with patience material precariousness and smear campaigns, Mourad Dhina rejected these political inducements and refused any negotiation with the military regime that is not conducted in a public and transparent manner and that does not associate all the political stakeholders in the country.



From left to right: Mourad Dhina, Rachid Mesli and Mohamed-Larbi Zitout, from Rachad's Secretariat

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In 2007, Mourad Dhina was appointed Executive Director of the *Alkarama* Foundation for Human Rights, a Swiss organisation founded by Arab Human Rights advocates, which focuses its efforts on extra-judicial executions, disappearances, torture and arbitrary detention in the Arab world.<sup>58</sup> *Alkarama*, which works with the UN human rights instruments and has become a recognised NGO in the Arab world in recent years, defends the victims of human rights violations without discrimination: men and women, Islamic and secular Arabs, Sunnis and Shiites, Christians persecuted by the Egyptian regime and Jews persecuted in Yemen.



Geneva 2009. With Abbas Aroua and Alkarama award for human rights laureate Ali-Yahia Abdenmour

Mourad Dhina took part in the conference which brought together various Algerian political and intellectual figures to discuss the 'Prospects for political change in Algeria', in November 2008 in Geneva.<sup>59</sup> The final communiqué stressed 'the need for changing the regime' in a 'radical, consensual and non-violent' manner and the requirement to include 'all the forces that aspire to this change, whatever their ideologies, political line or constituency'.<sup>60</sup>

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Geneva 2008. Left picture, from left to right: Mourad Dhina, Rachid Maalaoui, Ahmed Benmohamed, Djamaleddine Benchennouf and Abdelhamid Mehri. Right picture: Mourad Dhina with Salaheddine Sidhoum

Since 2007, long before the advent of the ‘Arab Spring’, Mourad Dhina has been organising Rachad workshops to debate on the various non-violent means one may use to change totally the political system in Algeria. In these workshops he often discusses the various definitions of non-violence, the evolution of non-violent struggles throughout history, and experiences — successes and failures — of non-violent political change in the world.<sup>61</sup> For Rachad, non-violence is not an act of submission, avoidance or compromise in the conflict. It is a form of struggle that seeks to use political, economic, social and moral pressure to achieve the goal of change. It is morally and strategically the most effective methods for bringing about a radical political change. Just as the non-violent struggle may have moderate or limited reforming objectives, it may also aim for an overthrow of the imposed order. It requires a commitment of those leading the fight not to use violence knowing they are likely to be harmed by the power against which they struggle. It requires therefore patience and discipline, and resistance capabilities against repression. It does not necessarily require a charismatic leader, saints or exceptional people. The ‘Arab Spring’ showed that ordinary citizens can carry out this struggle.

For Mourad Dhina, freedom of expression and thought are not empty slogans. He embodies them in his public and private

behaviour. He listens with attention, patience and respect to his critics and defends assiduously the right to expression of those who have questionable opinions or are inarticulate.<sup>62</sup> Within Rachad, Mourad Dhina committed himself



particularly to overcoming the obstacles to freedom of expression in Algeria. He is the architect and driving force behind the Rachad television project, first on the Internet in 2010, then by satellite in 2011. Rachad has made this tool available to people across the Algerian political spectrum.<sup>63</sup> Rachad TV was designed as an alternative media to 'provide a space for dialogue between Algerians', to 'give voice to the voiceless', to 'reflect the diversity of culture and opinions in Algerian society', to 'encourage non-violent political change', 'to promote good governance' and 'contribute to a genuine reconciliation which meets the requirements of truth, memory, justice and forgiveness'. Its code of ethics requires representing even the positions of the regime through its spokesmen. Even politicians who participated in the coup of January 1992 were invited to express their positions on Rachad TV.

### **Trial and perseverance**

On October 20, 2011, General Khaled Nezzar, the former defence minister of the military regime, was arrested in Switzerland, to be heard by the police, following complaints against him for crimes against humanity made by many Algerian survivors of torture. On January 11, 2012, on the twentieth anniversary of the military coup, Rachad organised a protest in front the Algerian regime's embassy in Paris.

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On the left, general Nezzar. Right, 11 January 2012 demonstration in Paris

On 16 January 2012, Mourad Dhina was arrested at Orly airport just before boarding a flight to Geneva, after a meeting of Rachad in Paris. The prosecutor confirmed during the hearing the next day that the arrest followed a request for extradition by the Algerian authorities, who accuse him of having committed terrorist acts in Zurich, Switzerland, between 1997 and 1999. While the Swiss authorities have consistently refused to act on the numerous requests for arrest and extradition, made by the Algerian regime, the French judge decided to detain Mourad Dhina pending extradition proceedings.



At the time of this writing, it has been three weeks since Mourad Dhina was taken from his family. Mourad Dhina is married to an Algerian since 1986 and is the father of six children. Contrary to the claims of some Algerian newspapers, Mourad Dhina does not live in luxury, but he and his family reside in a modest apartment in Meyrin, a commune in the canton of Geneva, where they are well integrated and appreciated for their respect, righteousness and participation in the life of the community.

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Mourad Dhina's family, friends and colleagues miss him. Despite his detention he is in high spirits. He remains calm and steadfast as he knows that the dictatorship colludes, but it is God who concludes. He draws his patience from his faith, Islam, which takes its name, not from its laws or prohibitions, but from 'a moment of cognition, from the strength of the soul to face the times, from the readiness to endure everything that an existence can offer, from the truth of submission to God'<sup>64</sup>.



Mourad Dhina once said: 'I am honoured to have been condemned by tyrants. History will, one day, vindicate me.'<sup>65</sup>

Those who persecute Mourad Dhina and oppress the Algerian people belong to the past, the cemetery of betrayed oaths, wasted lives and regrets. The future belongs to God, to Algeria and its faithful children.

'Mourad Dhina is an Algerian Erdoğan, he defends an Islam compatible with human rights and democracy,' said the eminent political scientist Lahouari Addi.<sup>66</sup> He still has bright chapters of his life to give to Algeria.



Tahrir Square, Cairo, 25 January 2012

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The city started its armed resistance at the beginning of the French occupation (1830) and continued fighting until the death of Sheikh Musa, leader of the uprising, in 1848. In December 1852, half the town was decimated by resisting a siege by General Pelissier, General Bouscaren and General Valentini. Krim Belkacem (1922-1970), one of the main leaders of the Algerian revolution (1954-1962), said that he learnt the meaning of patriotism in Laghouat. Laghouat is also the birthplace of the Sufi Tidjania order and has been a breeding ground of educated men.

<sup>2</sup> The core group was made up of activists who had served in World War II, including the martyr Keririche nicknamed 'Qhiwa'. During one of its first operations, this small group shot down a French reconnaissance aircraft at Settafa, 60 kilometres south of Laghouat.

<sup>3</sup> He escaped an assassination attempt by an armed group under the command of 'Colonel' Bellounis in the town of Seridja, 10 km from Laghouat.

<sup>4</sup> Official Gazette of the Republic of Algeria, 24 September 1965, p. 853.

<sup>5</sup> Official Gazette of the Republic of Algeria, 19 November 1971, p. 1239.

<sup>6</sup> Illustrated history of the Ecole Normale d'Alger-Bouzaréa.

<sup>7</sup> The books he published include: 'The states of the Muslim West in the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries', 'The Abdulwadid Kingdom at the time of Abu Musa Hammu I and Abu Tachfin I', and 'The Sultanate of Abdulwadid in the fourteenth century'.

<sup>8</sup> [www.sidielhadjaissa.com](http://www.sidielhadjaissa.com)

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* The maps in this book were drawn and commented on by Amar Dhina.

<sup>10</sup> He holds the 'Certificat d'aptitude au professorat de l'enseignement supérieur' (CAPES), which refers to a degree enabling its holder to teach in higher education. See [www.sidielhadjaissa.com](http://www.sidielhadjaissa.com).

<sup>11</sup> It was renamed 'IbnRushd College' after independence.

<sup>12</sup> See [www.sidielhadjaissa.com](http://www.sidielhadjaissa.com).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> The titles of his published books include 'Statesmen and warriors', 'Caliphs and rulers', 'Illustrious women in Islam', 'Major figures of Islam, Turning points in the history of Islam: From the Battle of Badr to the attack of Algiers by Charles V', 'Knowledge of Arabic literature', 'The Cities of the Muslim East and West', 'Manual for spoken Arabic beginners'. His articles include items such as 'Notes on the phonetics and morphology of Arba speaking', *Revue Africaine*, Vol. 82 (1938) pp. 313-353, and 'Arabic texts from the south of Algiers', *Revue Africaine*, Vol. 84 (1940) pp. 93-113.

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<sup>16</sup> Several Algerian physicists remember him as a smiling, courteous and modest student who used to get the top marks in all exams without too much effort (private communication).

<sup>17</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel\\_C.\\_C.\\_Ting](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_C._C._Ting)

<sup>18</sup> Positron-Electron Tandem Ring Accelerator.

<sup>19</sup> German electron synchrotron.

<sup>20</sup> <http://dspace.mit.edu/bitstream/handle/1721.1/14861/17850868.pdf?sequence=1>

<sup>21</sup> ETH stands for Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich. This department has seven winners of the Nobel Prize in Physics including Röntgen, Einstein and Pauli.

<sup>22</sup> See Physics Reports Vol. 236, Nos. 1 & 2 (1993) pp. 1-146.

<sup>23</sup> [http://hoggar.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=3148:liste-des-publications-scientifiques-de-mourad-dhina&catid=94:hoggar&Itemid=36](http://hoggar.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3148:liste-des-publications-scientifiques-de-mourad-dhina&catid=94:hoggar&Itemid=36)

<sup>24</sup> Anta is an acronym for الجزائر إلى عملية نقل التكنولوجيا. It has also the meaning of 'you' to evoke personal responsibility.

<sup>25</sup> Private communication with Algerian physicists.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Several causes have been attributed to the riots: the end of historic legitimacy of the regime, facade socialism, feelings of injustice, the arrogance of the FLN leaders, the impunity of law enforcers, open corruption, and violent suppression of demands for freedom.

<sup>28</sup> 'Octobre: Ils parlent', *Le Matin*, Algiers 1988; A. Charef, *Algérie 1988: Un Chahut de gamins*, Laphomic, Algiers 1990; Special report of the daily *Le Matin* of 5 October 2000.

<sup>29</sup> Y Bedjaoui, A Aroua and M Aït-Larbi (eds), *An Inquiry into the Algerian Massacres*, Hoggar, Geneva 1999.

<sup>30</sup> Ali Yahia Abdenour, 'La grande question est de savoir comment l'armée va réagir au lendemain des élections législatives', *El Watan* week-end, 06 January 2012.

<sup>31</sup> Comité Algérien des Militants Libres de La Dignité Humaine et des Droits de l'Homme (CAMLDHDH – Algerian committee for human dignity and human rights), *Le Livre Blanc sur la Répression en Algérie (1991-1995)*, Tome 1, 2 et Supplément, Hoggar, Genève 1995 & 1996 ; 2003. منتدى باحثي شمال إفريقيا تحقيق عن التعذيب في الجزائر، دار هوقار للنشر، جينيف

<sup>32</sup> A. Ali-Yahia, (President of LADDH), 'Algeria, October 1988 to October 1998: A Ten Year Crisis', Lecture at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 5 October 1998; Mr Khelili, (president of National Union of Algerian Lawyers), 'Disappearances after abduction by the security forces', University of Geneva, 26 October 1999; R. Fisk, 'One man's heroic fight against a regime with a taste for torture', *The Independent*, 30 October 1997; Algeria-Watch, 'Disappearances in Algeria following the abduction by the security forces', March 1999; Algeria-Watch and Salah-Eddine Sidhoum,



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'Enforced disappearances in Algeria: a crime that endures', January 2007, updated in January 2009.

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/global-overview-2010-africa-algeria.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> Report prepared by the Algerian committee for human dignity and human rights, which includes lawyers, doctors and advocates of human rights. It is available in PDF format at [www.hoggar.org](http://www.hoggar.org).

<sup>35</sup> See the French state document here:

[http://www.hoggar.org/index.php?option=com\\_flexicontent&view=items&cid=589:islam-&id=2541](http://www.hoggar.org/index.php?option=com_flexicontent&view=items&cid=589:islam-&id=2541)

<sup>36</sup> Yacine Benlemnour, from the Arabic-language weekly *Almouhaqiq*, asked Mourad Dhina about the claim, in the Algerian press, that he had a golden salary and lived in a villa in a luxurious area of Geneva. Mourad Dhina replied: 'Regarding my financial situation, I assure you that if I had wanted a comfortable life, I would have taken a different path. Material life came to me with open arms; I had an important job in Switzerland until the 1990s, after I got my Ph.D. from the most prestigious American university before the age of 26. After the coup, I could not enjoy a comfortable life while my brothers were getting killed. I paid a high price for my position and I pray to God that what I did was only for Him. To this day I do not have a passport or official documents, be they Algerian or otherwise. My refusal to compromise with Western governments has deprived me of my most basic rights. And I seek assistance from no one except God. My coming to Switzerland was the will of God, and I shall leave this country with His permission, and I accept in advance what God has in store for me. Thank God, I have never compromised my principles. I assure you, Sir, I do not live a villa. I live in an apartment in a building that people regard as of the lowest quality in Switzerland.' (Yacine Benlemnour, *Al-Mouhaqiq* (Investigator), No. 40, 16-22 December 2006).

<sup>37</sup> This propaganda depicts FIS members as 'terrorists', 'criminals', 'barbarians', 'fascists', 'green Khmers', 'fanatics', 'fundamentalists', 'madmen', 'rats', 'rabid dogs', 'vermin', 'Hydra', 'insects', 'rascals', 'wretched', 'filthy', 'nauseating', 'AIDS carriers', 'cancerous', and 'parasites' to be 'eradicated'. These characterizations suggest that FIS members are not human and therefore they can be destroyed. It is known that this language often precedes and accompanies genocides.

<sup>38</sup> Swiss Federal Court Case # X.1/1996/ROD.

<sup>39</sup> Yacine Benlemnour, *Al-Mouhaqiq* (Investigator), No. 40, 16-22 December, 2006.

<sup>40</sup> See for example Arezki Aït-Larbi, « Assassinat de Tahar Djaout : un crime sans coupables », *Le Matin* 26 May 2001, Monika Borgmann, *Saïd Mekbel, une mort à la lettre*, Téraèdre & Dar al-Jadeed, Paris/Beyrouth, 2008, François Gèze, 'Algérie: révélations posthumes du journaliste Saïd Mekbel', 27 February 2008,

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<http://www.rue89.com/2008/02/27/algerie-revelations-posthumes-du-journaliste-said-mekbel>.

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KcpWVp-aYFo> As an example of the dehumanising discourse which was used to justify morally the repression, Mourad Dhina was also falsely accused of condoning the attacks in Paris in 1995. Investigative French journalists attribute these crimes to the Algerian military intelligence (DRS) (see JB Rivoire and Romain Icard, 'Attentats de Paris: On ne pouvait pas les empêcher', Inquiry, Canal +, '90 minutes', November 2002.). In this regard, Mourad Dhina says: 'I was at the receiving end of the same kind of criticism, in an interview with a French TV station, following the 1995 Paris attacks. The two channels, TF1 and Antenne 2, came to interview me. Their question was: "Why do you not condemn the attacks?" I said: "The problem is not the condemnation of your attacks, the problem for me, as an Algerian, is why you keep silent about forty thousand deaths?" At the time it was believed that there were forty thousand dead. We now know the number was unfortunately much higher than that. I then said: "You are silent on the massacres that take place in my country and you want me to mourn the eight dead in Paris." Of course, this was not meant to be a rejoicing on anyone's death in the world. I simply wanted to say that what was hurting me at the time, what made me really sad was what was going on in my country.' See the above-mentioned video recording.

<sup>42</sup> [http://hoggar.org/index.php?option=com\\_flexicontent&view=items&cid=569%3Ale-putsch-et-la-repression-&id=3133%3Acontrat-national&Itemid=13](http://hoggar.org/index.php?option=com_flexicontent&view=items&cid=569%3Ale-putsch-et-la-repression-&id=3133%3Acontrat-national&Itemid=13)

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> [http://hoggar.org/index.php?option=com\\_flexicontent&view=items&cid=569%3Ale-putsch-et-la-repression-&id=3131%3Amanifeste-du-fis-pour-la-justice-et-la-paix&Itemid=13](http://hoggar.org/index.php?option=com_flexicontent&view=items&cid=569%3Ale-putsch-et-la-repression-&id=3131%3Amanifeste-du-fis-pour-la-justice-et-la-paix&Itemid=13)

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> [http://hoggar.org/index.php?option=com\\_flexicontent&view=items&cid=612:activites-&id=2547:les-dimensions-reelles-de-la-crise-algerienne](http://hoggar.org/index.php?option=com_flexicontent&view=items&cid=612:activites-&id=2547:les-dimensions-reelles-de-la-crise-algerienne)

<sup>47</sup> [http://hoggar.org/index.php?option=com\\_flexicontent&view=items&cid=570%3Alere-de-bouteflika-&id=3132%3Aactes-du-congres-du-martyr-hachani&Itemid=13](http://hoggar.org/index.php?option=com_flexicontent&view=items&cid=570%3Alere-de-bouteflika-&id=3132%3Aactes-du-congres-du-martyr-hachani&Itemid=13)

<sup>48</sup> <http://homepage.eircom.net/~irelandalgeriagroup/>

<sup>49</sup> [http://hoggar.org/index.php?option=com\\_flexicontent&view=items&cid=569%3Ale-putsch-et-la-repression-&id=3127%3Ale-fis-du-peuple&Itemid=13](http://hoggar.org/index.php?option=com_flexicontent&view=items&cid=569%3Ale-putsch-et-la-repression-&id=3127%3Ale-fis-du-peuple&Itemid=13)

<sup>50</sup> Open letter to members and supporters of the Islamic Front for Salvation, available at link: [http://www.algeria-watch.org/fr/article/pol/partis/fis\\_lettre.htm](http://www.algeria-watch.org/fr/article/pol/partis/fis_lettre.htm)

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> See the press release of Mourad Dhina on 24 September 2005 available on the link: <http://www.algeria-watch.org/fr/article/pol/amnistie/communiquedhina.htm>, and his contributed paper in the book, « *Quelle réconciliation pour l'Algérie ?* » (Hoggar, 2005), i.e. 'What reconciliation in Algeria?' The paper is available here: [http://hoggar.org/index.php?option=com\\_flexicontent&view=items&cid=610:chapters-](http://hoggar.org/index.php?option=com_flexicontent&view=items&cid=610:chapters-)

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[quelle-reconciliation-pour-lalgerie&id=2570:taire-la-verite-cest-laisser-la-porte-ouverte-au-renouvellement-des-massacres](#)

<sup>53</sup> See the Charter of the Rachad Movement, available at the link: [http://www.rachad.org/index.php?option=com\\_remository&Itemid=92&func=fileinfo&id=6](http://www.rachad.org/index.php?option=com_remository&Itemid=92&func=fileinfo&id=6)

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> [www.rachad.org](http://www.rachad.org)

<sup>58</sup> [www.alkarama.org](http://www.alkarama.org). Before this position, Mourad Dhina worked as a consultant in Information Technology for a private Swiss company.

<sup>59</sup> [http://www.cordoue.ch/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=category&sectionid=4&id=15&Itemid=25](http://www.cordoue.ch/index.php?option=com_content&task=category&sectionid=4&id=15&Itemid=25)

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Mourad Dhina, 'The Non-violence in question', in *Non-Violent Political Change*, in preparation.

<sup>62</sup> In a testimony of this typical aspect of Mourad Dhina's character, the journalist Yacine Benlemnouar introduces an interview with him with these words: 'When interviewing Mourad Dhina [...] one feels one is discussing with an experienced politician and a man of society. Despite our attempts to provoke him with many questions and accusations, he listened to our words with tolerance and defended himself and his ideas calmly.' See the Algerian weekly *Al-Mouhaqiq* (Investigator), No. 40, 16-22 December 2006.

<sup>63</sup> [www.rachad.tv](http://www.rachad.tv)

<sup>64</sup> Alija Ali Izetbegovic, *Islam Between East and West*, American Trust Publications, Indianapolis 1985.

<sup>65</sup> Ian Hamel, 'Mourad Dhina a quitté discrètement le FIS', *Le Matin* (Switzerland), 14 October 2006.

<sup>66</sup> Marie Verdier, *La Croix*, 26 January 2012.