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## THE MASSACRE OF SERKADJI

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*National Union of Algerian Lawyers  
Committee of Constituent Lawyers  
The Families of the Serkadji Victims and Detainees  
Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights*

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## 1. Introduction

The bloody events at the Serkadji prison on 21, 22 and 23 February 1995, following an ‘escape attempt’ or a ‘mutiny’ – depending on the two official versions –, resulted in more than one hundred dead and around ten people injured by offensive weapons, according to an unofficial count. About 1,600 political and ordinary prisoners are detained in this prison located in the heart of one of Algiers’ high security zones.

This massacre – euphemistically called ‘event’ by officials – raises many questions to which the official account has not provided satisfactory answers for the families of the victims, their lawyers, non-governmental organisations of human rights and the public.

How and why did such a bloodbath take place within the walls of a prison, against people who were under the state’s protection?

The causes and the magnitude of this tragedy, the wall of silence that surrounded it, the concealment and the systematic destruction of the evidence that would have helped the truth to come out, as well as the hastened treatment of the consequences of this ‘event’, have led the families of the victims and their lawyers to try and fill the obvious gap left by the official press releases.

They were even more convinced of the necessity of such a quest for the truth when they faced a total refusal to their request of an independent commission of inquiry made up of the families of the victims, lawyers, magistrates and non-governmental human rights organisations.

We also note the following:

- the results of the official investigation, which should have been documented within ten days following the massacre, were never made public;
- the testimonies and televised confessions later appeared to have been extorted through various means;
- the refusal to order protective measures to preserve the material evidence;
- the refusal to publish an official list of the names of the victims.

These are some of the elements which convinced us of the necessity to carry out this work. In this preliminary, the families of the victims and their lawyers have attempted to shed light on an affair which may become, following a similar carnage in the Berrouaghia prison in November 1994, a regular

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pattern in the state's behaviour. This may lead to a dangerous trivialization of the exercise of power, silence about which is akin to complicity.

This investigation has not been easy, particularly because the cover-up surrounding the hastened and secret burial of the victims, the refusal to allow the bodies to be identified and autopsies to be carried out, in addition to the refusal to move the judicial and prison authorities implicated away from the site of the massacre. This work aims to unveil the truth, thanks to the testimonies of the survivors of the massacre, which enabled the reconstruction of the various stages of a plot against defenceless civilians.

The various testimonies from the massacre survivors, the tenacity of the families of the victims — who remained strong despite all the obstacles and the death of their loved ones — and the work carried out by their lawyers have uncovered a premeditated machination

On 25 February 1995, the head of the government announced the setting up of a commission inquiry to include representatives from the Ministry of Justice, and top officials from the police and the *gendarmerie*, under the authority of the Ministry of Justice. But strangely enough, it was then entrusted to the Interior Minister. On 27 February 1995, the media announced the setting up of the commission by the interior minister, but its report has never been made public.

## **2. Background**

The period preceding the massacre, which started on 21 February 1995, was marked by an intense activity within the prison. A series of internal and external transfers of detainees and of reassignment of prison guards took place in a context characterised by extreme pressure and collective sanctions against the prisoners.

### **2.1 Transfer of Detainees**

#### *2.1.1 Internal Transfers*

During a relatively short period preceding the massacre, the prison authorities proceeded to massive inter-cell and inter-ward transfers of detainees in order to regroup prisoners according to criteria known only to them. Many detainees had expressed their concerns to their lawyers or to their families during visits about the many unusual and unexplained transfers they were being subjected to.

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*2.1.2 External Transfers*

External transfers consisted of selective extractions of detainees and condemned prisoners who were serving their sentence in other prisons across the country. They were then gathered at the Serkadji prison. Most of the transferred prisoners came from the prisons of Chlef, Berrouaghia and El Harrach. Not only were these transfers obscure and unexplained, but some of them took place illegally, and can be considered abductions rather than legal transfers. The case of the late Mohamed Aït Bellouk, assassinated in Serkadji after his transfer from El Harrach in January 1995, under mysterious circumstances, is highly significant and raises many questions on the real aim of the transfers.

*2.1.3 Transfers and Breach of the Law***2.1.3A FORCIBLE TRANSFERS**

The transfers from the prison of El Harrach to that of Serkadji appear to breach the law. Indeed, the law prohibits the transfer of prisoners from a given prison without the prior written consent of the public prosecutor's office in charge of the case. However, the detainees of El Harrach were literally abducted and held illegally by hooded strangers. The detainees were transported in the boots of unmarked police vehicles towards unknown destinations. They were hand-tied and blindfolded.

The destination was unknown even to the El Harrach prison authorities, which could not provide information to the lawyers who had come to record the disappearance of their clients. Furthermore, this transfer took place in breach of the law in force since the prisoners had been directly transferred from El Harrach prison to Algiers' central police station. In these premises, they were subjected to various forms of torture and death threats.

In view of these practices which are contrary to the law, the defence lodged a complaint regarding the case of Mohamed Aït Bellouk with the general prosecutor to the special court of Algiers and with the public prosecutor's office competent for the area, El Harrach court. This complaint has remained unanswered ever since the above-mentioned prisoner was assassinated in the prison of Serkadji.

**2.1.3B GROUPING OF DEATH-ROW PRISONERS IN SERKADJI**

The prison authorities deliberately violated the law by detaining in Serkadji the prisoners condemned to the death penalty beyond the time limits allowed by law. They committed an even more serious violation by transfer-

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ring condemned prisoners from central prisons – their legal place of detention – to Serkadji, an ordinary prison which was already overpopulated.

The law clearly states that the condemned prisoners must imperatively be transferred to a purpose-built central prison, within eight days following sentencing. However, it appears from the list of the condemned prisoners that the majority was detained illegally by the prison authority in Serkadji for reasons that remain obscure and unexplained. Strangely, most of these prisoners were killed in the massacre.

In this case too, the law clearly states that condemned must be transferred to central prisons after the sentence is pronounced. The law classified the prisons of Chlef, Tazoult, Tizi-Ouzou and Berrouaghia as central prisons. In total breach of the law, condemned prisoners were in this instance transferred from central prisons to Serkadji, which classified as an ordinary prison.

These transfers, besides being illegal, defy also common sense as the prison of Serkadji is known for its overcrowding. Indeed, it contains more than 1,600 prisoners, that is more than twice its capacity.

It is worth noting that some illegally detained or transferred death-row prisoners as well as transferred defendants awaiting trial were killed during the massacre.

## **2.2 Transfers and Appointments of Prison Staff**

The massacre of Serkadji was also preceded by transfers of guards.

Hamid Mebarki, a guard who had just been hired, was appointed to the wing housing death row inmates. Keeping watch over such special prisoners requires someone with training, qualification, and above all many years of experience. However, the management of the prison appointed this ‘novice’. The same Mebarki is also believed to have led the planning, execution and failure of the alleged escape attempt.

Another strange fact in the prison authorities’ procedures was the appointment of an ordinary guard, Ramdane Selsaf, as the duty officer the night of the massacre.

## **2.3 Pressure and Provocations Suffered by Detainees**

The days preceding the night of the massacre were marked by an increase in the provocations and pressure on prisoners. A climate of fear was thus created, all the more since the violence and vexations suffered by the prisoners were completely unjustified:

- detainees were punished for performing their prayers,
- detainees were beaten on their way to the shower,

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- detainees were savagely beaten by hooded agents during their transport to the court of justice,
- some detainees had their plastic spoons taken away.

The guards were looking for the slightest excuse to send the prisoners to the dungeons of the old prison. The punished detainees were systematically undressed, beaten up and left on the spot for days.

Searches increased in the days preceding the massacre. Strangely, the wing housing the death row prisoners - principal stage of the events - was subjected to a meticulous search in the presence of the director of the prison and outside duty hours... This happened on the eve of 21 February, i.e. a few hours before the events. It is worth noting that periodical, weekly and surprise searches were the norm, however they would be carried out only during the legal working hours.

### **3. The 'Escape Attempt' and its Failure**

The alleged 'escape attempt' took place in conditions that raise many suspicions, in particular about the smuggling of four guns and three grenades, the opening of the cells of the condemned, the failure of the alleged attempt, and above all with regards to the unexplained death of the guards at the very start of the operation.

#### **3.1 Unfolding of the Attempt**

The cells doors of the death row inmates were opened normally, without being broken. It is worth recalling that these cells are equipped with 'security' locks. The director of the prison always gives the keys only to the head guard, to prevent any attempt to duplicate them.

The failure of the so-called attempt remains unexplained: the detainees allegedly reached the last door to end in an incomprehensible failure. The death of the guards, reported to have occurred at the very beginning of the operation, remains unexplained with regard to its objective usefulness and the identity of the party actually responsible. The systematic elimination of most of the detainees who had witnessed the first phase of the operation in addition to direct threats made notably by the general prosecutor against the other detainees, throw a thick veil of confusion and abstruseness on the whole event.

#### **3.2 Failure of the Attempt**

The Serkadji prison is located in a high security zone. It is positioned downhill from the buildings of the Ministry of Defence, the Ali Khodja army barracks and the Algiers' *gendarmerie* barracks, and uphill from the National Gen-

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*darmerie* headquarters. It sits opposite another building of the *gendarmerie*, next to the Bab Jedid police station.

Not only are the site and its surroundings under strict surveillance, but also the ‘attempted escape’ took place during the curfew hours and in a prison known for its rigorous security systems: watchtowers, meticulous searches at the entrance, continuous presence of *gendarmes* within the prison.

Hamid Mebarki, the guard mentioned above, is believed to be the initiator of the escape attempt, the supplier of weapons, and the agent of the failure. The three grenades remained intact and were shown later on TV after the massacre. It was even noted they were inoffensive as one of them did not explode when its pin was pulled out.

#### **4. Hooded and Armed Men Unlock Cells and Wards**

Most survivors of the massacre stress that hooded and armed men suddenly appeared at approximately 5 a.m. and started unlocking some cells and wards. These hooded and armed men then ordered the perplexed prisoners to get out of their cells and wards. The operation then spread to all the cells and wards of the prison. Consequently, the detainees found themselves, without any apparent reason, outside their cells, in a state of total turmoil.

It is still an enigma why these men entered the prison at 5 a.m., precisely after the ‘escape attempt’ had totally failed, when people were asleep. Another mystery is the swiftness with which they carried out an apparently very specific operation, and then disappeared. This is even stranger as, in view of the subsequent events, this operation seems to have created the tension within the prison and served as an excuse, in addition to the ‘escape attempt’, to justify the armed intervention.

#### **5. Prisoners Set up a Crisis Management Team**

Faced with this situation, a group of detainees broke the lock of Abdelkader Hachani’s cell. Consequently Hachani found himself in the courtyard, among a thousand prisoners in turmoil and five corpses including the body of Mohamed Mechrouk, a prisoner murdered by the security forces positioned on the rooftop of the prison. Hachani was then led to a cell, along with Kacem Tadjouri, Yekhlef Cherrati, Mohamed El Wad, Abdelhak Layada and Hacene Kaouane. The decision to contact the authorities was then taken, and Hachani and Layada were appointed to make this contact in order to obtain a peaceful settlement of the situation.

During the first contact, Hachani and Layada offered to:

- give instructions in order to prevent further victims on both sides,
- make contact with the other wings to include their respective leaders into the crisis management team, in order to control the situation effectively,

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- make themselves available to the authorities to find a peaceful outcome to the crisis.

Both parties agreed to the proposal outlined above, and no victim was reported during the ten hours of negotiations. By including the other leaders into the crisis management team, the control of the situation became easier, and an undertaking to deal with the situation peacefully was taken unanimously.

However, the question of guarantees was raised in order to avoid a violent reaction of the task forces. Indeed, the way an identical situation had been dealt with at the Berrouaghia prison on 27 November 1994, in which a horrible and disgraceful massacre had been perpetrated, prompted the prisoners to take a maximum of guarantees. Indeed, there were signs that the authorities intended to use the crisis management team to control the situation, with the aim of unleashing a bloody carnage later.

Such a responsibility was hardly bearable for the members of the team. It was therefore suggested to involve a third party, three lawyers namely: Messrs Abdenour Ali Yahia, Bachir Mecheri and Mustapha Bouchachi. These three lawyers were to record that:

- there were no more than five victims, i.e. those who died at the beginning of the crisis;
- the authorities should carry out the necessary investigations, after a peaceful ending to the crisis, in order to identify those responsible and apply justly and transparently the law.

In exchange, the crisis management team firmly committed itself to getting all the prisoners back into their cells and wards.

A total and violent rejection was the only response from the authorities, under the pretext that the state did not need witnesses. The crisis management team then freed one of the guards held hostage by the prisoners as a sign of goodwill, and kept demanding the lawyers' visit, which the authorities persisted in refusing.

Dreading an assault with devastating consequences, and noticing that there was an obvious intention of carrying out a massacre, the team decided that the prisoners should return to their cells. This decision was indeed carried out by the prisoners, without the knowledge of the authorities. It was only well into the operation that Hachani and Layada notified them.

At that moment, and against all expectations, the authorities chose the violent solution, and abruptly broke the negotiations by locking up the representatives. It was 5:30 p.m., on Tuesday 21 February 1995.

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## **6. Peaceful Solution Deliberately Aborted**

It is worth underlining that the crisis management team had succeeded in reaching a peaceful outcome to the crisis, thanks particularly to:

- its control of the situation, by restoring calm and order among the prisoners in their hundreds;
- the acceptance by the prisoners of all the conditions laid out by the authorities (return to the cells, application of the law against those responsible for the deaths of the guards and those guilty of other offences);
- the effective and immediate movement of return of the prisoners to their cells once the team took this decision.

Despite the fact that they had started to implement the peaceful solution advocated by the crisis management team, the authorities chose the violent option. They abruptly broke off the negotiations by holding the representatives of the crisis management team. The latter were held separately, in total isolation for three days, without any water or food, and in confined rooms normally used as parlours by lawyers. During his confinement, Abdelkader Hachani was subjected to acts of violence, threats and insults from guards who shaved his beard by force.

## **7. The Armed Intervention**

The intervention of the Government's armed forces was executed in three phases:

- elimination of selected prisoners by marksmen as well as mass murder in the courtyard and in wards number 29, 30, 31 and 25;
- finishing off of the injured, mutilations and elimination following a pre-established list;
- torture and humiliation of survivors.

Before detailing each of these three phases, it is necessary to recall the context of this intervention, which turned into a real carnage.

### **7.1 Circumstances of the Armed Intervention**

After the agreement for a peaceful solution, which the prisoners had started to implement, only the request for the presence of lawyers was still being negotiated. Nevertheless, the military authorities totally rejected this request. One colonel ordered the confinement of the crisis team's representatives.

When the prisoners were expecting the representatives to come back, they were surprised to hear, on the megaphone, an order instructing them to return to the cells within the next ten minutes.

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The military authorities asked Layada to convey their demand that Lembarek Boumaarafi, the suspected murderer of Boudiaf, and Hamid Mebarki, the guard mentioned earlier, be delivered to them without any argument.

The general prosecutor announced that the forces 'have penetrated the compound without shooting a single shot as most of the prisoners have respected the order of the crisis team and only a small group of around twenty five prisoners has refused to comply.' This group hid in ward 25 behind a group of ordinary prisoners they took hostage. Hachani insisted and even begged the general prosecutor to let him talk these prisoners into returning to their cells and thus avoid more victims. The general prosecutor promised to consult with the authorities, but never came back. As for Hachani, he was molested by members of the army and locked up in a confined room normally used for lawyers.

## **7.2 First Phase: Sniping and Shooting**

The task force (military, *gendarmes*, and police officers) positioned on the prison rooftops overlooking the courtyard aimed the first shots at specific targets. This sniping was followed by continuous shooting which lasted several hours.

### *7.2.1 Selective Killing by Marksmen*

The first victim of the sniping was Yekhlef Cherrati, a member of the crisis management team, who had remained in the courtyard to ensure that all prisoners went back calmly and orderly to their cells. Cherrati was standing and repeating the following orders to the prisoners: 'do not respond to provocations' and 'avoid the machination against you'. Cherrati was holding the Koran in his hands and reciting verses when he was shot through the head. He fell on the ground, blood was pouring out but he kept reciting. One of the prisoners crawled close to him, and hardly lifted him when the shooting resumed. Cherrati was then hit by several bullets which, this time, blew his leg to pieces.

### *7.2.2 Shooting in the Courtyard*

The sniping was followed by an intense shooting for several hours. Many prisoners in the courtyard were killed and injured. Ordinary prisoners, police officers, civil servants and strangers, who were used as human shields of ward 25, were caught in the shooting. Scores were hit, and there were about fifteen dead and tens of injured.

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### 7.2.3 Mass Murder in Selected Wards

After the shooting in the courtyard, shots were targeted at wards 29, 30, 31 and particularly ward 25, where a number of prisoners were hiding, along with others who had fled the shootings in the courtyard.

The grouped firings also lasted several hours. Ward 25 was turned into a human slaughterhouse by the heavy firing and the explosions of offensive grenades: bodies torn into pieces, pieces of flesh stuck to the blood-spattered walls. The firepower and the concentration of the bullets shattered the thick door of ward 25. The shooting lasted nearly 17 hours and was only ended when a *gendarme* announced that 'the general has ordered a cease-fire'. It is worth underlining that the only survivors of the massacre were Bou-maaraifi and the 'guard' because, in all likelihood, the order was given to spare them.

### 7.3 Second Phase: Finishing off, Mutilations and Executions

After the shooting, the task force fired and threw grenades into the cells and through the ventilation grids before firing their way into them. In ward 25, if a prisoner was found alive among the corpses, he was tortured and finished off.

At the end of the massacre in the courtyard and in the above-mentioned wards, the authorities, in the presence of the prison deputy director and some guards, read a list of prisoners. Those who responded to the roll calling were led to a separate location and executed.

Tadjouri was not found among the victims. He was looked for on the basis of his clothes and had also been called by megaphone. His body was later identified by other detainees.

### 7.4 Third Phase: Torture and Humiliation of Survivors

The survivors were gathered in courtyards to be subjected to an unprecedented physical and moral torture.

The prisoners who had managed to survive were gathered in the courtyard, after they had been forced to leave their cells crawling while being beaten up over the whole body with gun butts, and iron and wooden bars.

Once in the courtyard, hundreds of prisoners were ordered to lie down on top of each other in several piles. Many of them lost consciousness due to suffocation. The beatings did not stop until 6 p.m. Almost all the prisoners carried marks from these beatings, which lawyers recorded on their first visit to their clients. The survivors were kept the whole night in the court-

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yard, lying flat on their stomach, face down, with neither water nor food, in the cold and rain of that night of Ramadhan.

The morning after, tortures resumed in the same spot and lasted for one night and one day altogether:

- the prisoners had to stand up and keep their legs apart and were then kicked by foot in their testicles;
- the *gendarmes* spat in the mouth of prisoners and urinated on their faces;
- leather jackets and sports shoes (Adidas and Reebok) worn by some prisoners were confiscated. Guards forced prisoners wearing spectacles to take them off and break them by stepping on them;
- prisoners were forced to stand up, swear at each other as well as insult themselves, the religion and the political leaders, and were threatened by death if they did not comply.

### 7.5 Weapons of the Intervention

All the prisoners agree that the weapons used during the intervention were as follows:

- automatic weapons;
- FMPK machine guns;
- offensive grenades;
- iron bars;
- maces;
- knives and bayonets.

### 8. Aggression by the Task Force and Some Guards

Taking advantage of the climate of total impunity, members of the task force and some guards gave free rein to their most evil and abject instincts. They ill-treated the prisoners and perpetrated various crimes including murder.

One hooded member of the forces threatened a prisoner with his weapon and forced him to submit to his evil and repugnant urges. He was led to a cell and raped.

Another prisoner became blind as a result of the blows he received.

A third one died as a result of a savage attack by a guard called Ramdane Selsaf, who beat him up with a mace. With the same weapon, this guard injured other prisoners who still bear the marks.

Ali Zouita, a lawyer held at the Serkadji prison for several years, did not manage to escape the systematic beatings. The guards were going all over the cells and wards, and attacked whoever they wanted, in total impunity.

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## 9. Consequences of the Bloody Intervention

The intervention had very serious consequences: scores of prisoners were dead and hundreds injured. The majority of the killed prisoners were secretly buried in anonymous graves.

### 9.1 Extent and Horror of the Massacre

The official list of the victims of the massacre has never been officially published so far, despite urgent requests made by the lawyers and the families of the victims, who had been kept completely in the dark for eleven days, all doors being closed to them. By refusing to publish the list, the authorities try to minimise the extent of the massacre and the number of dead and injured.

The burial of the victims was also kept secret, without even the presence of the families. The graves bear the inscription 'X – Algérien\*'. This may be due to the fact that the violence of the carnage and the weapons used left the bodies completely unidentifiable.

The lawyers and the families present at the gates of the prison the day after the massacre saw the firemen, who had been called to 'clean' the prison, come out in a state of shock, and heard them express publicly their deepest revulsion at the horrible scene. One of them, taking off his surgical gloves full of blood, said: 'This is not a job! Blood, blood everywhere! Scores of bodies blown to pieces!'

### 9.2 Unclear Circumstances of the Burial

The bodies of the victims – or what was left of them – were transported to the Bologhine morgue, some in small bin bags. They were stored there for a few days, piled on top of each other, until they reached total decomposition.

The relatives who went to the morgue to obtain some information were kept at bay. The management of the morgue was also in utter confusion, as the authorities had not sent any specific instructions. It was only on 24 February 1995 that thirteen identified bodies were buried in the El Alia cemetery.

Apart from these thirteen identified victims, the others were buried on 25 and 26 February 1995 in anonymous graves. The victims of Serkadji were buried in a separate plot of the El Alia cemetery. Under normal circumstances this should have helped to determine the number of the victims, if

\* 'X – Algérien' means unknown Algerian.

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other unidentified bodies from other morgues had not been buried at the same time, in the same plot, and with the same inscription 'X – Algérien'

Over 1,500 helpless and anguished families who had come from all over the country were faced with a wall of silence. Some of them received a telegram from the prison authorities notifying them of the 'death' of their relative 'during the mutiny'. The message also advised them to contact the court of Raïs Hamidou (Serkadji being on its territory of competence and therefore the only authority able to deliver burial permits) to obtain information about the place of burial. The recipients of the telegrams went to the court concerned only to be told, to their great surprise, that the public prosecutor's office did not know anything about the contents of the telegrams.

It was only several days later that burial authorisations, issued by the district authorities (*wilaya*) of Algiers, were delivered through the judicial authorities (*sud*). They bore the mention 'X – Algérien', except for thirteen victims.

As the families were appearing in front of the official, the latter would add the name of the victim on the effectively anonymous burial permit. Thus, a family could well have grave number 2 as number 12, for example. In the end, everything depended on the order of arrival of the relatives in front of the official. This led to a great confusion, as in one instance two permits were delivered for the same grave, and, in another, a telegram announcing the death of a prisoner, who was in fact still alive, turned out to be incorrect.

Faced with this confused burial procedure, the families became convinced that their relatives were not buried where the authorities claimed. This belief was further strengthened by rumours that one single grave contained the scattered and mixed pieces of several victims. The families therefore lodged a complaint with the judicial authorities and requested the opening of a murder investigation. They also asked for the exhumation of the bodies for autopsies, in order to identify each victim, a demand not met to this day.

## **10. Organisation of the Cover-Up**

The prison authorities rushed to repair the spots of the massacre and remove all evidence, on one hand, and to silence the detainees who witnessed the tragedy using threats and other forms of pressure, on the other hand.

### **10.1 Destruction of the Material Evidence**

The Serkadji prison officials were kept in their posts despite requests by lawyers to keep them away from the site. In the days that followed the massacre, they took to destroying the material evidence of the massacre. They had the

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courtyard, the wards and the cells restored. The bullet and grenade holes in the walls were filled in. The bloodstained clothes of the victims were burnt. Ward 25, the main scene of the massacre, was fully refurbished.

Yet, the judicial authorities should have systematically sealed these sites. None of this was done, despite strong requests made by the lawyers and the families of the victims.

### **10.2 Pressure on the Survivors**

To silence the survivors, the authorities continually used various means of pressure:

- a climate of general psychosis through threats of repetition of the massacre;
- surprise visits by hooded men, accompanied by prison officers, who would forcibly drag detainees from their cells to unknown locations;
- the guards and the prison officials involved in the massacre were kept in their posts;
- beating of prisoners without apparent reason or warning;
- severe rationing of food, limitation on the weight of food parcels to three kilos a fortnight, deprivation of sugar and salt;
- pressure on detainees to be witnesses for the prosecution in exchange for promises of clemency and good treatment;
- appointments of guards who were involved in the massacre, according to the detainees, to positions which involved dealing with lawyers and relatives of victims.
- opening of an inquest against some survivors, by the general prosecutor present during the massacre, with no possibility for lawyers to defend the survivors or access relevant information.

### **10.3 Media Manipulation**

After the Justice Minister publicly congratulated the task force, terming the armed intervention a 'successful operation', the general prosecutor and the prisons director at the ministry of justice staged a televised 'investigation' involving a hearing of defendants and interrogations focused on the 'escape attempt' and the 'mutiny'.

One of the detainees who had been subjected to such a cross-examination later said that his public statements had been made under duress.

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## 11. Conclusion

The unfolding of events, as reported by the various testimonies of the survivors, shows that everything was minutely planned to create an atmosphere of mutiny and give a pretext to justify a bloody intervention.

The planning, execution, and pre-programmed failure of the 'escape attempt', in addition to the 'mutiny' resulting from the sudden appearance of hooded men with a clear mission to unlock the cells of the death-row inmates or force their way into them, only to vanish immediately afterwards, are the most flagrant and manifest evidence of this plot.

Once the machination started, it was not to stop despite the snags caused by the presence in the courtyard of Boumaarafi, the suspected assassin of president Boudiaf, and the guard Mebarki who played an important role in the event. Even the presence of the policemen and strangers did not stop anything. The assault was ordered once Boumaarafi and the guard had been hauled on to the terrace, and the state prosecutor had exclaimed: 'Fantastic!'

After the sniping that first killed Yekhlef Cherrati, shooting shifted to the courtyard. The thirteen non-political prisoners forming the human shield were mown down, and then the elimination of political prisoners started.

The sequence of events as reconstructed from different testimonies of survivors shows that an eradication operation was indeed carried out against political prisoners whose only crime was to hold different opinions. Following the carnage, hooded men reappeared – but this time in the company of the prison director – to take away detainees to secret places.

The testimonies also clearly show that the television documentary produced by the state prosecutor in person sought to distort the facts by coercing detainees, who are held as hostages, into giving testimonies supporting the official versions of events. Is it not justified to question the purpose of an investigation into the Serkadji massacre when it is carried out by judicial authorities which are themselves implicated in the crime? What would be the result of an investigation carried out by an authority which is simultaneously judge and litigant in this affair?

The families of the victims are aware that their loved ones will not be returned to them, but they are convinced that by breaking the wall of silence surrounding such pervert behaviour of the state, they will contribute to ensure that such inhuman and shameful acts do not happen again. Algeria will thus be able to escape from this world of horror, where repression, manipulation and torture are the preferred means for managing the affairs of the state.

The families are equally convinced that the truth on this affair will serve to create the conditions conducive to the emergence of the rule of law.

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This crime enters in the category of imprescriptible war crimes in international law, and the families of the victims, their lawyers and human rights activists make an urgent appeal to the world's conscience and to the human rights organisations to press for an independent and impartial commission of inquiry into the Serkadji prison massacre.

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## Appendix A: Testimonies

### A.1 On internal transfers before the massacre

#### *Testimony 1*

Three days before the bloody night of the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month of Ramadhan, other prisoners and myself were transferred to new cells. This was part of a routine transfer of prisoners between cells and wards that takes place about once every two months. What was strange this time was the fact that we were picked out of a list and transferred to specific locations, whereas usually we are randomly taken out of our cells. The guards would tell you: 'you, you... go to such and such place'. In the course of the latest transfers, most of the prisoners, who had come from El Harrach and had been placed in various wings, were called out and gathered in the same wing.

#### *Testimony 2*

It was horrible, indescribable. Actually, just a few days before the massacre, most prisoners were exchanging concerns. They were saying they felt something was about to happen. They could not understand why the latest transfers were not designed to ensure that prisoners would not spend too much time in the same ward. It seemed as if something unusual was going to happen since, on this occasion, prisoners had been called out by their names and sent to specific sections of the prison.

### A.2 On external transfers before the massacre

#### *Testimony 4*

I had been detained at El Harrach for several months pending judgement, when on October 8, 1994, I was 'transferred' to the prison of Serkadji, in very strange circumstances. Here follows a brief account of what happened.

Hooded and armed men suddenly entered in our ward, and I was kidnapped in front of my inmates who were surprised and horrified. They covered my head with my shirt and tied my hands behind my back. They then threw me in the boot of a car, which immediately drove off. After a fast drive through the streets of Algiers, I found myself in a building, which later turned out to be the main police station. As soon as I entered, they threw me on the floor, and started to torture me. I could not understand what I was doing in a police station, since I had been imprisoned for several months already.

I was told that prisoners had attempted to escape from El Harrach prison, and blows were raining on me from everywhere. The violence was even harder to bear as I was blindfolded and my hands were tied; I could not dodge the blows. This lasted for several hours, and in the end I heard someone telling them: 'Take him away, it's not him, we got the wrong name.' The same hooded men then threw me again into the boot of a passenger car, and, to my great surprise, I found myself in Serkadji prison...

A group of guards were waiting for me and took charge of me as soon as I arrived: with incredible violence and swiftness, they stripped me off my clothes, threw me on the ground and beat me all over the body with iron bars. When I regained consciousness I was in an

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isolated cell, covered in blood, with a horrendous pain in the head and all over the body. Later on, I got to know that other prisoners abducted from El Harrach prison by the police had suffered the same fate and were now in Serkadji too. I knew many of those murdered on the night of 22 February 1995 but I only remember some names: Mohamed Aït Bellouk, Mohamed Yacine Si Mozrag, Rabah Remit, Kamel Lamara and Hacène Kaouane.

**A.3. On the ill-treatment and provocations of detainees***Testimony 4*

In the evening of 15 February 1995, during the month of Ramadhan, we were 84 prisoners performing the *tarawih* prayer in the common room. Guards entered noisily the room, they were shouting and randomly beating with iron bars the prisoners who were kneeling in prayer. We had in fact been performing this prayer the previous days without the prison authority trying to ban it or make comments about it. Not losing a minute, the guards set out to punish us swiftly as they led us to the dungeons in the basement of the prison. The 84 of us were split into groups of eight people in two-by-three metre cells.

It was hell. We were tortured, more morally than physically, as the sanctions were unjust and arbitrary. They imposed a ban on family visits, confiscated parcels, rationed food to a bowl of soup every 24 hours, in addition to vexations, and beatings without reason. This lasted for 45 days. This punishment had no motive and violated our political opinions as well as our religious beliefs.

*Testimony 5*

An unusual tension reigned over the few days before the events of February 1995. Some guards were provoking the prisoners under any pretext, beating them for no reason, and a real psychosis set in, all the more as there was no possible recourse for us. As an example, I will tell you about the shower torture. The prisoners would be systematically beaten up, or, to put it otherwise, savagely attacked by guards armed with iron bars, on the way to the showers. Once under the shower, there was only freezing water. Faced with this situation, many prisoners would prefer to avoid taking a shower.

*Testimony 6*

On 11 February 1995, Kacem Tajouri had his only plastic spoon confiscated, and was, as a result, forced to eat his soup with his hand. A few days beforehand, he had showed his medical prescription for his asthma remedy to a guard and requested to see the doctor to have it renewed. The guard took it off his hand, tore it off and summoned him to return to his cell as he did 'not have a prescription'.

**A.4 On the hooded men who unlocked the cells and vanished***Testimony 7*

I was asleep when, at around 2 a.m., hooded men broke into the cell and threatened us... They ordered us to come out. They were wearing denim trousers and trainers. Many prisoners were already outside... The courtyards were filling as prisoners arrived from all parts of the prison.

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***Testimony 8***

I was in my cell when strangers started to break the locks of cell 36. No prisoner knew them.

***Testimony 9***

We were asleep when hooded men unlocked the door of our cell with a key...

***Testimony 10***

We were suddenly woken up by big bangs on the doors... We saw hooded men who were trying to open them... These men were armed... One of them ordered us to come out and join the other prisoners... They suddenly disappeared, vanished...

**A.5 On the execution of Sheikh Cherrati*****Testimony 11***

Cherrati was standing up, and holding the Quran in one hand while a big number of prisoners were already back to their cells and wards. Others were still walking back to their cells. The tension was easing. The disorganised comings and goings and the hubbub were decreasing as the prisoners were returning to their cells.

Cherrati was reciting softly Quranic verses. From time to time, he would address the prisoners and advise them not to fall into a trap and above all not to respond to the provocations, as the weapons pointed at them were meant to kill: 'Don't give them an opportunity to do it'.

There was almost silence when a shot was heard. People rushed from all sides: a marksman positioned on a rooftop had just hit Cherrati in the head. Cherrati swayed, then fell on the floor. Blood was coming out of his wound, and he murmured the last verses of the Quran. A prisoner ran to him and took him in his arms but he was already dying. Suddenly, shots came from all sides. The prisoners who by then had not managed to return to their cells – as a large number had been gathered in the courtyard – dropped like flies. Many were injured in the back and the legs. Cherrati was hit a second time by a series of shots, which tore his leg off completely. At times, the fire would stop and armed men would throw ropes and hooks from the rooftops and lift the dead and the injured on to the roofs. This is how the body of Cherrati was lifted onto the rooftop.

In the cell where I was, five grenades were thrown, and we hid behind the wall of the second cell.

**A.6 On finishing off the injured in ward 25*****Testimony 12***

Some prisoners, who had escaped the shooting, were immediately executed: El Wad, Bougueroun and Bouakaz... The latter two were injured and killed off on the spot.

Some people in civilian clothes were looking for Kacem Tajouri... When they were told that he was wearing a yellow jacket, they looked for a person wearing such a jacket. When

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they found him injured in his cell, they told him: 'You! With the yellow jacket! Move!' When he moved, one of the men in civilian clothes shouted: 'He's still alive! Kill him off!' And they shot him.

Hocine Metajer was recognised: 'There is Metajer, kill him!'

The assassinations were precise and selective: Cherrati was the first to fall near us of a single shot in the forehead.

In our cell, several grenades were first thrown in through the window, then shooting continued through the same opening... This is how I got hit twice.

In ward 25, two prisoners were completely burnt. I saw a paratrooper captain draw crosses with chalk on the back of some prisoners... These ones were immediately taken from the ranks and executed...

In cell 29, there were many injured prisoners still alive. When they [the army] entered, we heard shots of automatic pistols: the injured were all finished off after they had been tortured with bayonets and knives.

**A.7 On the selective executions after the shootings***Testimony 13*

I now know that I am – *de facto* – condemned to death like everyone else who was murdered. The director and one of the guards came to see me after [the massacre] and told me that I was a leader. I denied it, so they brought a hooded common prisoner to testify against me. He looked at me and refused to talk. When I looked at him in the eyes, I saw that he was crying. I later learnt that he had been punished and beaten because he had refused to unjustly testify against me.

On 14 March 1995, the director came back and told me '*Bla rabi mateslekha*' ('even the Lord will not be able to save you'). The deputy-director also came to see me and threatened me with death.

On 22 February 1995, some *gendarmes* and a prison guard were looking for Kacem Tajouri and me all over the wards and the cells. As they could not find us they called our names on the loudspeaker. I was in the courtyard where 400 prisoners had been crammed together. Some inmates told me to hide, as, they said, the policemen would kill me as they had killed all those they had called out. I did not move. At one stage, some policemen asked us to stand up and to identify ourselves. When my turn came, I only mentioned half of my name, so they went on to others and then left. I stayed put until the massacre had ended and the policemen had left.

*Testimony 14*

[...] During the nightmare of the bloody night, when paratroopers, *gendarmes* and plain clothes policemen, all armed to the teeth, committed a horrendous massacre against us, we only had the cries of '*Allah Akbar*' (God is the greatest), the groaning and the cries of fright to protect ourselves. Afterward, some guards and some security officers gave free rein to their thirst for blood and committed crimes with the blessing of the officials present. There was a prisoner called Djamel Boumezrag crammed with us in the courtyard. He was having an asthma attack. He was suffocating and moaning, and desperately crying for help. He was then violently attacked by Ramdane Selsaf, a guard, who wanted to silence him. He beat

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him on the head with a mace. Boumezrag was making strange groans, then went quiet. We were told later that he had died.

**A.8 On the suspicious burial procedures*****Testimony 15***

I am Mrs Fifi Doumer, spouse of Mohamed Taouch, mother of Reda Taouch, born 31 April 1974 in Borj Menayel and murdered in the course of the events which took place in the Serkadji prison.

My son was employed at the local carpentry. On 23 April 1994, at 3 a.m., hooded men and soldiers (paratroopers) came to our house and arrested my son. I looked for him for fourteen days in vain. Each time, I was told that he was not with them [security forces]. Several days later, I received a letter from him from Serkadji prison.

After difficult procedures and endless waits in front of the Algiers court (I had to be there at 6 a.m.), I was allowed to see him once a week and then once a fortnight. Each time I asked him how he was, he would answer: '*Masha-a Allab* (it's God's will), I am with my brothers, and my case is very simple. I haven't done anything wrong and, *Insba-a Allab* (*God willing*), I will be freed on the day of my judgement.'

That was his nature, he was always smiling and never talked about his life in prison, while other prisoners were telling their parents about the bad treatments they suffered. Each time he insisted he would be acquitted because his case was empty.

On Wednesday 22 February 1995, I went to Serkadji prison to give the usual parcel to my son. It was Ramadhan and there were many people, women, and men of all ages gathered and kept at bay from the prison. I asked what had happened. 'Something very serious' was the answer I got from an old lady. Shots and bangs had been heard throughout the night, but no one knew what had happened to the prisoners. I shouted 'My son', dropped my parcel and ran to a police officer. As he saw me coming towards him, he shouted back: 'Go away! We killed all the terrorists.' People were saying that our children had been killed. We went to the prison every day, until Monday morning. On Saturday, we went to the cemetery of El Alia. There, we saw unidentified graves, only a few (about twenty) bore names.

The police told us to go home and we would get the list from the morgue the next day. But we went to the morgue of Bologhine straight away. There were five trucks parked in the front and firemen were putting corpses in boxes. The police came and barred us from watching.

I was back to the cemetery at 4 p.m., when five trucks from the fire brigade arrived and unloaded fifty-five boxes: we counted them one by one. They stayed until 6:30 p.m. The police ordered us to leave. The employees of the cemetery buried the fifty-five boxes into the graves.

I went to El Alia on the following morning, Sunday, at 8:30 a.m. There were a lot of people. Some had arrived very early. We stayed there until 2:30 p.m. to see the list. The dead bore the inscription of 'X-Algérien' and no list was made available to us.

***Testimony 16***

I received a telegram telling me that my son had died on 27 February 1995. The day after, I went to the court of Rais Hamidou, in Bab-El-Oued. There, they told me that they did not have any list and gave me a burial permit which bore the mention 'X-Algérien'.

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I went to the cemetery. There, I found many graves with no names on them. A few others had names, but none bore the name of my son. An employee of the cemetery, a gravedigger, showed me a grave without any inscription, and told me that it had the number 146, which I was looking for. I planted on it a little piece of wood on which I wrote the name of my son, to identify the grave.

A few days later, although not convinced that it was my son's grave, I nevertheless came back and had masons to build a tomb on that spot.

I forgot to tell you that, on Sunday 4 March 1995, the state prosecutor to the Bab El Oued Court told us, in person, that he did not know anything about the matter.

***Testimony 17***

My name is Telija Larachi. On a Friday, police officers came to fetch my son Boujemaa. As they could not find him they told me that he had to come to the police station as soon as he was back, on Saturday morning. He went to the police station of El Harrach and there they told him that he had to go to the main police station for a matter that concerned him. There, they detained him for one month and ten days. There was no news from him until we found him in Serkadji, where his brother was already held. He was the one who informed us of his detention.

When I heard what happened at Serkadji, I went there straight away. There I found hundreds of mothers, wives, children and relatives of prisoners. They were kept far away from the prison, which was cordoned off by *gendarmes*. These were shooting from time to time in the air to scare away anyone who dared to come closer to obtain more information.

Everyday, morning and evening, I went to the prison to inquire about my children's fate, but was unsuccessful. Small groups of women and men would go to the morgue, the Ministry of Justice and the cemetery but with no result. Each time we were told that they did 'not know anything'. It was only on the evening of Monday 27 February, when I went back home, that I was told a telegram had arrived. It read that my son had died in a 'mutiny', which had taken place in Serkadji.

After many unanswered inquiries with the judicial and prison authorities about the cause of my son's death, his burial without our presence and, above all, the mention 'X-Algérien', I eventually found the grave where I had been told that my son was buried.

When I visited my son's grave in El Alia, I saw two women, who had been given a burial permit with the same number, in front of my son's grave.

***Testimony 18***

I am the father of Abdelazziz Bouazza, cowardly murdered by the authorities, who were supposed to protect him and guarantee his safety, as he was detained in premises under the state's responsibility.

What hurts me most and increases my pain as a father, as an Algerian citizen and as a disabled, is that my son was buried without the slightest consideration and due respect for a deceased. My son was buried in the most disgraceful way, as there is no indication of where his grave is.

When I saw the authorities, after repeated requests, they gave me a permit to bury him. However, it did not bear the name of my son but only 'X-Algérien'. At the cemetery of El Alia, I was directed to the grave bearing the number 243 written in my burial permit. But when I reached the grave, I was stunned to find another man who said that he was called

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Yaacoubi. He told me he had buried his own brother, Messaoud Yaacoubi, in that grave. I went back to the [cemetery] office and there, to my great astonishment, after I had explained to the employee what happened, I saw him took his pen, cross the number 243 on the permit and write a new number next to it, 238.

When I went back over the next days to shed light on this enigma and to find my son's new grave, I found other people, whose relatives had died in Serkadji, in the same situation as me.

I must also specify that long before his life was taken away from him, his rights had been taken away from him, because when the police arrested him on 19 October 1993, he was tortured for forty-five days at the Hussein-Dey police station, despite the new law that limited the custody to twelve days.

***Testimony 19***

I am the father of Omar Cherifi and I don't understand anything with regard to the burial of my son. Indeed, when I went the court of Bab El Oued, I was given a burial permit bearing the number 245. When I arrived at the cemetery of El Alia, at the grave number 245, someone else had been buried there. When I asked the cemetery administration for an explanation, they just crossed the number I had and replaced it with a new number, 235, without any explanation.

**A.9 On the cover-up*****Testimony 20***

Ward 25 has eight cells for condemned prisoners. It was subjected to a fierce attack with gunfire and grenades.

At around 3 p.m., forces from the army, the *gendarmerie* and the police launched an attack, targeting the wing housing ward 25 in particular, without giving the other prisoners time to return to their cells. They made use of intense and sustained gunfire, along with grenades. This lasted until 5 a.m. on Wednesday 22 February.

The fumes from grenades were asphyxiating us, but no one dared to move. We could hear voices of prisoners injured by bullets and grenades crying from pain. Dozens of offensive grenades had been thrown into the cells; we saw bodies that had been completely blown to bits.

The 'hostages' were hit following the intense assault and the use of grenades. Each time the shooting stopped, a colonel would shout asking for the whereabouts of Boumaarafi and the guard.

At the beginning [of the attack], *Sheikh* Cherrati was killed by a bullet in the head, as was Hacene Kaouane, who was taken by force and dragged on the ground in front of the prisoners before being murdered in the courtyard. Other prisoners told me that others, such as Nourredine Harik, Mohamed El Wad, Mourad Kritous, and many others whom I only vaguely knew, had suffered the same fate as Kaouane. The prisoner Djamel Boumezrag was killed by a guard nicknamed 'the Spider'.

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The massacre went on until approximately 9 a.m. on Wednesday. It lasted about seventeen hours. Even FMPK machine guns had been used against prisoners hidden in the back of their cells.

A lot of blood was pouring from ward 25. All the prisoners had been ordered to lie down on their stomach in the pools and streams of blood in the middle of the courtyard. We received violent blows on the body. I was hit on my head and on my back. Most prisoners still bear the marks of the injuries.

After beating us up, they started stealing our belongings. The *gendarmes*, the army and the guards stripped the prisoners off their clothes and their trainers (Reebok, Adidas). The guards stole food, blankets and pens in the cells. We spent the night in the courtyard under heavy rain. During all that time, we were beaten up continuously, officers were ordering some prisoners to stand up, and spread their legs and to be kicked between the legs. The prisoners were yelling from pain, some lost consciousness, and others vomited. As for us, we were shivering from cold, hunger and fright.

Some guards walked over bodies lying on top of each other beating them up with iron bars and shouting hysterically. One guard, nicknamed 'the Spider', had a huge mace with which he hit the prisoners who were lying down.

***Testimony 21***

I will never forget the night of 21 to 22 February 1995, as we spent it in the cold and the rain, lying on top of each other in our hundreds.

As a pastime, some armed men would select some among us and order them to jump, dance and chant insults. One of them came up with the idea of asking all 'four-eyed' men to take off their spectacles, throw them on the floor and step on them. After that, no one had spectacles. I for one suffered from my short-sightedness for days.

***Testimony 22***

[...] We were crammed in the courtyard, on top of each other. I was trying as much as possible to curl up to avoid getting any blows from iron bars like my comrades or a 'shower' of urine from the officers.

At one stage, we were taken out of the courtyard and all those wearing spectacles were ordered to take them off, throw them on the floor and step on them. Like my comrades, I was forced to break mine. I was deeply hurt by such a wanton act, committed in premises under the responsibility of the state, and also because I am short-sighted and my father had made a lot of sacrifices to buy them for me.

***Testimony 23***

[From the testimony of Mr Zouita, a lawyer]

[...] I was in the courtyard, the day after the massacre, when three guards holding iron bars came to me. They beat me up badly and, to humiliate me even more, they stripped me off my clothes and left me like that, lying on the floor.

***Testimony 24***

I am one of the survivors of the massacre of Serkadji. One day, guards came and took me to one of the offices of the prison authorities. They sat me on a chair facing a TV camera.

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The state prosecutor, in the presence of others, asked me to recount what had happened. I started to report the horrible scenes I had seen and the events I had lived.

'No,' he said, 'this is not what I want! This is what you have to say!'

I first refused but I suffered violence and, under pressure and threats, I was forced to make televised statements. They were dictated to me and are contrary to the truth.

**Appendix B: List of the Victims of the Massacre of Serkadji**

Sources: Kader, *The Massacre of Serkadji*, Dissertation, University of Algiers, 1997.

Algerian Committee for Human Rights and Dignity

Arab Commission for Human Rights

1. **Sofiane Achour**, born on 31 July 1972 in Hussein Dey (Algiers), policeman, non-political prisoner.
2. **Tewfik Ahlouche**, born on 6 December 1965 in Algiers, single, appeared before court on 14 February 1994, condemned.
3. **Mohamed Aït-Bellouk**, born on 29 April 1966 in Kouba, single, detained for 36 days at the Châteauneuf police academy and severely tortured. Charged with setting up a terrorist group and condemned. Executed in his cell.
4. **Rachid Akrou**, policeman, non-political prisoner.
5. **Farouk Aourak**
6. **Aïssa Arrouche**, life sentenced.
7. **Fayçal Ayache**
8. **Rachid Bakhous**, prison guard.
9. **Zoubir Bekeri**
10. **Mohamed Belkacem**, defendant.
11. **Rédouane Bellili**, born on 26 March 1973 in Larbaa, single, employee, arrested two days after *Eid El Adha* 1994 at 10:00 in a stadium. Defendant.
12. **Mohamed Benadallah**, non-political prisoner.
13. **Mohamed Benafta**
14. **Mourad Benafta**, non-political prisoner.
15. **Mohamed Benallal**, life sentenced.
16. **Mohamed Benaouda**
17. **Mohamed Benarbaoui**, non-political prisoner.
18. **Abdelhafid Benbelaïd**, born on 1 September 1969, single, electrician, arrested on 1 September 1993, condemned on 10 April 1994.
19. **Abdelkrim Benhamid**, non-political prisoner.

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*Massacres and Victims***20. Feth-Ennour Benmeradi****21. Mohamed Benzaamouche**, non-political prisoner.**22. Abdelkader Benrabeh**, born on 16 April 1971 in Douaouda (Tipaza), single.**23. Mourad Bouakaz**, condemned.**24. Kada Boualem**, life sentenced.**25. Abdelghani Bouaouina**, non-political prisoner.**26. Abdelaziz Bouazza**, born on 19 July 1966 in Kouba, single, pastrycook, arrested on 9 October 1993 at 01:20 at home. Condemned on 31 July 1994.**27. Sid-Ali Boubacha**, born on 10 June 1969, single, life sentenced.**28. Mohamed Boucenna****29. Zakaria Bouchafaa**, life sentenced.**30. Mohamed Boufas****31. Ismaïl Bougueroumi**, born on 12 August 1969 in Baraki, single, arrested on 20 February 1993, charged with carrying firearms and theft. Defendant.**32. Hocine Bouhadda****33. Abdelhamid Bouhroud**, condemned.**34. Samir Boukhres****35. Djamal Boulefrakh**, non-political prisoner.**36. Djamal Boumezrag**, born on 10 October 1964 in Hussein Dey (Algiers), single, merchant, arrested on 8 May 1993 at home. Appeared before court on 8 June 1993. Charged with setting up an armed group and sentenced to 3 years jail.**37. Seddik Bouraïne**, born on 20 March 1966 in Sidi M'hammed (Algiers), single, University student, condemned.**38. Khaled Bouzaraa****39. Boualem Bouzenoun**, life sentenced.**40. Mohamed Bouzid**, prison guard.**41. Sadek Chanoun**, born on 13 April 1969 in Meftah (Blida), single, farmer, arrested on 20 Ramadhan 1414 (1994) at 02:00, at home, life sentenced.**42. Moussa Charikhi**, prison guard.**43. Brahim Cherif**, life sentenced.**44. Omar Cherifi**, born on 9 March 1967 in Sidi M'Hammed (Algiers), condemned.**45. Foudil Cherir**, born on 22 February 1969 in El Harrach, defendant.**46. Ykhlef Cherrati**, born on 20 May 1950, married, father of 5 children, Imam, MA in Islamology, member of the Islamic League headed by Cheikh Sahnoune. Member of the Consultative Council of the FIS. Appeared before court on 29 May 1994, life sentenced.**47. Tahar Dada**, condemned.**48. Samir Daoudi**, born on 20 August 1971 in Hussein Dey (Algiers), macon. He was sought for on the evening of 30 avril 1994 at home. He later gave himself up. Defendant.

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49. **Fayçal Djaafari**, born on 8 January 1971, defendant.
50. **Amar Djaber**, non-political prisoner.
51. **Nabil Djebbari**, judged on 17 October 1993, found not guilty for homicide, charged with belonging to a terrorist group and condemned.
52. **Belkacem Djillali**, born on 12 January 1942 in Soumaa (Blida), condemned.
53. **Nacereddine Dridi**, born on 25 January 1970 in Sidi M'hammed (Algiers), single, University student, condemned.
54. **Tewfik El Aïche**, born on 16 March 1964, Sidi M'hammed (Algiers), single, appeared before court on 3 October 1994 at 09:30, charged with trading firearms.
55. **Merouane El Arbi**
56. **Mohamed El Wad**, medical doctor, condemned.
57. **Nacereddine Gherbi**, born on 23 February 1962 in Hussein Dey (Algiers), single, arrested on 15 February 1992 at home.
58. **Mohamed Guebli**
59. **Mustapha Hadjouti**, condemned.
60. **Ahmed Hamdad**
61. **Rafik Hanifi**, born on 14 March 1972, single, defendant.
62. **Noureddine Harik**, born on 29 August 1964 in Algiers, single, college teacher, MA in Islamology, arrested on 7 September 1993 at 18:00, in a café at Al Anasser. Appeared before court on 6 October 1993, condemned on 12 April 1994. Tortured in the premises of the Sûreté and the Sécurité militaire.
63. **Smaïl Hassini**, born on 26 April 1968 in El Biar (Algiers), arrested on 7 June 1994, defendant.
64. **Ouahid Hedroug**, non-political prisoner.
65. **Sedik Kaci**, life sentenced.
66. **Hacene Kaouane**, born on 10 June 1955 in Algiers, married, father of 4 children, Chaabi singer, defendant.
67. **Benacer Mohamed Karabadji**, born on 2 February 1968 in Hussein Dey (Algiers), single, University student, arrested on 12 April 1994 near the Moroccan borders, defendant.
68. **Rédha Kastali**, born on 15 July 1970, single, merchant, appeared before court on 24 January 1994 at 09:00. Charged with belonging to an armed group and condemned on 26 March 1994.
69. **Ahmed Ketmouni**, born on 14 March 1971, defendant.
70. **Abderezak Khelifi**
71. **Farouk Khelifi**
72. **Nadir Kheris**
73. **Ammi Kouidri**, born on 19 August 1971, defendant.
74. **Amar Kritous**, non-political prisoner.
75. **Mourad Kritous**, defendant.

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76. **Kamal Lamara**, defendant.
77. **Rachid Laribi**
78. **Abdelkrim Maariche**
79. **Mohamed Mechrouk**, life sentenced.
80. **Boualem Mouici**, born on 23 April 1969 in Douaouda (Tipaza), single, condemned.
81. **Hocine Moutadjer**, condemned.
82. **Abderrahmane Negliz**, born on 6 August 1969 in Kasbah (Algiers), single, life sentenced.
83. **Ali Rafik**
84. **Rahmouni Boudjema**, born on 24 January 1969 in El Harrach, defendant.
85. **Rabah Remit**, defendant.
86. **Wahid Roumili**
87. **Nacer Saadallah**, life sentenced.
88. **Miloud Saadoune**, born on 24 December 1966 in Oued Djer, married, father of one child, teacher, life sentenced.
89. **Mourad Sabouni**
90. **Hacene Sadaoui**
91. **Mohamed Sadoun**, life sentenced.
92. **Yazid Sahraoui**
93. **Abdelkrim Saïdi**, born on 11 March 1970 in Kouba, University student, condemned.
94. **Lamri Saïdi**, born on 8 May 1974 in Kouba, single, trainee in Computer engineering, arrested on 23 September 1993 at 02:10 at home, condemned on 26 March 1994. His father, a mujahid of the Liberation War of Algeria, was detained in 1957 for 17 months in the same cell No. 29 in Serkadji.
95. **Mouloud Saïdi**, born on 18 August 1971 in Djijel, single, macon, arrested on 9 October 1993 at 23h00 at home. Condemned on 30 juillet 1994.
96. **Moussa Saïdi**, born on 8 March 1971 in Djijel, single, employee at Naftal, arrested on 9 October 1993 at 04:00 at home. Condemned on 30 July 1994.
97. **Rabah Salmi**, born on 29 March 1964 in M'hammed Sidi (Algiers). Turner at the *Entreprise d'aviation militaire*, condemned.
98. **Rédouane Selili**
99. **Abdelkader Semten**
100. **Mohamed Yacine Si-Mozrag**, born on 19 January 1971 in Biskra, director of an import-export company, arrested on 5 August 1993, defendant.
101. **Samir Sifi**, born on 10 February 1971 in Hussein Dey (Algiers), defendant.
102. **Belkacem Souilah**, non-political prisoner.

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**103. Kacem Tadjouri**, born on 4 October 1951 in Sidi Abdellah (Tlemcen), married, father of 5 children, Engineer, section head, BA in Economics, arrested on 26 January 1993, 12:00 at Place du 1er Mai. Appeared before court 11 September 1993. Defendant.

**104. Rédha Taouche**, born on 13 April 1974 in Bordj Mnayel, arrested on 23 April 1994 at 03:00, defendant.

**105. Mohamed Tebbi**, condemned.

**106. Rabah Touami**, born on 6 August 1960 in Dellys, married, father of 3 children, unemployed, charged with belonging to an armed group and condemned.

**107. Abdelkrim Touhami**, life sentenced.

**108. Bouzid Tounsi**, life sentenced.

**109. Houcine Toussena**

**110. Krimo Zbiri**, born on 10 October 1974 in Algiers, qualified employee in the mounting and maintenance of refrigerating devices, sportsman (Graeco-Roman wrestling), arrested on 8 April 1994 at 01:00, defendant.

**111. Mohamed Zdira**

**112. Sid Ahmed Zegharaba**, prison guard.

**113. Rachid Zouabri**

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Serkadji Prison, 23 February 1995 : Death-Row Ward few hours after the massacre



Serkadji Prison under French Rule : Death-Row Ward

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*The Massacre of Serkadji*

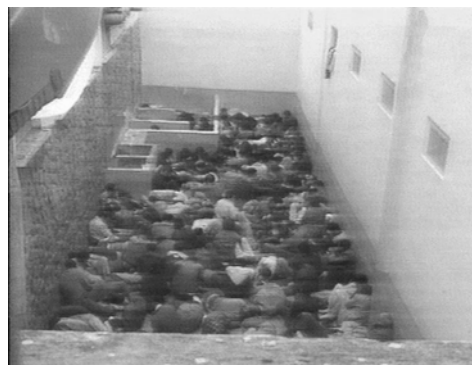
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A cell after the massacre, Serkadji Prison, 23 February 1995 :

‘The task force fired and threw grenades into the cells.’

(section 7.3 of the report).



The courtyard after the massacre, Serkadji Prison, 23 February 1995 :

‘The sniping was followed by an intense shooting for several hours. Many prisoners were killed or injured.’ (section 7.2.2 of the report).

‘The survivors were gathered in the courtyard to be subjected to an unprecedented physical and moral torture.

The prisoners who had managed to survive were gathered in the courtyard, after they had been forced to leave their cells crawling while being beaten up over the whole body with gun butts, and iron and wooden bars.

Once in the courtyard, hundreds of prisoners were ordered to lie down on top of each other in several piles. Many of them lost consciousness due to suffocation. The beatings did not stop until 6 p.m. Almost all the prisoners carried marks from these beatings, which lawyers recorded on their first visit to their clients. The survivors were kept the whole night in the courtyard, lying flat on their stomach, face down, with neither water nor food, in the cold and rain of that night of Ramadhan.’

(section 7.4 of the report).

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