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NATIONAL REACTIONS TO THE MASSACRES

J. T. Senhadji

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National Responses

The regression is so general that it takes the dimensions of a genocide. Torture is systematic. It has become an administrative method of work for the security services which consider it to be the best way of obtaining information. Extra-judicial killings have become common place. The special courts have gone but their legislation has been extended to all the courts of the land.

Maître Ali-Yahia Abdennour, President of the Algerian League for the
Defence of Human Rights

Eradicationism will be, hopefully, the last contribution to the catalogue of inhumanities inflicted by man on man this side and the other side of the millennium.

An Algerian citizen

1. Introduction

In Algeria, a human tragedy is unfolding before the eyes of the international community. Since the military coup of 11 January 1992 hundreds of thousands of people have been killed, jailed, “disappeared”, or exiled. Over the last three years, the conflict has degenerated into horrible massacres that have claimed the lives of thousands of people. Whole families have been slaughtered and obliterated from the face of the earth. Since the generals seized power in January 1992, they have adopted a policy of eradication which observers of the Algerian scene have dubbed ‘political’, or ‘electoral cleansing’. The core of the policy is the outright elimination of opponents, be they political or armed, their families, sympathisers and neighbours.¹ Terror is used as a weapon to coerce the population into total submission. Algeria now is a killing field where terror and eradication are pompously celebrated by the generals and their war press. One has but to glance at any newspaper to discover the gloating over the death of young Algerians sacrificed daily at the altar of eradicationism. Prisons (Serkadji, Berroughia), police stations (Ben Aknoun, Chateaneuf, Cavignac and Salembier) and villages (Bentalha, Beni-Messous, Sidi Rais, Relizane) have become killing grounds. The eradication work takes place away from the prying eyes of reporters and photographers. The Algerian tragedy is one of the least reported in modern times, as if taking place in another age, or on another planet.

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The military regime has succeeded in imposing a complete blackout on information. It has been skilful in waging the propaganda war to its advantage through the powerful machinery of the Algerian Press Service agency, State television and the newspapers of its allies. This formidable war press has been effective in presenting to the world a one-sided view of the complex Algerian tragedy. As a result, the international community has remained largely misinformed and often disinformed about the extent of the tragedy besetting Algeria. Unlike Bosnia, independent television pictures to galvanise the international community into action are not available since the regime prevents international reporters from operating freely in the country. Local reporters are subject to military censorship and can only write articles sympathetic to the generals' views. It has taken massacres of the scale of Ben-talha, Rais, Beni-Messous and Relizane to awake the international community to the suffering of the Algerian people.

It is difficult to gauge the feelings of the Algerian people to the ongoing massacres because of the atmosphere of terror, intimidation and insecurity pervading their life. In public, the people blame the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) for the massacres. In private, however, they are suspicious of the security services and armed militias. Only human rights activists and some political opponents dare openly accuse the regime of responsibility in the massacres. The question of 'who kills whom' is very much at the heart of the Algerian tragedy. It is a question that is anathema to a regime that perceives its mere mention as an accusation of its guilt. The regime has enlisted the support of some French 'intellectuals' such as Bernard Henry Levy, André Glucksmann, Alain Finkelkraut and Jack Lang in an effort to make the answer to the burning question a foregone conclusion, i.e. the killers are Islamists, the State is innocent and the army is incompetent to prevent the massacres. The regime's rhetoric has certainly changed in one respect. The image of the army is no longer that of an efficient and disciplined machine, capable of protecting the population. However, the hire of intellectuals, the excuse of an incompetent army and making the question of 'who kills whom' a taboo do not constitute a compelling defence. If the Algerian State is innocent, why does it fear an international commission of inquiry? Such a commission can only comfort the regime's position if the latter is not hiding anything from the world. The regime hides behind national sovereignty and pride in order to obstruct the legitimate quest of the international community to know who is committing crimes against humanity in Algeria.

The reactions of political parties, non-governmental organisations and personalities inside Algeria are extremely polarised. The divide between the supporters of the regime and its opponents is clear-cut. By 'regime', it is meant here the army. The civilian government is but the democratic façade of the military regime. This is why, for instance, the so-called 'democratic' parties (RCD, Ettahadi, PRA), which oppose vehemently the civilian gov-

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ernment, are found to be the staunchest supporters of the army. 'Democracy' in Algeria applies only to the virtual power, that of the civilian authorities, and does not extend to the real power, that of the military regime.

In what follows, the reactions of political parties, non-governmental organisations, political and cultural personalities and other persons to the massacres and atrocities that blight the lives of the Algerians are examined. The reactions of the main Algerian parties, some non-governmental organisations and representative personalities to the massacres, and violations of human rights are cited here verbatim from their documented sources to avoid any misrepresentation. The subject is too sensitive to leave any room for paraphrasing that may give rise to disputes and denials. The reactions constitute a facet of the subject of this book, and will help in forming a more complete picture about the protagonists in the Algerian conflict. They will contribute to lifting the veil on the extent of ideological entrenchment and complicity on the part of Algerian quarters that are fuelling the repression.

The compilation of the reactions is by no means comprehensive. However, the samples of declarations for the various categories are representative enough to allow a pattern of opinions to emerge. Understanding a reality that is surrounded by so much disinformation, complicity and cover-up is vital for discovering the facts on which future actions should be based. Indeed, the outcome of the analysis is revealing. The political parties, non-governmental organisations and personalities which depend on the military regime for their survival always blame the Islamists for all the atrocities that occur, portray them as barbaric and oppose any independent inquiry. The independent political parties, organisations and personalities have diametrically opposed views. For the latter, the military regime and its plethora of security services are manipulating and committing atrocities in order to discredit the Islamist opponents. They are on the whole in favour of an independent inquiry to identify the perpetrators and bring them to justice. The aim of the present paper is to press the need for an inquiry to establish conclusively 'who is killing whom'.

2. Political Parties

Political parties in Algeria fall generally into three categories: supporters of the military regime (RND, RCD, Ettahadi, PRA), opponents of the military regime (FFS, PT), and Islamo-nationalist conservatives (FLN, MSA, Nahda) with ambiguous positions. Observers see this last category of parties as opportunists. Some principled parties such as the Oumma Party of Ben-Khedda, former President of the GPRA, or the MDA Party of Algeria's first President Ben Bella opted for self-dissolution rather than 'selling their souls' to a regime that has usurped the popular will and betrayed the ideals of the revolution for which millions of Algerians sacrificed their lives.

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The supporters of the military regime advocate a military solution to the political crisis through the *physical* elimination of their political opponents and sympathisers.² Their policy has been termed 'political' or 'electoral' cleansing. These parties have innovated in the subject matter of political theory and practice by fashioning, as far as Algeria is concerned, a new ideology, namely *eradicationism*: the eradication of the political opponent. Their struggle is presented to the world as a struggle between good and evil, modernity against obscurantism, democracy against fundamentalism. Eradicationism views the political opponent as a demon, a terrorist, an infra-human beyond reform, education or reconstruction. This ideologically entrenched situation has been described by a group of researchers as follows:

The strategy of demonisation of the opponent leads us straight into electoral genocide or electoral cleansing, besides providing justification for the worst violations of human rights and other denials of justice. In the face of the spread of the Islamist insurgency, the most radical faction of the regime advocates massive distribution of arms and attempts to set part of the population against the other using manipulation of the media and the war propaganda.³

The parties, which advocate dialogue and national unity, form the opposition in the parliament. These parties seize every opportunity to call for peace, the respect of human rights and the inclusion of all the political forces in a meaningful dialogue in order to extricate the country from its tragic state. These parties are signatories to the National Contract⁴ signed in Rome which stipulates explicitly, among other principles, the rejection of violence as a means of acceding to, and staying in power and the guarantee of fundamental individual and collective rights and freedoms, without distinction of race, sex, religion or language. These parties are the object of constant harassment by the authorities which accuse them of conniving with terrorism. The state of emergency that has been in place since 1992 restricts their freedom and puts the lives of their adherents at risk. As a consequence of the constricting diktats of the regime, some parties have preferred self-dissolution and the withdrawal from political activity. Thus, the MDA and the Oumma party opted for this decision.

The political parties belonging to the third category (FLN, MSA, Nahda) cultivate an image of opposition to the eradicationists despite being members of a government which is totally committed to an eradicationist line. Within this group, Nahda is the only party that does not participate in the government. These parties owe their change of fortune from a marginal state to the present situation, where they have sizeable numbers of seats in the parliament, to the military coup of January 1992. These 'islamo-nationalists' either stand by or actively comfort the regime in its eradicationism to the extent of rejecting even the principle of an international commission of inquiry into the massacres.

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The regime draws comfort from the support of both the 'Islamists' of MSA and the 'democrats' of RCD. This alliance allows it to project an image of pluralism and a modernity that is not necessarily secular, since the Islamists of the MSA can identify with part of it.

2.1. Party of Defiance (Ettahadi)

Ettahadi party⁵ is the successor of the PAGS (Le Parti de l'Avant Garde Socialiste), originally a party of Marxist persuasion. The party was created on 26 January 1966 and has ever since been associated, in some form or another, with the successive regimes that have run the country. The culture of the party is widely seen as Stalinist and its adherents are mostly intellectuals who are out of touch with the aspirations of the general masses. At present, it is led by Cherif Hachemi. The party obtained 0.024 % of the voices during the local elections of 12 June 1990. Maître Yahia Abdennour, the President of the Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights (LADDH), describes this party as follows

It is a party of inquisition, a believer in the final solution. It practices exclusion, rejection and condemnation of its opponents, fires without warning on all those who call for national reconciliation, refuses any political competition or elections before the total and definitive eradication of the FIS. Only those who align themselves to its positions get into its favour. It carries an obsolete ideology that has led to illusions and failure. It has lost the confidence of the population and, oddly, that of the working class that it is supposed to represent.⁶

Ettahadi is a staunch opponent of the Islamists and its positions are similar to those of the RCD. When Abbassi Madani, leader of the FIS, was freed from jail, the party leader wrote:

Did not contemporary fascism with Hitler, Mussolini, Franco and -more recently Pinochet- refer to religion? And what should one believe with regard to the thinking of Abbassi Madani after his release? Well! He thinks that it is not the authorities that have freed him. The authorities have all but given up before the Islamists. He does not owe anything to them, absolutely nothing, not even silence. It is God that has freed him. Only God. At least the god he believes in. It is to him that he owes everything.⁷

The enmity of the party to the Islamists knows no bounds judging from the following declaration of the party national council: 'Fundamentalist terrorism succeeds in reproducing and redeploing because it feeds on the aggravation of the crisis and the shady deals of the authorities and large sections of the political class with fundamentalism'.⁸ The national council went on to deplore: 'the lack of a strategy and the incapacity of the authorities to confront the new developments of the situation as a whole and the security climate in particular. The complacency and arrogance of the official discourse add to the confusion of the population and its demobilisation'.⁹

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2.2. Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD)

The RCD (Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Démocratie) was created in Tizi-Ouzou in February 1989. It is led by Saïd Sadi, its secretary-general. During the general elections of December 1991, the RCD fielded 302 candidates but was unable to win a single seat. Saïd Sadi himself was beaten in the first round by the candidate of the FFS in his fiefdom of Tizi-Ouzou. Seeing his party completely marginalised, Saïd Sadi, along with Ettahadi, and the UGTA (Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens, the trade union organisation) called on the army to abort the electoral process. Maître Ali Yahia Abdennour wrote the following about Saïd Sadi:

Saïd Sadi who is a militaro-democrat awards himself the title of patriot, that of modernist and republican. He supports the military coup d'état, the totalitarian regime for the sole reason that the regime combats the FIS. He claims to be ready, with means that he does not possess but in the shadow of the army, to lead the country towards modernity with an iron hand and without compromises. A 'republican' who calls on the army to save democracy through non-democratic means, is he or can he be a democrat? A republican who asks the army to oppose the will of the people, that was freely and clearly expressed through the ballot box is a fascist who can only lead his country towards a tragedy without a name, for the sole benefit of the regime in place.¹⁰

The RCD party did not secure a single seat in the general elections that took place on 26 December 1991 and which were subsequently cancelled by the military regime. Its position has been very clear since the beginning of the conflict in Algeria. It has always advocated eradicationism and sought to enrol the civilian population in the war through the creation of militias and self-defence groups that are beyond political control and answer only to the security forces. For Saïd Sadi: 'The terrorists slaughter innocent civilians in the villages which lack the means of self-defence.' He advocates a 'government of national unity whose main action would be to arm the civilians in the areas which are threatened by terrorism'.¹¹

The RCD adopts a strategy of dehumanisation of its political opponents. It fashions out of a primitive anti-Islamism a political *raison d'être* and supports actively the military regime in a savage war in which systematic torture, extra-judicial killings and repression are widely practised. The language of damnation of the Muslims appears to be the only policy of the party and the 'barbarism of the fundamentalism'¹² is a recurring theme in its terror rhetoric. Its main struggle is directed against what it terms 'fundamentalism'. For this party, all the atrocities committed across the land are the work of the 'fundamentalists'. The leader of the RCD was among the first to call for the setting up of local militias to combat the 'fundamentalists'. In its reports, Amnesty International has attributed many of the atrocities committed to the militia. Saïd Sadi angrily objects to Amnesty International use of the term 'militiamen'. In an interview, he declared:

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Moreover, I reject the term of 'militiamen' which evokes paid up mercenaries. The last report of Amnesty International is a dangerous drift. I have suffered while reading this. I had created the first section of Amnesty in Algeria (sic)¹³. The report states that the Islamists slaughter in response to exactions committed by the self-defence groups. We have no right to express such an irresponsible position that further complicates a situation that is already muddled. Do we leave people to be slaughtered? There was no other choice.¹⁴

Khalida Messaoudi, the vice-president of the RCD has no doubt about the identity of the killers. She declared to the French communist paper *L'Humanité*: 'It is the armed Islamic groups which kill.'¹⁵ The RCD opposes any international inquiry into the massacres in Algeria. Its position has been reiterated in a newspaper: 'The RCD rejects even the principle of an international inquiry into the massacres in Algeria, for it amounts to putting on the same level terrorism and the State'.¹⁶ In another newspaper, Saïd Sadi criticised Italy for being credited with the idea of calling for an international conference on Algeria. 'This initiative, if maintained, will constitute a grudge between our two peoples'.¹⁷

In a speech at the festival of *L'Humanité* organised by the French communist party, Khalida Messaoudi spoke at length to an audience brought to a heightened state of anti-Muslim hysteria. We report below a large extract of her speech to illustrate the kind of semantic shifts and hyperbolic outpourings that have become the hallmarks of the eradicationist militants, be they Algerian or French converts. The eradicationists have been in the forefront of the war against 'fundamentalism'. Not only were they instrumental in inciting the army to subvert the democratic process, but ever since the military take-over they have been actively engaged in the systematic elimination of their political opponents through their zeal for eradication. They spearheaded the creation of armed militias to hunt the Islamists and punish their families. It is now known that massacres previously attributed to the armed rebels are in fact the work of militias.¹⁸ For Saïd Sadi, Khalida Messaoudi and their fans, the Islamists are to be eradicated and obliterated from the face of the earth because they have committed a cardinal crime, namely that of winning the general elections of December 1991. The eradicationists have refined the art of damnation of the Islamists to a degree that rivals with the mythology secreted by the crusaders in the Middle Ages against the 'Saracens'. The kind of language they use is illustrated below in a long passage from the prima donna of eradicationism, Khalida Messaoudi:

Thank you for allowing the voice of the Algerian people who refuses to die slaughtered. The news from Algeria is not good. The population which lives in the centre of Algiers is facing a real genocide. We always read in the European press, often by the pen of the pseudo-specialists of Algeria, the following question: who are the killers? In the name of the decapitated babies and in the name of the slaughtered women, I take the responsibility to say: it is the armed Islamic groups. Furthermore, the responsibility for these massacres falls on the Islamic groups of the FIS whose

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leader is Abbassi Madani. I appeal brotherly to those who still ask the question, maybe in good faith. Each time you take the responsibility off the shoulders of the assassins [...] you undermine the legitimacy of the Algerian State. I make a distinction between the State and the regime in power. Our struggle is very difficult because we do not know how to understand the ferociousness that leads to ripping a foetus from the mother, in front of the father, placing a baby in an oven and slicing him in parts. They want to massacre in the most barbarous way; their objective is clear: to spread panic among the population, to cause it to flee in huge numbers to Algiers in order to cause the implosion of Algiers. The FIS seeks to impose chaos so that it can take power, all the power. Dear friends, who wish to help us, you hear the call for an international conference on Algeria. This will be an unexpected opportunity for the assassins of women, old people and babies. This will compel us to negotiate with the Islamist terrorists. This has not been achieved in Algeria up till now. I ask you not to support this project against the Algerians! It is difficult for us to stay calm but Algeria has got the means to find the right exit. There are moments of panic after these horrible crimes. [...]. But fear has also given rise to courage and dignity. Young men are getting organised. Even the children! They deny the title of Saviour to Abbassi Madani. Because the people know who kills! Abbassi Madani must be tried by an international tribunal for the crimes he is responsible for. The Algerians refuse that he be absolved of his crimes. If we have no need whatsoever for an international conference, we, however, hope for your support for the young men, the women, and the workers who struggle everyday for Algeria. Algeria is not Kabul or Khartoum. Algeria will never be Tehran! We have the means to fight. The massacres have been going on for six months and Abbassi Madani has declared that he could put an end to them. This means that that he recognises his responsibility in the killings that are carried out by the hundreds. [...] Is it a coincidence that, after his liberation, voices in Paris, Rome and elsewhere have called him a man of peace and proposed an international conference? I repeat. We do not need this, what we need is your help in loosening the vice around the Algerian democrats. You have to stop saying that in Algeria there is the state and the FIS. There is another alternative. It is very difficult but it is the only one. The young, the women and the workers have their associations. The democratic political organisations exist. They need your help.¹⁹

2.3. Democratic National Rally (RND)

The RND (Rassemblement National Démocratique) party was created by general Zeroual and the militaro-political mafia with the aim of monopolising power. Since the military take-over of 1992, democracy has been turned upside down in Algeria. The distribution of seats is decided well ahead of actual ballots to avoid surprising outcomes. The generals in Algeria have now a political front, the RND, an instrument for the exercise of real power behind subservient and obsequious politicians. They are determined to avoid a repeat of the general elections of December 1991 which were free and fair by all accounts. In the new political configuration, the existence of other competing parties is essential for projecting a democratic façade to the outside world. The RND party was predestined to be the dominant party. In their witty humour, the Algerians describe the RND as a baby born with moustaches. Thus, the party won the first general election of 5 June 1997,

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just after three months of existence and went on to win the general elections of 23 October 1997 by securing, or rather grabbing, 55 per cent of the vote.

The RND is strongly backed by about two hundred thousand armed militiamen who terrorise, ransom and pillage the population with total impunity. They have the power over life and death. For instance, Zidane Mokhfi, a notorious warlord who commands a company of 2,000 militiamen,²⁰ headed the RND candidates list for the local elections in Bouïra. The Algerians are now tightly controlled by the generals and their numerous security services, a press run by the department of psychological operations of the Direction du Renseignement et de la Sécurité (DRS), and an overzealous party, the RND and its hordes of militiamen. The RND revolts the citizens by the thuggish behaviour of its militants and the unbridled greed and racketeering of its leaders.

Given the nature of the RND, its reactions to the massacres are therefore totally predictable. The party, which has been implicated in massacres, blames the Islamists for all the atrocities committed and vehemently opposes any inquiry into the massacres, be it national or international. The reactions of the party are typical of totalitarian regimes. Instead of confronting the reality of the situation, they take refuge in hollow patriotic sentiments.

The Democratic National Rally (RND) while denouncing with utmost firmness the odious crimes committed against defenceless civilians considers that revenge and hatred against the heroic Algerian people cannot diminish in any way its will and determination to persevere in the action of building a strong, stable and democratic Algeria.²¹

Too often, the party uses the language of conspiracy against the country. For instance, in another statement, the party said in a letter to its militants: 'We emphasise the existence of two plots against Algeria, one led by the terrorist groups and the other fomented by external political circles'.²²

2.4. National Liberation Front (FLN)

The FLN (Front de Libération Nationale) party was formed in 1954 with the objective of liberating the country from the French occupation. At independence, a power struggle broke out between the political leaders represented in the GPRA (Provisional Government of the Republic of Algeria) and the Boumediene-led group of Oujda. The GPRA was mainly supported by exhausted and poorly equipped freedom fighters who had waged the liberation struggle from within Algeria, and was no match to the military might of the group of Oujda. Clashes occurred between the two sides and resulted in hundreds of deaths. To avert a civil war the GPRA gave way and disbanded. Thus the republic of Algeria was born through illegitimate methods, the use of force and intimidation. The new leaders established an army-backed regime with the FLN as a civilian front.

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The seeds of the instability that is plaguing the country today can be traced back to that fateful encounter between a legitimate provisional government and a violent army determined to secure its hold on power. The FLN party played a vital role in running the civilian administration on behalf of the army colonels and generals. During the mid-eighties, the country faced a severe economic crisis and growing popular discontent. The FLN was seen by the people as a discredited and corrupt party.

In October 1988 riots broke out in Algiers and the main cities. The army stepped in and did what it is good at, namely killing and maiming Algerian citizens.²³ The events of October were to prove a watershed moment in the history of Algeria. The popular uprising forced the regime to reform the political system. A new constitution enshrining the principle of multi-party democracy was adopted in 1989. Following the new changes, the FLN ceased to exist as a privileged party. It had to compete with a plethora of emerging and previously banned parties.

From October 1988 until 1996 the history of the FLN party is intimately linked with the struggle of one man: Abdelhamid Mehri. During this period, the fortunes of the party had been completely transformed. Mehri is a respected political figure and has behind him a long history of political struggle. As secretary general of the party since 1988, Mehri sought to transform the FLN into a modern opposition party. Mehri called for the respect of the popular will and opposed the military coup of 11 January 1992. The FLN did not support the military regime and did not take part in the formal institutions that were set up to fill the constitutional vacuum. Moreover, the FLN signed the National Contract which set out principles for solving the political crisis and promoting national reconciliation.

However old habits die hard and Mehri was never forgiven by the old guard for daring to sever the juicy links with the military regime. In December 1996 Mehri was removed from the leadership of the party and since then the FLN has reverted to its old opportunistic ways: grovelling to the authorities, supporting all actions taken by the military regime and stifling free speech and dissent. During the party congress of April 1998, Ahmed Taleb Ibrahimi, an ex-foreign affairs minister, was prevented from finishing the delivery of his speech. He described what happened to him as follows: 'I had the impression that I was standing in front of various security services that were trying a citizen accused of violating the law when I saw a group of persons with links to the security services posing as members of the FLN congress'.²⁴

It is no wonder then that the reactions of the FLN to the massacres of innocent civilians are benign and even accommodating to the military regime: 'The National Liberation Front (FLN) condemns with vigour the barbarous acts committed against civilians.'²⁵

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2.5. Front of Socialist Forces (FFS)

The FFS (Front des Forces Socialistes) party was created by its present leader, Hocine Ait-Ahmed, in the early sixties during the one-party reign. Ait Ahmed is a founding member of the FLN. He is one of the leaders who sparked off the liberation struggle that led to independence from France in 1962. He was imprisoned and sentenced to death in October 1964 for his political activities. Two years later, he fled the prison and went into exile. With the end of the one-party era, he returned in 1989 to lead his party. After the coup d'état of 11 December 1992, which he opposed, he again chose exile rather than accepting the dictates of an illegitimate regime. An article in a newspaper describes the man as follows:

Hocine Ait-Ahmed does not mince his words. An historical figure of the liberation war, this seventy-year old Kabyle, President of the Front des Forces Socialistes (FFS) which is one of the last opposition parties to be tolerated by the authorities, is an acerbic critic of the regime. To a government that makes the 'eradication' of terrorists its unique response to a conflict that has lasted for more than five years, he advocates a political solution through a dialogue with the Islamists of the ex-FIS. Mr Ait-Ahmed has always shown an independent mind and an intellectual honesty that have earned him admiration by a large part of the Algerian public opinion. He lives nowadays in Switzerland. To the authorities that accuse him of 'deserting' he replies by denouncing the absence of democracy.²⁶

The FFS party has consistently called for dialogue and reconciliation. It is one of the signatories of the Rome Contract. In a speech to journalists in Rome,²⁷ Hocine Ait-Ahmed accused the former colonial power, France, which has close ties to the military-backed government, of inaction on a political solution and for indifference to the plight of Algerians. He went on to say: 'We would like this wall of silence, this Berlin Wall being rebuilt on the frontiers of Algeria, to be broken.' He also said: 'Europe made itself an accomplice to the violence through its silence.' He then accused President Liamine Zeroual of using the state of emergency to suppress democracy and appealed to President Clinton to help find a solution to the crisis:

One of the initiatives we expect is for President Clinton to take measures which are likely to help bring about peace. Why does he not appoint a mediator on Algeria? We believe that such an initiative in favour of a peace process will be likely to unblock the situation.²⁸

Hocine Ait-Ahmed told the British Royal Institute for International Affairs that only an international outcry could prevent Algeria from sliding deeper into despair. Despite fierce opposition by the army-dominated government, he urged the United Nations to open an office in Algeria in order to monitor the violence. He went on to say: 'The silence and indifference of the Western powers and public opinion have put my country on a very slippery slope towards an all-out slaughter, likely to rapidly assume the dimen-

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sions of a genocide.’²⁹ He praised UN Secretary-General Koffi Annan’s recent call for dialogue to overcome the violence and said the world should not be intimidated into silence by ‘fascist-like threats’ from the Algerian authorities. He stressed that he was not seeking outside military intervention but political pressure to bring all sides in Algeria to the negotiating table, as had happened in South Africa and between Israelis and Palestinians.

Hocine Ait-Ahmed accused the regime of seeking to manage the country as a military camp.³⁰ In another newspaper, he ridiculed the declarations of the Algerian authorities concerning the existence of an international conspiracy against them. He rejected the declarations of the President on the existence of a ‘conspiracy’ led with the help of ‘foreign forces’ and ‘Algerian personalities’ by describing them as a ‘Stalinist’ vision. He went on to say: ‘Algeria is put to fire and sword’, and ‘General Zeroual has only one thing to say: “international plot”.’³¹

Hocine Ait-Ahmed has been restless in the face of the recurring massacres that threaten the collapse of the Algerian society. His concern for the safety of the Algerians and his call for an international commission of inquiry into the massacres have been widely reported by the press. The newspaper, *La Tribune de Genève*, wrote the following article about him:

In Geneva the President of the Front des Forces Socialistes (FFS), Hocine Ait-Ahmed has equally asked the UN and the international community to intervene in Algeria in the face of crimes against humanity. He declared that the UN and Western nations should impose the return to democracy. ‘We cannot stand idly by in front of continuing massacres’, said the Algerian opponent in a meeting with the press. ‘The monstrous carnage of the last weeks is a crime against humanity. I call on the UN Secretary-General, the European Union and the President of the United States to quickly take a collective initiative in order to start a true peace and democracy process in Algeria’, said Hocine Ait-Ahmed. He revealed that he wrote to Kofi Annan asking him to intervene. ‘We have to abandon the policy of *laissez-faire* and indifference in front of the danger of ‘Somalisation’ and ‘Rwandisation’ which threatens the physical integrity of the population, added Mr Ait-Ahmed. The ‘complacency’ of the Westerners is explained by their interest in exploiting the resources of oil and gas, an advantage in the hands of the authorities.’³²

The same paper reported in another issue:

Thus, Hocine Ait-Ahmed, leader of the Front des Forces Socialistes (FFS), having already appealed to the UN General Secretary to send a ‘special delegate’, as well as a commission of inquiry into the recent massacres, asked yesterday the leaders of the French and British governments, Lionel Jospin and Tony Blair as well as other Western leaders, to ‘take immediate initiatives in favour of peace in Algeria’. ‘We are for the internationalisation of the Algerian problem because the authorities in place have been incapable of assuring physical, economic and social security for the Algerians. But we are not for the internationalisation of the solution’, he added. During a meeting with the French daily *La Croix*, Hocine Ait-Ahmed asked the international community to exercise maximum pressure, including economic pressure, on the Algerian authorities to force them to accept opening up negotiations with all the politi-

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cal forces, including the Islamists of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), in order to put an end to the violence. It is the first time that the leader of the FFS has launched so direct a call for political and economic pressures on the Algerian government.³³

2.6. Labour Party (PT)

The Labour Party (Parti des Travailleurs) burst onto the political scene in 1989, although it had been in clandestine existence for years. Its political programme is centred on the defence of the workers' rights, social justice and the promotion of individual freedoms. The party opposed the coup d'état of 11 January 1992, the ensuing state of emergency and the banning of the FIS party. It has consistently called for a political dialogue between all the political forces in order to put an end to the bloodshed. It took part in the January 1995 meeting of Rome and signed the National Contract which charts the principles that should govern the resolution of the Algerian crisis and lays the foundation for a political system in which the people shape their own destiny without any form of coercion.

The spokeswoman of the party is Louisa Hannoune, an energetic and indefatigable campaigner for peace and reconciliation. She helps the families of the disappeared and campaigns on their behalf to draw international public opinion to their plight. In a book³⁴ published in 1996, she lifts the veil on the hidden face of a savage war, in which the atrocities committed are officially attributed to the armed Islamists in order to hide the dreadful violations of human rights committed by the military regime, the wholesale impoverishment and criminal destruction of the Algerian society, its millennial culture, heritage, cohesiveness and humanity. She also denounces the cosmetic tampering with the constitution³⁵ that could in no way address the root of an essentially political problem that necessitates dialogue and national reconciliation. In this context, she wrote in her party paper, *La Tribune Ouvrière*:

The 'completion of the institutional edifice' has not solved any problem, on the contrary. The matter of Relizane, the deadly attack on the barracks of Larbâa, the succession of indictments of ex-DEC³⁶ and other government officials for violation of human rights and embezzlement, the bewildering number of disappeared, the complete decay of the economy and the social fabric, a vector of mafia generation and violence, prove, if need be, that no 'solution' is viable if it does not recognise as a priority the return to peace, the respect of human rights, the restoration of the freedom of speech to the people, the whole people, and the satisfaction of the urgent and huge needs of the overwhelming majority.³⁷

The Parti des Travailleurs (PT) has consistently called for dialogue and a peaceful solution to the crisis. Its representative Benmohamed said: 'The priority is to put an end to this war'. To this effect, he proposed the organisation of an Algerian national conference for peace and fraternity in order to establish true democracy.³⁸

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3. Non-Governmental Organisations

The number of political associations, social organisations and artistic movements in Algeria has soared since the coup d'état of 11 January 1991. These organised bodies, all more or less associated with the regime, are well funded, have easy access to the media and are 'consulted' by the authorities whenever major political decisions are taken. Despite their specific constituencies and particular political hue, they all have a common denominator: they support eradicationism, the official doctrine of the generals in Algeria, a euphemism for political genocide and the physical elimination of the ideological opponent. Nothing can be said or done without the approval of the ubiquitous *Sécurité Militaire* and the latter has learnt the crucial lesson from the outcome of the first round of the general elections of 26 December 1991. The FIS, a party over which it had no control, won a resounding victory. That event posed a threat to the interest of the generals and their respective clients and circles in the machinery of the State. Since then, the *Sécurité Militaire* set out to initiate, infiltrate, encourage and fund all kinds of 'independent' organisations. In fact, these bodies serve to generate sufficient background noise and agitation in order to give the impression of a democratic system based on freedom of association and political choice. The aim is really to prevent the rise of any genuine political movement that can articulate the grievances and aspirations of the people and channel their energy towards the establishment of a just form of government. Indeed, whenever there are calls for peace and national reconciliation, these organisations rise with one voice to frustrate them. They have constantly thwarted any attempt, including the National Contract, aimed at finding a political solution to the crisis. These organisations are nothing but an extension of the DRS, which uses them to preserve the narrow interests of the generals and the various mafia-bodies associated to the military regime.

Just as there are no independent organisations in Algeria, there is also no free press. The last truly free newspaper (*La Nation*) was shut down at the end of 1996 because the authorities could not tolerate the expression of independent opinions that did not promote eradicationism. In the words of an Algerian journalist, who preferred anonymity for fear of reprisals

There is no more free press in Algeria: hardly few concessions that allow the government to boast freedom of the press to the outside world in order to improve its image. Moreover, the generals know very well that, without a small breath of freedom, the country would be a pot under pressure and the situation would become explosive.³⁹

Given the nature of the non-governmental organisations, it is no wonder then to find their reactions in tune with the claims of the generals. They all blame the Islamic armed groups for the massacres and oppose any call for

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an independent commission of inquiry. To illustrate the point, the reactions of some of them are reported here.

3.1. Algerian Rally of Democrat Women (RAFD)

The RAFD (*Rassemblement Algérien des Femmes Démocrates*) is led by Leila Aslaoui, a former spokeswoman of the military regime and a passionate advocate for eradicationism. Sadly, her husband was killed in the troubles, but the tragic experience could only entrench her eradicationist convictions. In 1995, the movement staged a mock trial of opposition leaders such as Abbassi Madani and Ali Benhadj, Anwar Haddam and Rabah Kebir, as well as the deposed president Chadli Benjedid for legalising the FIS in 1989. In February 1995, the movement announced its intention to file a lawsuit in the United States against Anwar Haddam, on behalf of the civilian victims of the political violence in Algeria.

In a statement,⁴⁰ RAFD expressed its solidarity with the struggle of the Algerian women, condemned fundamentalist terrorism, asked the European governments to stop giving asylum to ‘terrorists’ and refused any interference in the ‘internal affairs of Algeria’. The movement has strong links to a clan within the military Establishment that advocates and implements a policy of physical elimination of the political opponents as well as their families. This clan always accuses the civilian authorities of not doing enough in terms of repression and eradication. The RAFD, being allied to this clan, subscribes to this eradicationist vision and accuses the authorities of complacency in the fight against ‘terrorism’. In a statement, the movement declared: ‘The fundamentalist assassins increase the pressure on the Algerian people’ and ‘the aggravation of the security climate contradicts violently with the triumphalist declarations of the authorities’.⁴¹

3.2. Association of the Executives of the Civil Service (ANCAP)

The ANCAP (*Association Nationale des Cadres de l’Administration Publique*) controls the administration at the national and local levels and operates outside the control of elected officials. The regime uses it as an instrument for implementing its policies and for monitoring various segments of society. Its reaction reflects the official versions of events. In a statement, the ANCAP condemned the horrible slaughter by the terrorist hordes and castigated the acts of certain parties which stopped at nothing in order to ‘destabilise the institutions of the Republic’ by outdoing each other in their declarations.⁴²

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3.3. Association of Victims of Terrorism (Djazairouna)

This association opposes any drive towards dialogue and national reconciliation and blames the Islamists for all the committed atrocities and massacres. Leila Aslaoui, who leads the above mentioned Algerian Rally of Democrat Women, plays a major role in shaping the political stance of the movement.

In a released statement, the Association of Victims of Terrorism expressed its conviction that the disconcerting facility with which the aggressors acted as well as their repetitive methods might raise doubts as to the motive and identity of the authors.⁴³ During a debate in the European parliament on the situation of human rights in Algeria, Leila Aslaoui criticised Amnesty International for its use of 'armed opposition' in its reports. She went on to say: 'We, in Algeria, know who kills us and who protects us [...]. Yes, there are excesses, abuses of rights, people who disappear and torture. But these are isolated cases. There is no institutionalisation of the abuses'. She then went on to ask the parliamentarians 'not to misunderstand the struggle or the target'.⁴⁴

3.4 Algerian Medical Union (UMA)

The UMA (Union Médicale Algérienne) has assumed prominence since the military coup of 11 January 1992. All the doctors who do not support the military regime are barred from standing for office within the organisation's ruling body. Like most such organisations, it is but a front for the military regime and hence supports eradicationism. In a statement, the Algerian Medical Union (UMA) claimed to be horrified by the collective massacres and the crimes of rare savagery perpetrated by the criminal terrorists and mercenaries against defenceless children, women and old people.⁴⁵

3.5. Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights

The LADDH (Ligue Algérienne pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme) is the exception that confirms the rule of the non-existence of independent organisations in Algeria. The League has been a constant thorn in the back of the military regime which responded by creating its own league and observatory of human rights. In the Algerian landscape of cruelty and horror, the LADDH stands as a beacon of hope and humanity. It reminds the universal conscience that even on such a harsh and inhuman soil there are men and women of honour and integrity who, despite the constant threat to their lives, continue to defend the rights of man and to speak out against the evil inflicted on humanity.

Maître Ali-Yahia Abdennour, president of the LADDH, depicted a bleak picture of the situation of human rights in Algeria in an interview with *La*

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Tribune de Genève. The questions of the reporter together with the answers are reproduced below:

Maitre Ali-yahia Abdennour received us at home, in his apartment which dominates the bay of Algiers. It has been several months now since he has visited his cabinet at the centre of Algiers or has pleaded in the courts. Since the killing of Maitre Fathallah, President of the rival league considered to be close to the authorities, he lives practically underground.

Maitre Ali-Yahia Abdennour has spent months in prison in 1985 for having created, during the one-party regime, the first league of human rights for which he remains president. Since then, and at the age of seventy, he is still one of the most resolute and active adversaries of the regime.

Question: Within a few weeks, more than 300 citizens have been savagely slaughtered in the region of Blida. Why these particularly horrible massacres affecting peaceful citizens?

Answer – Y A: To be able to understand what is happening, I think one should go back to the year 1994. At that time, the government had launched the policy of the ‘out-stretched hand’ through which it proposed to the ‘stray’ Islamist insurgents to lay down their weapons in exchange for amnesty. The security services had brought heavy pressure to bear on the families of those who had taken to the hills so as to force them to come back. But the operation had been a failure. Once the deadline given to the ‘stray’ to return to the fold had expired, the security services attacked the families of the ‘terrorists’, appropriated their properties and imprisoned many of them on the grounds of ‘supporting terrorism’.

Question: What assessment do you make of the human rights situation in Algeria after five years of emergency state?

Answer – Y A: 190,000 dead, 461 disappeared identified by the League, 20,000 prisoners crowded in filthy prisons under inhuman conditions, the regression is so general that it takes the dimensions of a genocide. Torture is systematic. It has become an administrative method of work for the security services which consider it to be the best way of obtaining information. Extra-judiciary killings have become commonplace. The special courts have gone but their legislation has been extended to all the courts of the land.⁴⁶

Maitre Ali-Yahia Abdennour is conscious of the genocidal enterprise of the generals in Algeria. They are determined to kill huge numbers of people in order to remain in power. In a meeting in Madrid, he spoke of massive violations of human rights and concluded: ‘This is the consequence of the security policy of President Zeroual and the “eradicators” who want the peace of cemeteries.’⁴⁷

4. Public Personalities

The military regime has enlisted the support of journalists, civil servants and trade union officials in its war against its political opponents. Its propaganda machine wants the world to believe that civil society, intellectuals and scientists are behind its ‘enlightened’ policies. The persons who have rallied to its

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defence acquire miraculously the title of ‘democrats’ or ‘intellectuals’ while those who fail to support it or choose to oppose it are at best denied these prized attributes. Instead, they can make do with a different list of attributes: ‘fundamentalists’, ‘obscurantists’, ‘terrorists’ and ‘infra-humans’. No amount of erudition, scholarship or intellectual ability entitles them to state their opinion or to be heard. Despite terror, intimidation and physical danger, many prominent personalities have spoken up against the crimes of the regime, denounced the massacres and called for an international commission of inquiry.

4.1. Omar Belhouchet

Omar Belhouchet is the editor of the daily newspaper *El-Watan*. He was an unknown figure prior to the January 1992 putsch, but since then has become one of the main ideologues of the military regime and maintains close ties with the security services. This explains why the newspaper he edits is quite well informed on security matters. Belhouchet is one of the pillars of the military regime. He constantly argues the case of the generals, vilifies the Islamists, and accuses them of all the evils that beset Algeria. He is a powerful exponent of the eradicationist cause. In his paper, *El-Watan*, he wrote:

A first fact, the armed Islamist groups, whose members belong to the FIS, have declared war on the Algerian people. To combat terrorism is also to combat the ideology that has produced it, i.e. fundamentalism. The building up of a credible state that respects the rights of its citizens must also be borne in mind. Algeria confronts a terrorism that derives from a political party. This terrorism has the potential to last and harm the country, its women and men. This terrorism is by no means technically and militarily defeated but, fortunately, it is rejected and disavowed by the population.⁴⁸

Like all the eradicationists, Belhouchet blames the Islamists for the massacres without producing any evidence to corroborate his accusations

Those, under the name of the FIS, who opened the way not long ago to violence, stain the word ‘Islamism’. We cannot turn our back to truth. To say ‘one does not know who are the killers’ has no meaning. [...] Children are being slaughtered and decapitated in the name of Islam. The justifiable rejection (of an international commission of inquiry) should not hide in any way the crimes committed in the name of Islam.⁴⁹

4.2. Ahmed Ben Bella

Ahmed Ben Bella, the first President of independent Algeria, assumed power from 1962 until he was toppled in 1965 and jailed by his defence minister Houari Boumediene. He spent the whole period of Boumediene’s reign in prison until the latter’s death. He was released from detention when Boumediene’s successor Chadli Bendjedid took over. After his release, he went into

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exile and set up a political party, the MDA (Movement Pour la Démocratie Algérienne). Ben Bella returned to the country after the events of 1988 which led to the end of the one-party state era. Ben Bella opposed the military coup of 11 January 1991 and condemned the interference of the military in politics.

Ahmed Ben Bella accuses the army of engineering the massacres and holds it responsible for the tragedy that engulfs Algeria. In a despatch from Vienna, *Agence France Presse* reported the following reaction from him:

The former Algerian President, Ahmed Ben Bella, declared on Wednesday that 'Algeria can only overcome the crisis through a dialogue with all the forces that seek peace', in an interview with the daily *'Kurier'*. 'A dialogue between the government and the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) is necessary', he added. According to Ben Bella, 'Most of the Algerians believe that the army as well as the secret service organise the massacres'. 'The government is controlled by the army. It is criminal that the government can commit massacres like the GIA (Armed Islamic Group) even though it is the guardian of the law. The government and the GIA are the only ones responsible for the massacres. The FIS is not responsible', declared the former Algerian leader. 'I do not belong to the FIS and I do not defend its ideas', he clarified before stating that a dialogue without the FIS would lead nowhere.⁵⁰

4.3. Ahmed Taleb Ibrahimi

Ahmed Taleb Ibrahimi is the son of one of the intellectual giants of the reformist movement in Algeria. He took part in the liberation struggle and was jailed by the French for his actions. After independence, he occupied several ministerial posts. He is best remembered as a skilful foreign affairs minister and has not been tainted by any whiff of corruption. Despite having served in many governments since independence, his integrity has remained intact, unlike many of his generation who failed to live up to the ideals of their youth, or who succumbed to the trappings of power and ended up pillaging the country and betraying the people in the name of which they fought and militated so eagerly in order to put an end to the French occupation.

In a speech before the FLN congress, Ibrahimi declared:

What is more dangerous is that years of violence and repression have produced a new mentality for which the victims have become but frozen numbers that add to each other in arithmetic operations which allow only addition and multiplication but no subtraction.

All of us have to condemn, with the utmost vigour and without any reservation, the butchery, burning, killings and the forcible removal of citizens from their homes, especially in remote villages. We condemn also the sabotage of public property, the pillage and destruction and the attacks on the Christian community through the assassination of one of its leaders and its monks. Among others, we question ourselves: is the State really incapable of protecting its citizens, putting an end to the series of massacres and sparing the country the dangers of the creeping internationalisation which constitutes the worst of all possible outcomes.

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At the same time we condemn all forms of human rights abuses, whether they are political, economic or social, and the breach of public freedoms, because we belong to a country which suffered colonial injustice. We should not humiliate the dignity of any citizen. With as much conviction, I think that this congress is called upon not to forget another tragedy which has deprived thousands of families from sleep since the beginning of the violence, namely the disappearance of hundreds of their sons in obscure conditions that should be clarified in order to arrive at the truth.⁵¹

The degradation of the security situation in all its forms has been further complicated by the distribution of weapons to a section of the population, thus putting new obstacles in the way of any durable political settlement and in turn feeding the germs of civil war. Indeed, violence in parts of the country is no longer motivated by political considerations but is used to settle accounts and as a method for quick enrichment and easy gain as well as an instrument for the domination and control of people's lives.

4.4. Abdelhamid Brahimi

Abdelhamid Brahimi was a freedom fighter during the war of liberation. After independence, he assumed many positions in the government, culminating in that of Prime Minister (1984-1988) under President Chadli. Brahimi is one of the rare officials who have not been tainted by corruption. He is also an economist who has written extensively about the economy of Algeria. Nowadays, he lives in exile in London. He remains a member of the FLN party but disagrees with the party leadership that he feels has sold the soul of the party to the military junta.

Brahimi knows personally the generals who run Algeria and what they are capable of. He has also friends among retired generals who are privy to secrets and indiscretions. He has constantly accused the generals of responsibility in the massacres. In an interview with the London-based *Al-Hayat* newspaper Brahimi said:

The Algerian security services are responsible for the massacres in Algeria and for carrying out a series of bomb attacks in France in 1995. The state organises terror and the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) is part of the regime. Brahimi said the bomb explosions in France in 1995 and 1996 were the work of the Algerian secret services. He also added that a senior French official informed him that France was aware of the responsibility of the Algerian authorities. He also pointed out that the same source revealed to him that the French President Jacques Chirac wrote to the Algerian President Liamine Zeroual warning him that France would not accept in the future to see the Algerian authorities exporting terrorism to France.⁵²

Brahimi is categorical about the perpetrators of the massacres. According to him, the military junta is massacring Islamists and their families and putting the blame on the Islamists. He told John Sweeny, an investigative journalist working for *The Observer*, the following:

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The Algerian Junta is killing Islamists and blaming it on them. It's machiavellian. The massive killings are always among the fundamentalists in the area where they are strongest. I knew some of the people killed in Medea. They were part of my family. The killers knocked on the door at night. They cut the throats of the father, his sons, daughters and a boy aged one. The family were well-known moderate Islamists. They voted for FIS in the 1991 elections. One of the sons was elected as a FIS Member of Parliament. He fled to the mountains. The message sent by the army and the Sécurité Militaire is clear. But everything happens in secret. You cannot find any official information, only that there is a reign of terror. Brahimi was especially critical for France's support for the junta.⁵³

In an interview with *The Herald Tribune*, he highlighted the crimes of the military junta and the oppression of the Algerians.

There will be no change. Not only was there a massive fraud by stuffing ballot boxes by government officials, but mainly because the overwhelming majority of the Algerian people do not trust the present regime. Algerians do not understand the silence in Europe about developments in Algeria over the past five years. Algeria is only a two-hour flight from most major European capitals yet tens of thousands of innocent people can be killed without any notice being taken. This is something nobody can understand in Algeria. Algerians are wondering if they are considered as sub-humans. The very least the European countries, and especially the United Kingdom, can do, is to take a public position on two fronts: first, condemn the present regime's human rights policy and, specifically, the lack of freedom of speech and political expression. Second, they should encourage a return to the democratic process in Algeria, through dialogue between the regime and all the representative political parties without any exclusion of individuals.⁵⁴

Brahimi went further in his accusations of the military junta. In an interview granted to a Moroccan newspaper he named three specific generals. When asked about the decision of the Algerian generals to sue him for accusing the army of being behind the massacres, he replied:

Before answering your questions, I need to clarify the following. In all my declarations I have never accused the Algerian army as an institution. I have accused three generals: general Mohamed Lamari, the Chief-of-Staff, general Mohamed Medienne, known as Toufik, and general Smain Lamari. These three individuals are responsible for all the massacres that have taken place since a year and a half. These three generals are behind the creation of the militias whose strength exceeds that of the army. The strength of the militia exceeds today 200,000 persons whereas the strength of the regular army does not exceed 170,000 persons. The 170,000 persons are not involved in the repression of the Algerian people. This task falls to the militias which act directly on the orders of the three generals. These three generals set the objectives to be achieved. As to the armed Islamists that the media keep talking about, everybody knows that the military wing of the FIS, the AIS has always condemned in all its declarations the targeting of civilians and foreigners and has concentrated its actions solely on military targets.⁵⁵

When the interviewing journalist remarked that the AIS declared a truce in October 1997, Dr Brahimi went on to say:

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Precisely, despite this truce, the massacres have continued all the more and have even increased in horror and ferocity. We are told that the GIAs are responsible. But who are these GIAs? I can assure you that these GIAs are infiltrated and manipulated by the security services and that some Islamist Groups have been created by the security services. We have reached a situation where two forces led by the same instigators confront each other: the militias, and the GIAs which act, so the propaganda says, in the name of Islam. These GIAs, I repeat, are the extended arm of the military security services. The targets are, as if by chance, civilians who had voted for the FIS in 1991 and who are considered by the military security to be the electoral bastion of this party. We are witnessing posthumous revenge and settling of scores.

Brahimi has alerted the international public opinion to the genocide in Algeria through testimonies before human rights commissions and press interviews. In 1997, he sent the following letter to the British Trade Union Congress (TUC), which gathered in Brighton. In the letter, he spoke of the tragedy of the Algerian people and asked for the support of the TUC.

The Algerian regime has been carrying out a severe repression policy for almost six years. More than 100,000 innocent Algerians have been killed since January 1992. The collective massacres organised by the governmental militia since 1995-96 reached an average of 1,500 killed per week in August 1997. The regime continues to use force as a means of countering the political ideas and beliefs of people.

Since 1992, the people of Algeria have been subjected to terror, pauperisation, injustice, arbitrary arrest and extra-judicial executions. The violations of fundamental human rights by the military regime, as well as the violations of individual and collective freedoms, have become the tragic daily reality of a large number of people. Throughout this period, the economic and social situation has dramatically deteriorated. Poverty has spread throughout, while the middle class has disappeared. This clearly indicates that the present regime does not wish to establish a democratic process, or to accept alternation of power, since it rejects the popular verdict and the Algerian people's sovereignty. Since January 1995, all the political representative parties have been calling for a genuine dialogue with the regime to prepare for a democratic transition and to end the bloodshed. Instead, the regime, internally isolated from the people, is escalating its policy of repression.

The Algerians do not understand the silence of Europe on developments in Algeria over the last six years. Algeria is only a two-hour flight from most major European capitals and yet tens of thousands of innocent people can be killed without any notice taken. This is something nobody in Algeria can understand. We hope that the TUC can bring the Algerian crisis onto its agenda. We hope that the TUC will condemn the present regime's human rights policy and, specially, the lack of freedom of speech and political expression. The TUC could also encourage a return to the democratic process in Algeria, through a dialogue between the regime and all the representative political parties without any exclusion.

4.5. Salima Ghezali

Salima Ghezali started her career as a French teacher. With the political liberalisation of 1989, she embarked on a journalistic career. She worked first in

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a women magazine (*Njyssa*) before becoming director of the genuinely independent newspaper, *La Nation*. The paper was shut down in early 1997. In 1996 she received the award of 'Editor-in-chief of the Year' from the World Press Review in recognition for her constant advocacy for a political settlement between the regime and its opponents. In October 1996, she was awarded the Human Rights Prize of the American 'Rothkoe Chapel'.

La Nation was the only paper that did not toe the official line; it sought to articulate the views and opinions of the silent majority outside the influence of factions and vested interests. It was a quality paper that did not peddle the junta lies, convey disinformation, or rationalise eradicationism like the rest of the other papers. The suspension of *La Nation* is a vivid reminder that no 'free press' that is not sponsored by a powerful military clan can exist in Algeria. The European parliament awarded Ghezali the 1997 Sakharov Prize for her struggle in favour of freedom and free expression in Algeria. In a speech before the European parliament at Strasbourg, she said:

The political will of granting non-equivocal support to a ravaged people whose claims are essentially for peace and dignity assumes taking a risk. The risk has to be taken in the face of a regime that needs war to survive, in the face of a conjunction of 'business clans' that, on both sides of the Mediterranean, shamelessly reap the benefits of corruption, in the face of a kind of 'numbness' that prevents a sincere human solidarity when it comes to Islam...⁵⁶

Salima Ghezali was once asked the following question: 'Can one be a journalist in Algeria?' To which she replied:

Two subjects are taboo: true corruption and everything that has to do with the war. Naturally, no one will prevent you from writing pages and pages on the 'patriots'⁵⁷ who take up arms to oppose the 'terrorists'. But try to write about the fighting, the disappeared, the role of justice and the insecurity in general: it is simply unthinkable. Everything that is printed must be cleared by the communication cell of the interior ministry.⁵⁸

In *The International Herald Tribune*, Salima Ghezali accused Algeria's military-backed government of promoting 'fictions' about the sources of violence that has ravaged the country. She was quoted: 'It is the uncomfortable truth that extremist tendencies and fascist beliefs can be found just as much among Algeria's secularists as among the fundamentalists.' She criticised the Algerian government for its repressive methods and its failure to enter into a dialogue with its Islamist opponents. Given the censorship laws which require that all reporting on the violence be based on official figures distributed by the Interior ministry, and which strictly prohibit any contact with Islamic groups, there can be no other version of events inside Algeria. Mrs Ghezali went on to say:

One should stop hiding behind the smokescreen of the Islamists. There are Islamists and there are Islamic terrorists, there is a terror practised by criminals, and there is a

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terror sustained by the government in defence of its power. We should try to identify the source of the violence, and see who profits from it. The worst thing in a modern crisis is to think one can have good guys on one side, and bad guys on the other. We are not dealing with two different camps. It is not an ideological battle, as it is often portrayed in the West. It is a violent breakdown whose victims we can't see, and don't hear.⁵⁹

Mrs Ghezali described the difficulties in trying to penetrate the mysteries surrounding the ongoing massacres, including the reasons that local government troops and police fail to intervene even when the killings are taking place in the vicinity of their own installations. 'They always claim that it is because there are mines all around the area. But then when it is all over, the mines never explode.'⁶⁰

4.6. Appeal of Algerian Intellectuals

One hears a lot about 'democrats' and 'intellectuals' in Algeria. A caste system has been in the making over the last seven years in Algeria. In this thriving apartheid, it is not erudition, scholarship or a sound track record in research and publications that determine one's belonging to the new priesthood of 'democrats' and 'intellectuals'. All that is necessary to qualify for the prized title of 'intellectual' is to be a pen-pusher in the service of the generals. The latter have decreed an edict that their opponents cannot assume the title of 'intellectual' and if anyone usurps that title, he becomes ipso facto a 'terrorist'. The same goes for the 'democrat' attribute. As Lahouari Addi put it: "The attribute "democrat" has undergone a semantic shift in the media and henceforth, it designates individuals or opinions that set themselves apart from the Islamists. The RND, the FLN, or indeed, the army are called "democrats".'

So, when the 'field' intellectuals, to paraphrase Malcom X, speak out against the atrocities committed against their fellow citizens, condemn the massacres and call for an international commission of inquiry, at best, they are dismissed as naive and at worst are accused of being 'closeted terrorists'. By contrast when the 'house' intellectuals speak out in support of the junta, they are showered with money and sent abroad to counter the 'malicious propaganda' of the fundamentalists. The room for manoeuvre of the 'field' intellectuals is obviously limited. Despite the physical danger to which they are exposed, they, however, continue to draw attention to the tragic situation of their compatriots. In what follows, we review some of the intellectuals' reactions to the massacres in Algeria. We start first with those of the 'house' intellectuals. Their reactions are full of hatred and intolerance and are simply calls for the mass murder of the regime's political opponents as exemplified by the following typical appeal of self-styled 'national intellectuals' headed by the writer Mohamed Dib.

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We, national intellectuals, producers and reproducers of culture and sciences, who cherish Algeria because it is our only country and we expect our children to live in it freely and in security,

condemn in an uncompromising manner terrorism and refuse the term 'political violence'. Terrorism has lost today any political dimension. It is the work of groups who have lost the sense of Algerianess, Islam and humanity. They have become infra-humans since they are capable of killing father and mother; Algeria asks them to give up their arms and submit to the laws of the republic. Otherwise, we say with a brutal frankness, that only the suicidal confrontation with the security forces remains;

support with utmost firmness and without ambiguity, the action undertaken by our republican security forces to have done with terrorism. In the terrible war they wage against the heartless infra-humans, we say to them that they are not on their own and that they have the support of society and its national intellectuals;

denounce the hypocritical language on 'the cessation of violence of whatever origin'. We state, that there are two radically different forms of violence: the terrorist infra-human violence and the legitimate defence of citizens exercised by the institutions of the State to ensure order and security;

salute the calm courage of thirty million Algerians, men and women who have allowed the defeat of terrorism, simply because they have refused to be terrorised;

share in the grief of the families of victims of terrorism and ask the State to intensify the help it gives to them;

call on the international community to support clearly our State in its fight against terrorism;

state our lucid confidence in the possibility of a new impetus by the Algerian society on the basis of the liberation of the creative effort of all its men and women.⁶¹

The 'house intellectuals' are inflaming a situation which is already causing too many deaths and much destruction and misery. The generals are cruel enough to carry on with their macabre business. What are needed are voices of reason and humanity such as the ones that are reviewed below.

A group of intellectuals, including the eminent historian Mohamed Harbi and the sociologist Lahouari Addi, have made the following appeal.

The Algerian people have been living daily in fear for several years. Tens of thousands of victims have already been listed by several international and Algerian organisations. The last massacres of villagers and travellers have provoked the indignation of the international community.

All the reactions (intellectuals, journalists of many countries and particularly the declaration of the United Nations Secretary General, the Director General of UNICEF, as well as non-governmental organisations such as Amnesty International, the International Federation of the Leagues of Human Rights) have expressed the emotions of public opinion and international solidarity with the suffering of the Algerian people. These declarations express the readiness of these persons and organisations to act in favour of the respect of human rights and the democratic freedoms in Algeria. In the darkness that surrounds the country, this solidarity is felt as a glimmer of hope, a consolation and a landmark by the ravaged population.

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While the government is constantly stating that terrorism has been defeated, insecurity spreads over a big part of the country. The government deploys considerable security forces for certain operations, and in particular to organise elections that it manages to control, but refuses to set up patrols to prevent, or stop massacres even when these crimes are committed for several hours within a few hundred yards from the big barracks.

The Algerian people have the right to know by whom and in which conditions these crimes are perpetrated and why no protection is assured to the citizens. Only an impartial and independent international commission of inquiry can now answer the expectation. The objective of the international commission of inquiry would be to shed light on the massacres, the bomb attacks and the human rights violations and to help in the determination of responsibilities.

The arguments according to which the constitution of such a commission would be an infringement of the sovereignty of the Algerian State does not stand up to any analysis. Indeed, the aim of such a commission is to establish the facts and to search for the truth, and no well-intentioned government should refuse it as this practice is widely accepted by the international community. It is neither a recourse to force nor a threat against the sovereignty of the State in the meaning of article 2 of the UN charter. The constitution of a commission of inquiry cannot be considered an interference in the sovereignty of the State.

In international law, in any case, the State has grounds for invoking sovereignty in so far as it has the capacity to organise and protect the populations living in the territories that it controls, especially as it is not an external threat that imperils the stability. The protection of the population is a fundamental pre-requisite element in the exercise of sovereignty. In any case, the development of an international protection of human rights in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations covenants on civic and political rights and on economic, social and cultural rights and the other relevant conventions, make the invocation of sovereignty inadmissible and irrelevant in order to prevent the demonstration of the international solidarity in favour of populations whose rights are massively violated on a repetitive basis.

The universal dimension of Human Rights is clearly affirmed in the international conventions ratified by Algeria. The universal dimension means that the human rights must be enjoyed by all men and women regardless of their political persuasion, religion or any other convention. It means also that the international community can and must show its active solidarity with the Algerian people, especially when the rights to life and the physical and moral integrity of the people are violated. Furthermore, the massacres of villagers, college students and travellers by armed groups are perpetrated at a time when the population is experiencing the ravages of an economic and social policy dominated by racketeering and corruption which increases unemployment and aggravates the conditions of life of the vast majority and socially excludes a big part of the youth. This policy has thrown large sections of the population into despair.

In these conditions, only an independent and impartial international commission can have the necessary moral credit to shed light on what is going on in Algeria.

The initiators of this appeal ask all the persons who approve of this text to append their signatures to it.⁶²

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4.7. Call for Peace in Algeria against the Civil War

Another appeal was also made by a number of persons who were concerned by the atrocities and the sufferings to which the Algerian people were subjected.

Where is Algeria heading? Two forces combat each other. The State on one side and the armed Islamic groups on the other side. War and violence have assumed an unprecedented scale, especially since the proliferation of militias in urban and suburban zones. Censorship of the information does not always allow the gauging of their role in the tearing up of the social fabric particularly when we know that the State owners, in their effort to achieve a better control of the situation, encourage the segmentation of the political and regional forces by exploiting the ethnic identity factor.

The tensions that opposed the State and society, more particularly since October 1988, had no reason to break out from the peaceful framework where they expressed themselves. It was the authoritarian State which, through its policy and since the elections of December 1991 upset the terms of the conflict by blocking any progress towards the democratisation of the country.

The army chiefs who have captured the State to their benefit sustain a project which is based solely on the confiscation of the oil revenues and personal enrichment. They freely enjoy the power that their position confers on them. Their refusal of any serious dialogue with the political opposition is a well established fact. Therefore, it is not without reason, that Algerian public opinion does not respond to their calls and considers them to be a menacing force that does not emanate from the people.

The opposition armed groups which confront the army claim an exclusive Islam and are in a situation in which they are responsible neither to a political authority – the State had repressed, broken and dispersed them– nor to society. Thus can be explained their military practices which are identical to those of the military and the militias, the reprehensible massacres, the application of the principle of collective responsibility on entire families.

The responsibility of the ‘international community’ in the evolution of the tragedy cannot be underestimated. France notably could not have interfered in the Algerian affairs with a clear conscience by developing ties with the Algerian military through networks and military nests if it was not invited to do so. The time of murky games is over. It is our duty to denounce them and to expose them.

Algerians and friends of the Algerian people, believers in the fraternity and co-operation among peoples on the basis of equality, we think that a more vigorous and a more sustained action of French and international public opinion in favour of peace is a necessary, though not a sufficient condition, for the Algerians to reconcile themselves and to foster a common will in order to rebuild the shattered country that is being ravaged by a civil war which has lasted too long.⁶³

4.8. Call for Peace

The following call for peace was made by a group of prominent Algerians who were eager to see an end to the violence and to promote peace and reconciliation among Algerians.

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The Algerian people has at all times expressed its aspiration for peace in unity, freedom and solidarity and has shown its attachment to the preservation of its State, the safeguard of its sovereignty and the defence of its fundamental rights. In other respects, it has proved its capacity to assume political pluralism in its diverse opinions, sensibility and vision. Now, for five years, the country has experienced a grave situation. The Algerians live a tragedy:

- tens of thousands of dead, of disabled, of widows, of orphans and of political prisoners, victims of the cycle of violence and repression. Far from receding, the violence takes new forms, exacerbates and extends dramatically;
- insecurity and fear reign in society;
- closing down of the political and media fields, violation of human rights, confiscation of freedoms and breaking up of the élite;
- detrimental malfunction of the State services, pressures and threats on the executives;
- destruction of the economy, aggravation of the external and internal debt, collapse of the value of the Dinar;
- unemployment and increasing dismissals, alarming academic exclusion, accelerated impoverishment;
- loss of direction, resurgence and instrumentalisation of regionalism.
- In this climate of insecurity and coercion, under the rule of the state of emergency, and in the absence of the Popular National Assembly and free debate, a revision of the constitution is proposed which, under the pretext of restoring the stability of the State:
 - reinforces presidential and administrative powers;
 - concentrates all the power within a reduced sphere;
 - confiscates the constituent power of the people;
 - restrains notably the rights and freedoms of the citizens;
 - neutralises the legislative authority and places the judicial authority under tutelage;
 - segments and confiscates the Algerian identity.

This revision cannot mend the fractures and exclusions, eliminate hatred and resentments, still less bring about peace and security. It will aggravate and further sustain extremism and violence. It is a dangerous process which is in a flagrant contradiction with the Declaration of November 1954.⁶⁴

In the absence of peace, demanded with insistence during the last national poll, the security situation is condemned to deteriorate, the economy to collapse, poverty and social destitution to settle durably and our dependence to aggravate.

The establishment of a global and definitive peace requires a dialogue that is transparent, frank and open to those who express their wish to contribute. The immediate and unconditional cessation of acts of violence, the lifting of the state of emergency, the release of the prisoners of opinion, the opening up of the political and media fields, are the guarantees for a return to civil peace, democracy, stability and development. Because only peace can create the conditions likely to preserve

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the life of the Algerians, to guarantee individual and collective freedom, to bring the country out of the crisis, to safeguard its autonomy of decision and to implement the great political and economic changes and the social and cultural progress. This is why it is more urgent to get involved and to act to impose peace, to lead society to overcome its tragedies and fractures and to allow the people to dress their wounds and the citizen to enjoy his freedom and security.

In order for the return to peace to materialise and for the killings, exclusion, extremism, internment and the fratricidal confrontation to end, it is urgent and vital to allow the good wills to express themselves, the mistrusts to fade away, the doubts to lessen, and all the political and social forces to gather, mobilise and become involved.

The mobilisation of Algerians, men and women, along with all the political and social forces, is crucial to the quest for a political solution that will restore peace, national cohesion, the stability of the institutions and that will assure, in the framework of a law-abiding State, the security of property and persons. Thus, the ideal of freedom for which our martyrs sacrificed themselves will be concretised.

Violence is not an inevitability. Peace is possible. Hope is allowed.⁶⁵

5. Miscellaneous Reactions and Testimonies

The Algerian tragedy has projected many persons into the limelight: defecting secret agents, soldiers, policemen, diplomats, lawyers, journalists, social scientists and researchers. Every person is eager to tell his story. The testimonies of defecting soldiers, secret agents and policemen, that were reported by newspapers such as *Libération*, *The Independent*, *The Observer*, etc. give a view from the front line of repression. They paint a gruesome picture in which ordinary civilians are the object of unspeakable atrocities. Lawyers such as Tahri, Taouti, Bouchachi, Khelilli and countless others have courageously denounced the use of systematic torture in the barracks, jails, detention centres and secret locations of the military regime. Ordinary Algerians are shaking off the fear that has gripped them for many years and are starting to inquire about the fate of their disappeared relatives. The lid on repression is finally starting to crack. The reactions of an Algerian journalist, a member of the secret service, a diplomat and an academic are reported here.

5.1. Rachid Messaoudi

Rachid Messaoudi is a London-based journalist who has been following the events in Algeria closely. He is well-placed from his contacts with the exiled community to know what is happening in Algeria. Messaoudi has researched the 'dirty war' waged by the generals on the Algerian population and arrived at the conclusion that the massacres and killings are in keeping with a pattern of the regime's counter-insurgency strategy. In an article published in a London paper,⁶⁶ he wrote:

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There is today ample evidence that the Algerian people's tragedy was initiated by France; that the French have actively assisted the Algerian generals, the erstwhile sergeants in the French army, to organise and carry out the present massacres, and that they played an instrumental role to misinform the world about it by turning the truth upside down. By an artifice that only the French political establishment and their media know very well, those who resisted the cancellation of the Algerian people's choice have become the terrorists, and the pro-French army fat cats who have carried out the current bloodshed have become the legitimate masters of the Algerian people.

He also wrote:

The reason why a commission of inquiry into the massacres was rejected by the Algerian generals, who were backed by Paris, is not difficult to understand. The commission will carry out a thorough investigation and its findings will be made public. Maître Bacre N'Diaye, the UN Rapporteur on Extra-Judicial Summary and Arbitrary Executions, is believed to have been trying for three years to obtain the green light from the Algerian government to start investigating the butchery which Mrs Mary Robinson, the UN Commissioner on Human Rights, recently described as the 'shame of mankind'. If it is true, as alleged by the Algerian regime, its press and the French media, that the Islamic armed groups, of whatever persuasion, are responsible for the continuing macabre butcheries, not pro-French Algerian security death squads, then why are the Algerian generals afraid of an inquiry by independent UN experts?

5.2. Captain Haroun

Captain Haroun is an ex-secret agent in the Algerian army. The appalling massacres of helpless poor people stretched his loyalty to the armed services to a breaking point. He could no longer accept to remain part of a repressive and a criminal military machine which crushes the lives of innocent human beings. He defected and sought asylum in Britain. Captain Haroun has testified before many organisations and parliaments on the involvement of the military regime in the torture and the killings. He made the following declaration on Swiss television:

It is the army which is responsible for the massacres; it is the army which executes the massacres, not the regular soldiers, but a special unit under the orders of the generals. It should be remembered that land is being privatised, and land is very important. One has first to chase people from their land so that it can be acquired cheaply. And then there must be a certain dose of terror in order to govern the Algerian people and remain in power. As the Chinese saying goes: a picture is worth a thousand words. I could not stand the image of a young girl having her throat slit. I could not bear seeing what happened and not tell it. I have children, imagine what this girl had to suffer, the last 10 seconds of her life must have been horrible. I think it is our duty to speak up against this. I speak today in the hope that others would do the same, so that things change, and so that these killings cease.⁶⁷

Captain Haroun testified before the British House of Commons on the implication of the security services in the atrocities committed in Algeria. An

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account of his testimony was published by *The Guardian*, and *The Times*, respectively:

As more bloodshed was reported from Algeria, the country's security services were accused yesterday of conniving in the massacres and of torture. Captain 'Joseph' Haroun, described as a former member of the Algerian secret service, told the Commons all-party parliamentary human rights group that his former colleagues were implicated in 'dirty jobs, including the killings of journalists, officers, and children. They have been taken at the middle of the night to torture centres at Ben Aknoun, Chateauneuf, Cavignac and Salembier', he said. He also claimed that the militant GIA (Armed Islamic Group) has been infiltrated by the Algerian security forces.⁶⁸

The Times wrote:

Captain Haroun, using a pseudonym, said as a young officer he had been proud to belong to a service which his father had helped to set up after independence from France in 1962. 'But I found out years later that I was not serving my country but a group of officers desperate to remain in power.'⁶⁹

5.3. Mohammed Larbi Zitout

Zitout worked as a first-secretary in the Algerian embassy in Tripoli. He defected in 1995 to Britain where he is living as a political refugee. As a diplomat who was in contact with colleagues in the secret service, Zitout is well informed about matters of security. He could no longer condone the crimes perpetrated by the military junta against a helpless population that has been abandoned to its fate by the whole world. His decision to defect was a courageous one given the fate reserved to the families of the persons who become disaffected with the regime.

Mohamed Larbi Zitout urged Britain⁷⁰ to use its presidency of the European Union to put pressure on Algiers. He also declared that the EU should stop deferring to France. On the role of France in the Algerian tragedy, he was quoted as saying: 'In Algeria, France has a long tradition of deafness. But many of us hope that Britain and the rest of Europe will listen.'

In an interview granted to *24 Heures* (Lausanne) and in response to a question on the identity of the perpetrators of the massacres, Mr Zitout declared

It is the special forces which number between 40,000 and 50,000 persons and the hooded crack commandos, nicknamed the 'ninjas', who represent the most blood-thirsty elements among the army, the *gendarmerie* and the police. Their officers are trained in France, Germany and Italy. It is also the work of militias which comprise 200,000 of veteran mujahidīn, parents of victims and mercenaries who have become warlords in their regions. The war is being privatised. These people will never accept a peaceful negotiated settlement. The authorities need to terrorise the population, sufficiently in any case, to remain in power for good. In the same manner that we cannot live without breathing, the authorities cannot survive without terror.⁷¹

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5.4. Lahouari Addi

Lahouari Addi is a sociologist and a visiting Professor of sociology at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Lyon. He has authored books and contributed articles to journals and magazines on the tragic situation in Algeria. His analysis of the army power structure has become a reference work in Algerian studies. He has a talent for untangling difficult situations and identifying the main factors at play.

In an article published in *Le Monde Diplomatique*,⁷² Lahouari Addi dissects the structure of the Algerian army and eloquently explains how the army, ever since it toppled the GPRA (Provisional Government of the Republic of Algeria) at the end of the liberation war in 1962, has remained the decision-making body behind the façade of a civilian government. He writes:

If the military hierarchy exercised sovereignty and assumed the role of holder of the supreme authority thus reducing the council of ministers to an executive body in charge of running the administration, it is not for all that a homogeneous structure. The army is made up of several structures which, while formally dependent on the general staff, nevertheless enjoy a measure of autonomy. It is the case for the national *gendarmerie*, the military security, or still the various military regions.

The officers appointed at the head of these structures, establish among peers and subordinates networks of loyalty which increase their independence from the governing authorities

The public authorities – for which the army and the *gendarmerie* represent the secular arm – find themselves thus short-circuited. By an external logic to the official pecking order of the authorities, this conflicting mechanism, which is not obvious to the layman in normal periods, breaks out into the open in times of crises. This is why, for instance, the anti-Islamist repression is waged without coordination, or reference to the laws in force. Special masked units arrest individuals who then disappear without their families ever knowing to which structures of the army belong the responsible elements. If we find ourselves in this situation of lawlessness, it is because the military personnel is trained in the conviction that public peace is part of their own prerogatives. They can therefore act without feeling accountable either to justice or public opinion.

As to the government – including the president – it does not have the necessary authority to punish those in charge of the anti-terrorist struggle. The officers in charge do not report to any body. No judge can autonomously investigate an attack or a killing. Therefore, all forms of deviation are possible. As established by the reports of international human rights organisations, the fight against Islamic terrorism is waged unlawfully. It seems that the hard-liners will not stop from creating a situation of no-return.

To the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) they have reserved physical liquidation, torture, and collective punishment. With the atrocities attributed to the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), the policy named 'security' has itself also degenerated. The secret services of the army have embarked on a strategy of terror with the aim of bringing the FIS to its knees and then imposing on it conditions in the hypothetical event of a negotiation conceded by the regime.

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6. Conclusion

An assessment of the reactions cited above leads to one conclusion. The majority of independent parties, organisations or personalities suspect the military regime of involvement in the massacres in one form or another. They favour the establishment of an international commission of inquiry into the massacres and violations of human rights so that the instigators and perpetrators can be unambiguously identified.

The political parties, organisations or personalities which espouse eradicationism blame the Islamists for the massacres but refuse an international inquiry to corroborate their claims. Their reactions could not be otherwise for they are ideologically motivated and driven by vested interests. Indeed, the eradicationists are part and parcel of the military establishment and have played a significant role in the formation of militias and the instrumentalisation of disinformation in their efforts to demonise their opponents.

The truth about the massacres is bound to come out as a result of inevitable contradictions, rivalries and human greed within the power structure. For instance, the massacres of Relizane were blamed by the Algerian authorities on Islamic groups, yet several months later, the killings were attributed to militiamen. Thus, according to a *Reuters* despatch:

Local officials and commanders of pro-government militias in Algeria have been arrested on charges of carrying out massacres of civilians, Algerian newspapers said on Tuesday. The French-language *La Tribune* and *Liberté* dailies said several local government heads, their aides, and pro-government militia leaders were in custody 'because they were involved in extra-judicial executions' of civilians. The government and Algerian newspapers had reported a series of massacres of villagers in Relizane and the killings of more than 40 civilians in Sidi M'Hamed Benaouda between last November and late January this year. More than 1,400 civilians have been killed in massacres in that period throughout Algeria, including hundreds in Relizane in last January. The government blamed Moslem rebels.⁷³

Following this new development, José Garçon wrote in *Libération*:

We could see, in the arrest today of several militiamen, a *de facto* recognition of the 'dirty war' that the authorities make strenuous efforts to deny. But obviously, it is not the aim sought. Since the big massacres at the gates of Algiers and then at Relizane, the military know that they are being watched, though relatively, despite the media campaign launched in Europe and the United States. The authorities seek therefore to give the illusion of a new transparency in the conduct of the security policy by putting an end, at little cost, to the demands of Washington, the United Nations and the humanitarian organisations to send to Algeria a special UN Rapporteur or an international commission of inquiry.⁷⁴

While the truth is bound to come out in the future, it may take time. Many more people risk being massacred in the meantime and the genocide may take even bigger proportions. That is why the international community

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should not rest until a commission of inquiry is allowed to visit Algeria and carry out a thorough, systematic and completely independent investigation into the massacres that have claimed thousands of innocent lives. The world owes to the memory of the massacred a duty of conscience and humanity. It should continue to press the need for an inquiry to establish conclusively 'who is killing whom'.

NOTES

¹ Florence Aubenas wrote in the French newspaper *Libération*, 4 February 1998: 'Back in 1992 with the victory of the FIS at the general elections, the suspension of the democratic process and the proclamation of the emergency state. [...] The security forces adopted a strictly repressive policy, a pure theory of subtraction, explained one Member of Parliament who is close to the regime. By eliminating all the Islamists, the problem is eliminated.'

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ In January 1995, several political parties (FIS, FFS, FLN, PT, Nahda) and the Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights met under the auspices of the Community of Sant' Egidio in Rome to draft and sign a political document outlining the principles of a political solution to the Algerian conflict. The document met with international approval but was violently rejected by the Algerian regime and opposed by France.

⁵ Ettahadi changed recently its name to Mouvement Démocratique et Social (MDS) in order to adapt to the requirements of the new political situation. As a matter of fact, since independence, this party has always practised a policy of infiltration of the institutions of the State. During the era of socialism, the name PAGS (Parti d'Avant-Garde Socialiste) was convenient and fell in line with the official ideology. With the advent of a multi-party system, and while Arabo-Islamism was on the rise, the party opted for the Arabic Ettahadi. Since the coup d'état of 11 January 1992, Algeria is in the grip of murderous generals and mafia-modelled factions. True to its opportunistic nature, the party has again changed its name to MDS. In the face of rising poverty and destitution, the word social is useful for the party image.

⁶ Ali Yahia Abdennour, *Algérie: Raisons et Déraison d'une Guerre*, Editions L'Harmattan, Paris 1996.

⁷ *El-Watan*, 29-30 August 1997.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ See reference 7.

¹¹ *Alsharq Alawasad*, 24 January 1998.

¹² *El-Watan*, 29-30 August 1997.

¹³ Ali Yahia Abdennour refuted this claim. He stated that Saïd Sadi was only a founding member of the Ligue Algérienne de Défense des Droits de l'Homme (Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights). Ali Yahia Abdennour, *Algérie: Raisons et Déraison d'une Guerre*, Editions L'Harmattan, Paris 1996.

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¹⁴ *Jeune Afrique*, 5-11 March 1997.

¹⁵ *L'Humanité*, 21 January 1998.

¹⁶ *Liberté*, 21 January 1998.

¹⁷ *Le Monde*, 3 February 1997.

¹⁸ The Algerian newspaper *Liberté* is an eradicationist and a staunch ally of the military regime. It could not, however, keep silent when it emerged that militiamen belonging to the RND party, the party of President Zeroual, were involved in the massacres of innocent civilians. El-Hadj Fergane, the mayor of Relizane, nicknamed the 'Sheriff', and El Hadj El-Abed, mayor of Jdiouia and their relatives were heading death squads that were responsible for the killing of scores of people. *Liberté* mentioned 17 corpses found in a well and 62 others found in blockhouses. Some of the victims were buried alive. Given the level of media censorship and strict guidelines under which the newspapers operate, the revelations could not have been published without the intervention of a powerful clan within the military to check the rise of the Zeroual clan. Indeed, the whole episode enlightens us about the rivalry that exists among the various poles of the military structure in Algeria. It supports also the analysis of the army made by Lahouari Addi (cf. *L'Armée Algérienne Confisque le Pouvoir*, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, no. 527, February 1998).

¹⁹ *Regards*, October 1997.

²⁰ *L'Express*, 29 May 1997.

²¹ *El-Watan*, 31 August 1997.

²² *El-Khabar*, 9 September 1997.

²³ The Algerian army has never balked at killing Algerian citizens. Since independence in 1962, it committed a series of massacres in which thousands of Algerians perished. The main massacres occurred in 1962 during the conflict with the GPRA, in June 1965 when President Ben Bella was deposed and imprisoned, in 1980 during the events of Tizi-Ouzou known as the Berber spring and in October 1988 during popular uprisings. However, since the coup d'état of 11 January 1992 to prevent the FIS from acceding to power, the scale of the slaughter is unprecedented. The army is undertaking a real genocide because it has never been so challenged and in the process almost lost its grip on power if it were not for foreign assistance. The ongoing massacres in Algeria have to be understood through the ruthless nature of the Algerian army, especially when it is challenged.

²⁴ *Ash-Shiraa*, no. 824, 16 March 1998.

²⁵ *El-Watan*, 31 August 1997.

²⁶ *Le Monde*, 11 February 1997.

²⁷ *The Irish Times*, 24 January 1997.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Reuters* despatch, 7 October 1997.

³⁰ *Le Monde*, 11 February 1997.

³¹ *Les Dernières Nouvelles d'Alsace*, 26 January 1997.

³² *La Tribune de Genève*, 4 September 1997.

³³ *La Tribune de Genève*, 5 September 1997.

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³⁴ Louisa Hannoune, *Une autre voix pour l'Algérie*, par Louisa Hanoune - Entretiens avec Ghania Mouffok, Editions La Découverte, September 1996.

³⁵ The Algerian constitution was revised in 1996 in the face of widespread opposition.

³⁶ DEC (délégué exécutif communal): local councillor appointed by the authorities to replace the elected councillor of the FIS after the coup d'état of 11 January 1992.

³⁷ *Tribune Ouvrière*, no. 84, April 98, editorial of Louisa Hannoune, spokeswoman of Le Parti des Travailleurs.

³⁸ *Liberté*, 21 January 1998.

³⁹ The information under control in Algeria (L'information asservie en Algérie) by Marc Margenidas in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, September 1998.

⁴⁰ *Dernières Nouvelles d'Alsace*, 12 December 1997.

⁴¹ *El-Watan*, 31 August 1997.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ *Le Monde*, 28 November 1997.

⁴⁵ *El-Watan*, 31 August 1997.

⁴⁶ *La Tribune de Genève*, 11 December 1996.

⁴⁷ *The Irish Times*, 15 April 1997.

⁴⁸ *El-Watan*, 29-30 August 1997.

⁴⁹ *Libération*, 23 January 1998.

⁵⁰ *Agence France Presse*, 7 January 1997.

⁵¹ *Ash-Shiraa*, No. 824, 16 March 1998.

⁵² *Al-Hayat*, 24 January in 1998.

⁵³ *The Observer* of 25 May 1997 run a lengthy article about the blow torch elections in Algeria.

⁵⁴ *The Herald Tribune*, 18 July 1997.

⁵⁵ *Maroc Hebdo International*, 15 February 1998.

⁵⁶ *Le Monde Diplomatique*, February 1998.

⁵⁷ Name given to the armed militiamen who take part in the war against the rebels. The patriots are notorious for their cruelty and their appetite for the bounty they receive whenever they kill 'terrorists'. They terrorise villagers and have committed numerous massacres. They target specially the families of rebels and take revenge on them with total impunity.

⁵⁸ *Le Nouveau Quotidien*, 29 Mars 1996.

⁵⁹ *International Herald Tribune*, 19 December 1997

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Appeal of national intellectuals against terrorism, first signatories: Mohamed Dib, writer; Mohamed Bahloul, economist; Mohamed Oulhaci, artist painter; Nacira Babs-Ahmed, psychoanalyst; Abdelmad-

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jid Djebbar, jurist; Aicha Barki, educator; Badra Mimouni, psychologist; Abdelkader Djeghloul, sociologist.

⁶² First signatories: Abboub Karim, psychiatrist; Lahouari Addi, academic; Belkeddar Farouk, community worker; Ben Sadia Hamida, community worker; Bencheikh Abdelmajid, academic; Chalabi El Hedi, academic; Daoud Kamel, academic; Djafri Yahia, lecturer; Harbi Mohamed, historian; Kadi Amina, academic; Laacher Smail, sociologist; Mouterfi Khelifa, retired trade union representative; Sayad Abedlamalek, sociologist.

⁶³ Names of the first signatories: Mohammed Harbi, historian; Abdelmalek Sayad, sociologist; Tassadith Yacine, anthropologist; El Hadi Chalabi, lawyer; Leïla Sebbar, writer; Lahouari Addi, sociologist; Nabil Fares, writer; Malek Chebbel, writer; Abdelkader Yefsah, academic; Ahmed Rouadjia, political scientist; Nourredine Abdi, sociologist; Fatiha Talahite, economist; Saïda Rahal sidoum, academic; Eliman Abdou, linguist; Brahim Younsi, historian; Fouad Hakiki, economist; Ould-braham Ouahmi, editor; Hassab Bouabdellah, film maker.

⁶⁴ A charter which set out the principles on which the future Algerian State would be based.

⁶⁵ Names of the first signatories: Tayeb Achour, Hocine Ait-Ahmed, Abdesselam Ali Rachedi, Abdennour Ali Yahia, Mohamed Allouache, Abdelaziz Belkhadem, Hadj Benalla, Ahmed Ben Bella, Rachid Benyelles, Mustapha Benmohamed, Khaled Bensmain, Mustapha Bouhadeb, Farid Chaoui, Fadila Chitour, Mohamed Dahmoune, Seddik Debaili, Ahmed Djeddai, Salima Ghezali, Mahfoudh Kaddache, Mahmoud Khelili, Rachid Hammouche, Mouloud Hamrouche, Louiza Hannoune, Abdelhamid Mehri, Mohamed Salah Mohammedi, Fodil Moubha, Mahmoud Ouarts, Tahar Ouattar, Hocine Sassi, Mohamed Said Sidi Said, Dalila Taleb, Hocine Zahouane, Djamel Zenati, Mohamed Larbi Zoubeyri.

Algiers, 9 November 1996. This call has subsequently been signed by thousands of people (*La Nation*, no. 175, 1996).

⁶⁶ *The Muslim News*, 30 January 1998.

⁶⁷ *Television Suisse Romande – TSR – /Switzerland/January 1998*

⁶⁸ *The Guardian*, 23 January 1998.

⁶⁹ *The Times*, 23 January 1998.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Interview conducted by Olivier Gravat in *24 heures* (Lausanne), 27-28 December 1997.

⁷² L'Armée algérienne confisque le pouvoir (The Algerian army confiscates power), *Le Monde Diplomatique*, N° 527, February 1998.

⁷³ Reuters despatch dated 14 April 1998.

⁷⁴ *Libération*, 15 April 1998.

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