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## RESPONSES OF THE ARAB AND MUSLIM WORLD

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*A. Zeronali*

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## 1. Introduction

Identifying the perpetrators of the Algerian massacres is a key factor in the search for a solution to the country's tragedy. How did the Arab and Islamic world react to the massacres? Who do they think is behind the killings? What is their view on the necessity of an independent inquiry into the killings? The aim of this paper is to provide tentative answers to these questions through an analysis of the various statements reported in the media. These declarations fluctuate between three positions, namely, clarity, caution and complicity.

Certain quarters openly endorse the Algerian authorities' claims that 'terrorism' is to blame for the massacres and that an independent inquiry would be an 'interference in Algeria's internal affairs'. These quarters also assert that such an investigation is not needed anyway, because the perpetrators are known to be *Islamist insurgents*. The advocates of this position include, mostly, governments and official organisations, which are spearheaded by the Arab League.

Others are more cautious in their statements. Whilst they do not accuse the authorities directly, they harbour suspicion towards it and are very prudent when referring to an independent inquiry. Advocates of this position are found mainly amongst political parties, intellectuals and government officials.

The third category comprises a cross section of people who do not hesitate in pointing their fingers at the government forces. They believe that the regime is involved in the massacres. Advocates of this position include politicians, government officials, members of Islamic movements, intellectuals and common citizens. However, the position of this category regarding an independent inquiry is not always unanimous. The majority favours some sort of independent inquiry, but there seems to be concern that such an inquiry could lead to the regime's whitewash if it does not comprise independent members of the highest integrity.

In the remainder of this article, we record representative statements from the three above-mentioned categories. We have concentrated on the reactions which relate to the questions of the identity of the perpetrators and the necessity of an independent inquiry. We also touch upon the question of identity of the victims, which is of vital importance when trying to identify the perpetrators.

Section 2 of this article is devoted to the Arab World whereas section 3 deals with the Muslim World (that is Islamic non-Arab countries such as Iran and Malaysia). Both sections look at statements made by government

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institutions, political parties, independent intellectuals, Islamic movements (not necessarily Islamic parties) and the common citizens.

## 2. Reactions in the Arab world

It is a well-known fact within the Arab nations that their governments cannot agree unanimously on almost anything. An exception to this general rule, occurred when interior ministers from some twenty Arab countries met in Tunis in January 1998, a month which saw the worst massacres so far, and approved unanimously an agreement aimed at increasing co-operation in fighting 'terrorism'. The joint strategy was initially proposed by the Algerian and Egyptian regimes who are battling Muslim insurgents. Most of the official Arab statements about the Algerian massacres stem from this consideration.

### 2.1. Official and Public Authorities

#### 2.1.1. Government Institutions

##### EGYPT

Egypt is one of the leading Arab governments which has forcefully expressed its support of the Algerian regime in its fight against 'terrorism'. Egypt is Algeria's most important Arab partner in this fight. For the Egyptian government the Algerian regime is just another victim of 'terrorism'. The perpetrators are viewed quite simply as the 'terrorists'. Below are some of its official statements:

In Cairo, the Egyptian foreign minister, Amr Mussa, said: 'Egypt is opposed to terrorism and to the crimes which terrify the innocents in Algeria and any other country.'<sup>1</sup>

At the Tunis meeting, the Egyptian and Algerian interior ministers also called on Arab governments to pressure other states to extradite Islamic extremists granted safe haven within their borders.<sup>2</sup>

##### IRAQ

The Iraqi authorities have clearly expressed their support to the Algerian regime.

Saad Kasim Hammoudi, the Head of the Office for External Relations said: 'Our Party (i.e. the ruling Ba'ath) condemns the call for an international intervention in Algeria and considers this to be an interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign member state of the UN.'<sup>3</sup>

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The Iraqi Press Agency reported that, whilst receiving the Algerian ambassador in Baghdad, the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Tariq Aziz, confirmed 'Iraq's firm position against any interference in Algeria's internal affairs'. He insisted that: 'the position of the Arab community must be unanimous against such an interference'.<sup>4</sup>

#### **JORDAN**

Jordan implicitly regards an international independent inquiry as interference in Algeria's affairs, but its official position regarding the perpetrators is characterised by caution. In a statement the foreign minister did not accuse any particular party but called for efforts, including international ones, to be deployed to stop the criminals whoever they may be.

Expressing his feelings in a statement, the Jordanian foreign minister, Dr Fayez Al-Taraunah said:

What is now going on in Algeria is a crime. There have been people slaughtered and this ugly image of killing spoils our reputation and deforms our image abroad. All those who commit such cowardly crimes, those who support them and stand behind them should be exposed. Jordan is ready to provide Algeria with the necessary support. Although we re-affirm Jordan's call against the interference in the affairs of other countries, we, in Jordan, are fully prepared to provide our brothers in Algeria with all the necessary help to end this horrible nightmare. It is time now to end these inhumane and immoral crimes. Every local and international effort should be deployed to overcome this dangerous criminal phenomenon and stop this terrorism, whatever its origin may be.<sup>5</sup>

#### **LEBANON**

During a cabinet meeting, the Lebanese leaders expressed their readiness to contact Arab leaders in order to establish a committee to help end the Algerian massacres. Algeria's ambassador to Lebanon, Hassan Abou Fares, expressed his country's total rejection of the Lebanese offer.<sup>6</sup>

#### **LIBYA**

For the Libyan leader, Col Moammar Qadhafi, the perpetrators are Islamist groups using religious masks to liquidate the Algerian people. As for an independent inquiry, Libya's reaction to NATO's proposal\* coupled with its position regarding the perpetrators suggests that Qadhafi's regime is against any interference in Algeria's affairs.

\* A Spanish newspaper disclosed that NATO has put forward a proposal to set up an emergency task force to intervene in the North African region should any emergency arise. The Libyan and Algerian authorities expressed similar views about the proposal which Libya called a new colonialism (<http://www.arabicnews.com>, 30 January 1998).

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In a radio and television broadcast to Arab teachers and students, the Libyan leader, Col Moammar Qadhafi called on all Arab people to team up and wipe out armed Islamist groups which he described as a serious threat to the stability of all Arab states as well as to the present and future of the Arab nation. Referring to Algeria Qadhafi said: 'Such groups were using religious masks to accomplish the role played by the French colonial troops of the 1960s in liquidating the people of Algeria.'<sup>7</sup>

In a four-hour broadcast on the Arab satellite channel *Al-Jazeera*, Qadhafi condemned the actions of 'terrorist' groups, which are committing massacres in Arab countries. He alleged that

These groups were originally recruited by the CIA through Saudi Arabia among the oppressed Arab youth under the pretext of fighting the Soviet occupation in Afghanistan. Once that war ended they were sent back home and instructed by the Americans to destabilise their countries of origin [...]. The US is trying to destabilise countries which matter in the Arab world, such as Egypt, Algeria and Libya.<sup>8</sup>

**SAUDI ARABIA**

The Saudi position was characterised by caution. The French newspaper, *Liberté*, quoted a delegation headed by King Fahd calling for 'reason to prevail so that an agreement is reached which should help re-instate calm and stability in Algeria'.<sup>9</sup> The massacres of innocent civilians have been vividly condemned and 'Saudi Arabia is prepared to respond to any request aimed at stopping the bloodshed. Saudi Arabia declares, once again, its willingness to play a mediating role in the Algerian crisis'.<sup>10</sup>

**UNITED ARAB EMIRATES**

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) have voiced their support of the regime in its battle against 'terrorism'.

Sheikh Hamdan bin Zaid Al-Nahyan, the UAE's minister of state for foreign affairs called on all Arab countries to 'join forces and stand by the Algerian government to eliminate all forms of terrorism'. He said that 'the UAE is ready to send a delegation to Algeria to discuss with the Algerian government what assistance the UAE may offer the brotherly Algerian people and what may be done to stop the heinous crimes against civilians. The UAE at the same time welcomes an Algerian delegation for the same purpose'.<sup>11</sup>

*2.1.2. Arab League*

No official organisation has been more vocal in its total support of the Algerian regime than the Arab League. For this organisation, the matter is very clear: the perpetrators are Islamist extremists; Islamist extremists are terrorists; terrorists should be eliminated; and any call for an inquiry is not only an interference in Algeria's internal affairs but also insinuates that government

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forces are involved in the killings (which is inconceivable according to the League). Here are a few illustrations of the organisation's reactions.

Algiers accepted a visit by an Arab League official, Muhab Muqbel, earlier this week, who said on Thursday he had conveyed the League's support to the Algerian government. 'The situation in Algeria is stable [...]', he told reporters at the League's Cairo headquarters, 'I have walked the streets of the capital (Algiers) and its suburb and I did not feel anything. Everything is normal.'<sup>12</sup>

Even if the 22 members of the Arab League may have different opinions about the Algerian tragedy, their defence of the principle of non-interference is unanimous. In an interview with the French daily *Le Matin*, Muhab Muqbel, under-secretary of the Arab League, affirmed that 'neither the regime nor the population need help'. When asked about the identity of the perpetrators, he said: 'asking this question amounts to instilling doubts about the attitude of the Algerian authorities. We think that this is unfounded.'<sup>13</sup>

The Arab League's General Secretary, Dr Ismat Abdul-Majeed, has forcefully condemned the "horrible crimes perpetrated by the terrorists against the innocent civilian population of Algeria". He reiterated the League's full solidarity with the Algerian people and its national leadership in their struggle against this *devious group*. He also insisted on the necessity of international co-operation to rid the world of the evil deeds of this group.<sup>14</sup>

Interior Ministers from twenty Arab countries meeting in Tunis have unanimously approved an agreement aimed at increasing co-operation in fighting terrorism. Correspondents say that the agreement, which has been under discussion for four years, was given added urgency by the killing in Algeria this week of 400 civilians in a single incident, as well as recent attacks on foreign tourists in Egypt.<sup>15</sup>

## 2.2. Political Parties and non-Governmental Organisations

### AL-JAMA'A AL-ISLAMIYA – EGYPT

The Egyptian Al-Jama'a Al-Islamiya issued a statement clarifying its position regarding the massacres and accusing the Algerian government of 'executing a plan aimed at tarnishing the image of the mujahidīn by accusing them of committing crimes thus alienating the popular support which they have enjoyed so far. It is also trying to convince the Algerian electorate that only the regime can guarantee their survival against terrorism'. The statement also urged 'all those who are concerned by the Algerian crisis to expose the perpetrators and their real motives'.<sup>16</sup>

### EGYPTIAN HUMAN RIGHTS – CAIRO

The Cairo-based Arab Organisation for Human Rights (AOHCR) said in a statement that it condemns the escalation of violence by armed groups and calls for the establishment of a national investigation commission and national fact-finding commission. While it may be possible to justify rejection by the government of the

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principle of an international investigation for fear of internationalisation of the issue, it remains necessary to undertake a national, independent and impartial investigation of these massacres.<sup>17</sup>

**HEZBOLLAH – LEBANON**

Mohammed Hossein Fadl-Allah, the Shiite spiritual leader, accuses the authorities of 'having a direct or indirect hand in the recent massacres in the country'.<sup>18</sup>

**HUMANITARIAN SOCIETIES – TUNISIA**

In a joint statement, nine Tunisian human rights organisations condemned the massacres committed by armed groups in Algeria. The organisations called on the Algerian government to shed light on the recent massacres, identify those responsible and hold trials for the perpetrators of these massacres.

Whilst the statement was being delivered to the Algerian Embassy in Tunis, tough words were exchanged with the ambassador, Ismail Allaoua, who considered the statement an intervention in the internal affairs of Algeria.<sup>19</sup>

**MOROCCAN ASSOCIATIONS – RABAT**

In a statement sent to Reuters, a group of Moroccan associations (including human rights and women's groups) called on Moroccans to react to the massacres in neighbouring Algeria and said they would work to bring peace there.

'[The call] is to express indignation and solidarity with the families of the assassinated victims, people undermined physically and mentally and all the civilian population living in fear and dread for tomorrow'. They gathered hundreds of signatures in solidarity with the victims of the massacres.<sup>20</sup>

**2.3. Intellectuals and Personalities****SHEIKH YUSSUF AL-QARDAWI – QATAR**

In an interview broadcast on the Arab satellite television channel, *Al-Jazeera*, Yussuf Al-Qaradawi, one of the eminent scholars in the Islamic world, accused the army of being involved in the massacres. He said:

The least one can say is that an army that cannot protect its own people is useless. There is no solution to the crisis except through dialogue with the Islamic Salvation Front; and all the scholars in the Arab world (including the Sheikh of Al-Azhar and Sheikh Bin Baz of Saudi Arabia) should get together and encourage such a dialogue.<sup>21</sup>

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The GIA is to blame for these massacres that have gone beyond any boundaries of cruelty. Even if members of the GIA are not directly involved they have paved the way. The perpetrators cannot be Muslims.<sup>22</sup>

**SHEIKH OMAR ESSABEEL – MEKKAH**

In his address during a Friday prayer, Sheikh Omar Essabeel, Imam of Al-Haram Mosque (in Mecca), called upon all Algerians to 'stop the bloodshed and listen to the voice of truth'. He also called on 'all influential bodies of the nation to work for the unity of the Muslims'.<sup>23</sup>

**FEHMI HOWAIDI – EGYPT**

In an article published by Al-Sharq Al-Awsat and titled: 'If an internal solution is difficult then an international silence is complicity and crime', Fehmi Howaidi argued that 'even if we agree that an international intervention is an evil then surely allowing the massacres to continue is much worse an evil'. In another article he said:

Only the Arab world constrains itself to silence, and all its media are echoing what the Algerian authorities say, whilst they refuse to hear or see what is happening or voice their condemnations. As for the scandalous attitude of the Arab intellectuals who chose to settle their differences with the Islamist groups through supporting the army, this scandal will remain a shameful page in their history.<sup>24</sup>

**COLUMNIST SALAMA AHMAD SALAM – EGYPT**

International pressure so far has failed to unveil the mystery of the brutal massacres in Algeria. The United States and Europe have retracted their positions when they received the Algerian angry response to the request to send an investigation committee to Algeria. The Algerian government's pretext for rejecting international assistance is not convincing. Arab silence on the situation in Algeria is understood, but shameful.<sup>25</sup>

**IBRAHIM SHOKRI – EGYPT**

In an article published by the Arabic magazine *Al-Mujtama'*, the Editor-in-Chief of the London based Palestine Times summarised the situation by saying:

What is patently logical and firmly supported by press reports emanating from Algeria is that the majority of acts of killings, especially the barbaric slaughter of children and women with axes and machetes, is the work of the so-called self-defence militia groups supported by the government, some of which are Berber groups seeking to establish a Berber state. No one can convince us that the 'Islamists' would even

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think about slaughtering babies and women like cattle in the way that is happening in Algeria. On the other hand, most of the victims are from the families of the Islamists or their supporters.<sup>26</sup>

**SENIOR EDITOR SALEH QALLAB – JORDAN**

Some people think it is easy to form international or Arab fleets and send them into Algeria. They think that the Algerian army will give way, the terrorists will throw away their weapons and everything will be over. Simplifying the matter in this way is such a bitter laugh. Those who suggest the formation of these saviour fleets forget that what is happening in Algeria is not children's play in a small village. It is the outcome of international and regional polarisation that found the perfect atmosphere to take root and flourish and then turn against the Algerians.<sup>27</sup>

**MANAGING EDITOR YAHYA MAHMOUD – JORDAN**

The current international action on the Algerian crisis [...] should be approved by anyone who realises the amount of suffering of the Algerian people [...]. The fact that the Algerian government is incapable of protecting the Algerian people, and that the Arabs and Muslims have failed to arabise this crisis leaves one hope only: that the international forces will intervene in order to restore security to the Algerians.<sup>28</sup>

**MOHAMMED SEMMAK – LEBANON**

Mohammed Semmak, a political advisor to the Mufti of Lebanon, said:

The international community has to have some kind of initiative, we cannot stay indifferent to what is happening inside Algeria. I know that the Algerian Government is sensitive to any comment about its internal affairs but one cannot ignore the horrible effects these killings are having and we should encourage any kind of intervention that might help stop these massacres.<sup>29</sup>

**ABDUL RAHMAN AL RASHED – SAUDI ARABIA**

In talking about the perpetrators Abdul Rahman Al Rashed, a senior columnist in Arab News, said:

Some, I believe, claim that the government has a hand in these murderous acts. This is patently illogical. It is not possible for the Algerian government to do such things. What is taking place, in fact, is a war to defeat the present government by hacking to death unarmed women, children and innocent villagers.<sup>30</sup>

**2.4. Summary**

The table below summarises the reactions in the Arab world. Amongst the official declarations one can consider the Arab League to be the representa-

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tive of the Arab states' reactions. With the exception of Lebanon, which called for an all-Arab inquiry into the massacres, all the other governments have not made any statement that clearly contravenes the League's position. In contrast to the official reactions, Non-Governmental Organisations and intellectuals seem to agree that the government has a hand in the killings and that some kind of independent inquiry is needed to establish the truth and ascertain the validity of the claims emanating from all sides.

Table1. Summary of Reactions in the Arab World.

Origin of Reaction	What they said about		
	Perpetrators	Inquiry	Victims
EGYPT	- Terrorists - Islamic extremists	N/A	Innocent civilians
IRAQ	N/A	Interference in Algeria's internal affairs	N/A
JORDAN	unidentified	Interference in Algeria's internal affairs	N/A
LEBANON	N/A	Possibly an all-Arab one	N/A
LIBYA	Islamist groups CIA	Interference	N/A
SAUDI ARABIA	N/A	N/A	Innocent civilians
UAE	Terrorists	N/A	Civilians
The Arab League	- Certainly not the Algerian authorities - A devious group of terrorists	Interference in Algeria's internal affairs	Innocent civilian population
NGOs	- Government forces - Armed groups - Authorities, directly or indirectly	A national, independent and impartial investigation is necessary	innocent civilian population
Intellectuals	- Army - GIA - Cannot be Muslims - Self-defence militia groups - Berber groups	An international intervention is needed	- Unarmed women, children, babies - Families of Islamists and their supporters

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The following questions remain however: Where are all the other Arab states and organisations? Where do they stand regarding the situation of human rights in Algeria? Would the deafening silence be the same had an Israeli missile hit a lamppost in one of the streets of Algiers or any other Arab capital?

### **3. Non-Arab Islamic World Reactions**

Unfortunately we have had very little success in gathering information about the reactions in the Islamic (non-Arab) world. Numerous sources of publications have been consulted (including the internet) but only limited data was available. The following is a sample representation of the reactions recorded.

#### **3.1. Officials and Public Authorities**

##### *3.1.1. Government Institutions*

#### **IRAN**

Iran has condemned strongly the continuing ruthless killing of defenceless women and children in Algeria and criticised philanthropic organisations for their indifference towards the crimes.

The Foreign Ministry Spokesman, Mahmud Muhammad, said that: ‘the crimes were suspicious and those responsible had remained unknown. The continuation of torture and killing of innocent women and children in Algeria is repulsive and should be condemned, no matter who or what organisation is responsible’.<sup>31</sup>

Ex-President Ali Khamaneï said: ‘We do not want to be affirmative but there is no doubt that the Algerian government is responsible for the security of its citizens [...] the cold-blooded attitude and the silence of the international institutions towards the Algerian tragedy [...]. The government is implicated in the massacre of innocent Muslims’.<sup>32</sup>

Iran’s Parliamentary Speaker accused the Algerian government and Westerners of being involved in the massacres. Mr Ali Akbar Nateq Nouri ‘reiterated direct involvement of the Algerian government in the massacre of over 400 men, women and children, adding that the alleged attribution of the slaughter to Muslim fundamentalists was a pretext by the Algerian government to harm the image of Islamic groups’.<sup>33</sup>

Iran’s state radio urged the United Nations to step in to protect Algerians, following the killings of some 1,200 people since the beginning of the Muslim month of Ramadan on December 30. ‘The Algerian government is responsible for protecting the lives of its citizens, but it has been proven that the rulers of Algiers cannot, or in

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other words do not want to, carry out this responsibility. It is therefore the duty of responsible bodies, such as the United Nations, to impose the will of the Algerian people and the international community on that country's leaders. Of course this pre-supposes that Western countries that support the Algerian regime put an end to their support to this regime', Tehran radio said in a commentary.<sup>34</sup>

**MALAYSIA**

Foreign minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said that 'Malaysia is disappointed with the continuing killings in Algeria because they have given Islam a bad image. Some people associated Islam with extremism and terrorism after hearing of the Algerian violence'.<sup>35</sup>

*3.1.2. Organisation of Islamic Conference*

The world's largest Muslim organisation, the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), condemned the massacres and denied strongly that such barbaric acts could be carried out by Muslims.

His Excellency Dr Azzeddine Al-Iraki, Secretary General of the OIC, is following with deep concern the terrorist events witnessed by Algeria and which escalated in the holy month of Ramadan. The Secretary General condemns these actions whose atrocity has rarely been matched in recent history, and strongly affirms that the Islamic faith rejects absolutely such evil deeds.<sup>36</sup>

Iranian Foreign Minister, Kamal Kharazi, telephoned OIC general secretary, Dr Azzeddine Al-Iraki, and urged him to visit Algeria to help stop the recent massacres in that country. The OIC general secretary announced that he was ready to travel to Algeria and expressed hope to be able to help end this human tragedy.<sup>37</sup>

**3.2. Political Parties and non-Governmental Organisations****HIZB UT TAHRIR – LONDON**

It would be inconceivable for the Islamic groups to kill the residents of such areas who happen to be their protégés, who supported them during the elections and most of the Islamic groups recruits come from these areas. It is also unlikely for the army and the security forces, who have a large presence in these areas, to allow the Islamic groups to commit massacres that last several hours without taking the initiative to attack them and catch them red-handed. If the Islamic groups had the ability to move unhindered amidst the large presence of the army and the security forces, they would attack the Club-des-Pins area, where government officials, army and security chiefs and political party leaders close to the government reside, for those are the real enemies of the Islamic groups. [...]

The appeal made by some Algerian political leaders to the UN and the Western states to intervene in order to put an end to the tragic situation in Algeria can only

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be described as political stupidity and political suicide, because the intervention of the UN and the West will not solve the problem, it will rather complicate it further.<sup>38</sup>

### 3.3. Intellectuals and Personalities

#### AYATOLLAH AHMAD JANNATI

During a Friday sermon broadcast on Tehran radio Ahmad Jannati said:

Why does the Algerian government not allow inspectors to come and investigate who is doing this (i.e. carrying out the killings)? This shows that it approves of it. If it is not involved itself, which we cannot rule out, then it is at least consenting to these acts, while it accuses Muslims of terrorism.<sup>39</sup>

#### HAMDAN MUHAMMAD HASSAN\*

It has been going on for some time now and many voices have come out to reveal the real nature and true facts of the tragic situation. News reports and commentaries add to the intricacies surrounding the grisly and mysterious killings. They talk about armed groups and gangs with beards and looking like Muslim fighters. The FIS has openly challenged and revealed the real perpetrators of such heinous crimes. Its recently released leader, Professor Abbasi Madani, asked that ever-famous question: *"tell me who were killed and I will tell you who did it"*. An ex-prime minister (during the FLN regime) has openly accused Zeroual's regime of posing as Muslim fighters in the massacres.

What is happening in Algeria is extremely tragic not only because of its ruthlessness and barbaric proportions of violence but the way how regimes respond and react (with tacit or apparent Western consent and support) to democratic changes and modern politics.

We must not let Algeria pass into oblivion. The struggle for peace and the establishment of the truth in Algeria must be part of the nation's agenda.

### 3.4. Common citizens

#### IRANIAN MARCHERS

Iranian Revolution Day marchers called on the OIC to take practical steps to end the killings in Algeria. In their statement at the Tehran rally, as read out on Iranian TV, they said:

\* Currently, a senior civil engineer at the University of Science of Malaysia. He is involved in youth activities with the Muslim Youth Movement in Malaysia, and is the secretary of the Muslim Staff Association in the university.

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We marchers, while condemning the disgraceful silence of the false defenders of human rights and stressing the need for the international community to take serious steps towards bringing to an end the tragic killing of the innocent people of Algeria, firmly urge the OIC to take practical steps - in view of this organisation's wish to play an active part in the resolution of the problems of the world of Islam - towards the restoration of security in Islamic countries, cultural and military cooperation between Islamic countries.<sup>40</sup>

#### **MEHMET DAL – A TURK WHO HIJACKED A PLANE**

A Turkish Airlines (THY) plane flying from Adana to Diyarbakir with 63 passengers on board was hijacked by Mehmet Dal. The hijacker used a bear-toy, in which he claimed there was a bomb, to hijack the aeroplane and ask for its destination to be re-routed to Iran. It is understood that the hijacker later gave himself up and no violence was used. The passengers described him as a normal person. He reportedly attended to their needs, asked whether there were sick passengers and let them go to the toilets. He eventually let the passengers go out.

Mehmet Dal who hijacked the plane to protest against the campaign of massacres in Algeria was born in Cyprus but lived at Adana in Turkey. Throughout the hijack Mehmet Dal repeated claims that the French, in co-operation with other non-Muslim countries, were committing the massacres in Algeria. The hijacker also repeatedly made the statements that 'no real Muslim or Muslim country was ready to halt these massacres in Algeria' and that 'I am a witness of Allah'. After his arrest, Mehmet Dal said that the object of his hijack was only to draw attention to the Algerian massacres and stop them.<sup>41</sup>

### **3.5. Summary**

Spearheaded by Iran, the Muslim world seems less reticent in accusing the government of being behind the massacres and in urging the international community to act swiftly in order to put an end to the suffering of the Algerian people. However, one has not heard from countries such as Turkey, Pakistan and other members of the OIC. One must conclude that the research has failed to uncover these countries' reactions, or that there is a distinct lack of reaction. The latter would account for the deafening silence of so many countries.

### **4. Conclusion**

Although neither those who accuse the Algerian authorities nor those who are happy to attribute the killings to 'terrorists' have any evidence to substantiate their reactions, the fact remains that in the Arab-Islamic world many people are suspicious and believe that an independent inquiry is required to establish the truth and to contribute towards finding a just and lasting solution to the Algerian tragedy.

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The Algerian regime is party to the conflict and its views on an independent investigation are, to say the least, paradoxical. If help and assistance are offered to support the military in power then it is welcomed by the regime. If, however, help is offered on humanitarian grounds, such as an international inquiry, the regime protests against foreign intervention in Algeria's internal affairs.

With regards to an all-Arab commission of investigation, it appears that the Arab regimes will only help each other muzzle their political opponents and critics. They can work closely together only when it comes to crushing dissent, stifling free speech and censoring the media. Therefore, an all-Arab investigation cannot be the answer as it is difficult to envisage how an independent Arab commission can be formed without the interference of undemocratic and repressive regimes.

Finally, it is our view that an independent inquiry would greatly benefit Algeria. It is by far the best possible tool to establish who is perpetrating some of the most heinous crimes in recent times. It is almost unbelievable that such an inquiry has not yet been issued in order to put an end to the cycle of terrorism, which all civilised people would surely wish to end.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> *The Australian News Net*, 15 January 1998.
- <sup>2</sup> Barbara Plett, *Dispatches* (BBC News programme), 5 January 1998.
- <sup>3</sup> *Al-Hayat*, 1 October 1997, p. 6.
- <sup>4</sup> *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, 31 January 1998.
- <sup>5</sup> <http://www.arabicnews.com>, 5 January 1998.
- <sup>6</sup> <http://www.arabicnews.com>, 19 January 1998.
- <sup>7</sup> *PanAfrican News Agency*, 9 August 1997.
- <sup>8</sup> *Al-Jazeera Satellite Television Channel*, 30 August 1997.
- <sup>9</sup> *Liberté*, 21 January 1998.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>11</sup> *CNN*, 15 January 1998.
- <sup>12</sup> *Reuters*, 16 January 1998.
- <sup>13</sup> Christophe Ayad, *Liberation*, 31 January 1998.
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