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Algeria: Allow Rights Groups to Visit ***No Response from Algiers to Requests from UN Bodies***

Joint Statement by Amnesty International, Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network, Human Rights Watch, the International Federation for Human Rights and the World Organization Against Torture

Algeria should uphold the values of the United Nations Human Rights Council by allowing UN human rights experts and international human rights nongovernmental organizations to visit the country, five human rights organizations said today. Algeria joined the Human Rights Council in January 2014.

"As a member of the UN Human Rights Council, [Algeria has pledged to cooperate with regional and international human rights organizations](#). Yet, the Algerian authorities have not agreed to visits by the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, despite their repeated requests", said Philip Luther, Middle East and North Africa director at Amnesty International. This pattern is also reflected in restricted access for other human rights observers. Algerian authorities have refused to grant visas to international human rights nongovernmental organizations for several years, and have violated in many ways the right of Algerian human rights organizations to operate freely.

"Algeria remains the only country among its neighbors that generally restricts access to human rights organizations," said Eric Goldstein, deputy Middle East and North Africa director at Human Rights Watch. "Since 2011, our organizations have regularly visited Morocco, Libya, and Tunisia with few if any obstacles."

The groups that are making the appeal to the Algerian government to allow human rights groups access to the country are Amnesty International, Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network, Human Rights Watch and the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint program of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), and the World Organization Against Torture (OMCT).

"Algeria should end the farce of refusing any scrutiny of its own human rights record while sitting on the Human Rights Council", said Karim Lahidji, president of the FIDH. "Granting visas to international human rights organizations and inviting UN human rights experts would signal a genuine commitment that the Algerian authorities will seriously engage with the UN Human Rights Council", added Gerald Staberock, secretary general of the OMCT.

"All our organizations have submitted several official requests to visit the country in 2013 and before but Algerian authorities either refused, did not respond, or imposed conditions for access that would not have allowed us to conduct a research mission freely," said Michel Tubiana, president of the EMHRN.

By successfully running for Human Rights Council membership, Algeria is expected to "uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights" under UN General Assembly Resolution 60/251. However, in 2012, Algerian authorities adopted a new law on associations more repressive than the previous one.

Law No. 12-06 forbids associations from receiving any foreign funding or cooperating with or seeking membership in foreign organizations without the government's agreement. The law also requires all associations already registered under the previous law to submit organizational bylaws that comply with the new legislation, by January 15. All existing associations not successfully registered under the new law can be considered illegal, exposing their members to penalties of up to 6 months in prison and a 300,000 Algerian

dinar (€2,800/ US\$3,800) fine.

The groups said that if Algeria's three-year term as a member of the Human Rights Council is to be meaningful, the Algerian authorities should:

- Cooperate fully with the Human Rights Council, including its human rights experts known as special procedures, in particular by promptly facilitating their requests to visit, by issuing and honoring standing invitations to UN human rights experts and working groups, and by acting promptly on their recommendations and communications;
- Repeal those articles of Law No. 12-06 on associations that violate freedom of association and the right of associations to cooperate with and belong to organizations based in other countries;
- Ensure in all circumstances that human rights defenders and all activists in Algeria can fully exercise their rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly without fear of harassment or interference;
- Grant visas without delay to representatives of international human rights organizations who ask to visit Algeria.

All UN Human Rights Council member countries should urge Algerian authorities to carry out the recommendations listed above, the five organizations said.

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