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ALGERIA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNS MASSACRES OF CIVILIANS

Amnesty International condemns in the strongest terms the massacres of civilians which continue to be committed daily in Algeria. The organization calls on all those involved in the conflict to put an immediate end to the targeting of civilians.

In the past weeks, hundreds of people have been shot dead, slaughtered, decapitated or mutilated in targeted attacks. Others have been killed and blown to pieces in bomb explosions in public places. Among the victims were men, women and children, including relatives of members of the security forces and of government-backed militias, as well as relatives of members of armed groups defined as Islamic groups.

Armed groups such as the *Groupe Islamique Armé* (Armed Islamic Group), GIA, or the *Front Islamique pour le Djihad Armé* (Islamic Front for the Armed Jihad), FIDA, which have claimed murders and attacks, continue to issue death threats against civilians.

Such atrocities cannot be justified under any circumstances. Those responsible for such crimes continue to show their utmost contempt for the respect for human life, Amnesty International said.

The murders and bloody attacks of these past few weeks have taken place in the context of the increased level of violence of the last three months. However, while massacres and explosions form part of a terrifying daily reality, the Algerian authorities continue to claim that there is only residual violence.

The civilian population, especially in rural and isolated areas, often does not benefit from any protection from the security services, who have been replaced in several regions by civilian militias armed by the state. Thus, it is often left to the civilian population, who is more and more vulnerable to attacks by armed groups, to find ways of protecting themselves and to take the law into their own hands.

The censorship of information defined as security-related and the restrictions imposed on the media makes it impossible for the Algerian and international press to investigate and freely inform the public. Therefore, massacres go unreported and figures given by official sources for the number of victims are often much lower than in reality.

Concrete measures must urgently be taken to protect the civilian population. Thorough and transparent investigations must be carried out so as to ensure that those responsible for these atrocities are brought to justice, Amnesty International said.

This is the responsibility and the duty of the Algerian authorities, but also of the international community, which to date continues to ignore the plight of the civilian population in Algeria, added the organization.

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*Source: Amnesty International, International Secretariat,
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