

Public Statement

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Algeria: Every killing must be urgently investigated

In the light of a recently published official report into the unlawful killing of over 80 protesters at the hands of the security forces in the Algerian region of Kabylia, Amnesty International has today written to the Algerian authorities to press again for full investigations to be carried out into every killing.

*Amnesty International welcomes the publication of the *Preliminary Report of the National Commission of Inquiry into Events in Kabylia* on 28 July 2001. The organization believes that by setting up a commission of inquiry the Algerian authorities took an important first step in the process to investigate the killing of over 80 protesters in Kabylia during the last four months. By making public the commission's initial findings about the circumstances in which these killings occurred, the authorities have taken a crucial confidence-building measure.*

Amnesty International now urges the Algerian authorities to take the next step of ensuring that full, impartial and independent investigations take place into every one of the over 80 killings and that those responsible are brought to justice. Investigating officials must be given full access to all material evidence, including autopsy and forensic evidence.

Only by establishing the truth behind every killing and rendering justice to the families of those who died can the climate of impunity which contributed to the tragic loss of life in the first place be broken, Amnesty International said today.

The preliminary report published by the commission of inquiry notes that 50 people died between 22 and 28 April in the region of Kabylia after being shot by members of the security forces involved in policing demonstrations. It expresses alarm at the high incidence of injuries to the head, neck, thorax and abdomen among the dead and wounded and reaches the conclusion that the gendarmerie and other security forces have repeatedly resorted to excessive use of lethal force.

The authors of the report, mostly lawyers, magistrates, law professors and representatives of civil society, found no evidence that protesters had used firearms at any time during the demonstrations, finding that security forces used live ammunition in circumstances in which neither the lives of members of the security forces nor others were in imminent danger.

Amnesty International has received reports that over 80 Algerian civilians have died between 18 April and the present day in the region of Kabylia at the hands of the security forces, the vast majority of them as a result of bullet wounds to the most vulnerable parts of the body.

The organization is seriously concerned that highly penetrative rounds, or bullets which travel and kill over long distances, have been used in public disorder situations in Kabylia. Of even more concern are reports that civilians were shot by members of the security forces when demonstrations were peaceful or even after protests had ended.

Amnesty International has also received reports that dozens of civilians, including children as young as 15 years old, have been tortured or ill-treated following arrest by members of the security forces in the context of demonstrations. Beatings with fists, truncheons and rifle butts appear to have been common occurrences at the time of arrest or during detention in police stations or gendarmeries. Some report that, while

being held at gendarmeries, they were undressed, tied up with wire and threatened with sexual violence; others allege having been whipped or slashed with sharp implements.

Amnesty International urges the Algerian authorities to ensure that all cases of unlawful killings and of torture and ill-treatment by the security forces are investigated fully and immediately, in an independent and impartial manner. All those found responsible for unlawful killings and torture or ill-treatment must be brought to justice in trials that are consistent with international standards and, where applicable, superior security force officers must be held responsible for ordering or failing to report unlawful use of force or firearms or other violations of human rights. The Algerian government should make reparation, including payment of compensation, to the families of victims of unlawful killings.

In addition, Amnesty International calls on the Algerian government to take immediate action to ensure that all security forces are trained in and comply with international standards governing the conduct of law enforcement officials and the use of force and firearms and thereby respect and protect the right to life.

Amnesty International has requested a visit to the country to update its information on human rights concerns, not only in the region of Kabylia, but also in other parts of the country.

The organization hopes that, having taken the important step of launching a commission of inquiry into the events occurring in Kabylia since April of this year, the Algerian government will now take concrete measures to ensure that the thousands of killings, massacres, disappearances, abductions, incidents of torture, extrajudicial executions, deliberate and arbitrary killings of civilians and other human rights abuses committed in Algeria since 1992 by the security forces,

state-armed militias and armed groups are investigated in a full, independent and impartial manner and that the findings are similarly made public.

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