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**ALGERIA: ARMED GROUPS MUST STOP TARGETING CIVILIANS**

Scores of civilians, including children, have been killed in a recently stepped-up bombing campaign and deliberate killings which bear the hallmark of armed groups who define themselves as "Islamic groups".

"Armed groups must stop targeting civilians. Such killings can never be justified and show utter disregard for the most basic right of all human beings -- the right to life," Amnesty International said.

Four journalists were murdered in individually-targeted attacks in the first week of September; among them was national television journalist Said Brahimi, who was shot dead with his wife outside Algiers. More than 40 journalists have been killed since May 1993, and the rest live in fear.

Eleven people, including a small child and his mother, were killed when a car bomb exploded on the main road leading to Boufarik on 11 August; two days later at least seven people were reported killed by a bomb which exploded in a train near Medea.

Communiqués signed by the *Groupe Islamique Armé* (GIA), Armed Islamic Group, and other groups have claimed responsibility for many such attacks and threatened more killings of civil servants, journalists, and wives and relatives of officials and members of the security forces.

The wife and daughter of a member of the *Conseil National de Transition* (Transitional National Council), CNT, an appointed body which replaced the elected parliament, were killed with five other people in an explosion at a guarded residential complex outside Algiers where many officials live. A week later the wife of the head of a District Executive Committee (DEC), which replaced the elected municipal councils, was killed when a bomb exploded near her home in Oued Foda; another woman and three children were also killed in the attack.

Other civilians killed include relatives of members of the security forces and of the recently-set-up communal guards who operate in conjunction with the army and security forces. On 19 August nine women, most of them wives of communal guards, were killed in Grarem, Eastern Algeria. Six of them were reportedly beheaded.

Such killings and attacks aimed at civilians have increased in the run-up to the presidential elections, scheduled for mid-November and boycotted by the largest political opposition parties.

"As these attacks continue to increase and the number of civilian victims spirals, it is imperative that no efforts are spared to stop the loss of civilian lives. Those who are behind the bombings know full well that they are targeting civilians," Amnesty International said.

Amnesty International has repeatedly called on armed groups to stop killing civilians. The organization has also called on the leaders and spokesmen for the outlawed *Front Islamique du*

*Salut* (FIS), Islamic Salvation Front, to condemn clearly and unequivocally **ALL** targeting of civilians by armed groups who call themselves "Islamic groups".

However, FIS spokesmen continue to use double-talk. They have condemned the killing of "innocent civilians", stating that these are committed by security forces to discredit the armed Islamist groups. However, they have so far failed to call on armed Islamist groups to stop targeting civilians, and have continued to justify such killings by the armed groups. A FIS spokesman commenting on a bomb which exploded in a busy street in central Algiers killing more than 50 people, most of them civilians, said it had been "the work of the moujahidin" (freedom fighters), without condemning the attack.

Amnesty International is also concerned at the serious and widespread human rights violations committed by the Algerian security forces. The organization recently wrote to President Liamine Zeroual urging that thorough investigations be carried out into cases of extrajudicial executions, "disappearances", torture and arbitrary detention by the security forces.

The authorities responded by accusing Amnesty International of biased and selective reporting. "However, the Algerian authorities have so far failed to take concrete steps to investigate human rights violations committed by security forces and bring those responsible to justice," Amnesty International said.

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