

Algeria's National Reconciliation:
An analytical Approach

المصالحة الوطنية الجزائرية: مقارنة تحليلية

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Abstract

After the removal of a dictatorial regime or a period of civil unrest, national reconciliation strategies, including amnesties, have been used as tools for dealing with past atrocities and paving the way for a process of a transition. Algeria's measures which include, the Rahma law, the Law on Civil Harmony and the Charter for National Reconciliation have not only been one sided, but did not go far enough in dealing with the conflict. They have managed to drastically reduce the level of violence and achieved peace in the short-run, but it is doubtful that long and lasting peace would be achieved unless the Algerian authorities would take further steps and build on what has been achieved thus far.

Keywords: Algeria, conflict, reconciliation, military, Islamism, Bouteflika.

المخلص:

بعد الاضطرابات الأمنية التي عاشتها الجزائر في العشرية السوداء، استخدمت استراتيجيات المصالحة الوطنية بما في ذلك العفو، كأدوات للتعامل مع الجرائم التي ارتكبت في الماضي، وتمهيد الطريق لعملية انتقالية. إن التدابير التي اتخذتها الجزائر والتي تشمل قانون الرحمة وقانون الوثام المدني

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وميثاق المصالحة الوطنية، مكنت من الحد بشكل كبير من مستوى العنف وحققت السلام على المدى القصير، ولكنها لم تنجح بما فيه الكفاية في التعامل مع الصراع. ولن يتحقق السلام الدائم ما لم تتخذ السلطات الجزائرية مزيداً من الخطوات انطلاقاً مما تم انجازه حتى الآن

Introduction

The provision of amnesties is one important mechanism through which to establish regime legitimacy and create consensus around a particular idea. Amnesties offer incentives for those who have taken up arms to put an end to their activities with the knowledge that they will not be punished for their activities. Allowing these fighters a safe return to their communities in theory encourages the possibility of building allegiances with the regimes they formerly fought against. Similarly, this process confers some legitimacy on the state in the eyes of these former fighters. Furthermore, these amnesties help in the establishment of a consensus regarding the concept of citizenship. Those who take advantage of such amnesties can return to their normal lives, while those who do not are considered terrorists or outlaws. Algeria has adopted this strategy in its pursuit for peace and stability.

Through an analysis of the legislative procedures relating to amnesties in Algeria, as well as of their administrative oversight and eventual impact, we hope to generate new understandings on how elites in Algeria have attempted to construct post-conflict political order. The paper argues that these measures were one-sided: the Algerian authorities' judge and jury. They decided who the perpetrators were and offered them amnesty, if they voluntarily gave up their arms. However, this approach, it fostered impunity; for example, the security forces were exonerated from any crimes they may have committed. Therefore, this process did not go far enough in dealing with the different aspects of reconciliation, such justice and impunity. The paper also argues that the main objective of these measures was the establishment of peace at the expense of justice. Consequently, it is doubtful that a long lasting peace will be achieved unless the Algerian authorities pay particular attention to the policy recommendations the paper provides.

On National reconciliation:

One of the most significant problems facing countries that have come out of either conflict or broke away from authoritarian/totalitarian rule is how to deal past abuses. It is especially difficult in areas of reconciling perpetrators and the victims. The approach that countries adopt in dealing with the past has significant impact on the future of the country, both socially and politically situations that follow. Should everyone regardless of rank, be tried or should it be just those giving the orders? Should there be restitution or retribution? At the heart of these approaches is the idea of justice; how and why it should be achieved.

(Minow, 1998)² and Mani (Mani, 2002)³ offer a typology that countries need to address following a conflict: (a) retributive, (b) restorative, and (c) reparative justice. *Retributive justice* is essentially about the legal prosecution of people for the crimes they committed. The details of the crimes committed are being openly discussed before a competent court of law and the accused is punished, if found guilty. For the perpetrator, the sentence marks the beginning of the process of rehabilitation that occurs whilst serving the sentence, but for the victim, it is acknowledgment of the pain and suffering. Moreover, retributive justice, it is argued, does not only serve as a deterrent to future perpetrators of crimes, but it does also demonstrate that rule of law prevails. The aim of *restorative justice* is the recalibration of community (local, regional and national) by reconciling both actors of the conflict, the victim and perpetrator. This process does not only dignify the victims but it also to empower them. Truth commissions, as the one established in South Africa after the end of Apartheid, provides an important example of this approach. Finally, *reparative*

justice, as its name suggests, is about undoing the injustices of the past. It may take the form of an apology: a perpetrator's acknowledgement their responsibility for the acts committed would go a long way in reducing the suffering of the victim and fosters a feeling of vindication. It may also involve restitution by way of financial compensation to the victims.

Fraihat (Fraihat, 2016, pp. 12-15.), with reference to the reconciliation in the post-Arab Spring period, points to four layers of transition, and he argues that together they determine the extent to which a society can make the transition to peace and stability. His approach, it must be stressed, overlaps with the above typology. The first layer is transitional justice, which is past oriented and help victims cope with what happened. The second layer is national reconciliation, which deals with past and present issues. Furthermore, dealing with current issues - such as the displaced people, the disarmament of former combatants and their integration into society, the establishment of a national dialogue and the restructuring of national institutions, particularly the security sector,- are not only important for a society to heal but they also enable the country to move forward. The third layer is post-conflict reconstruction and includes, among other things, the rebuilding the infrastructure, reviving the economy, forming political parties and reforming the educational system. Finally, the fourth layer is the post-conflict development, which focuses on raising the standards of living with reforms of the different sectors of the economy.

Furthermore, conflict resolution literature suggests that amnesty does indeed have a role in the transformation of civil and deep-rooted conflicts. Amnesty "provides a way out of deadlocked relationships between conflicting parties, where communication has broken down, trust has been eroded, polarized positions have been solidified and violence has become a viable option." (Sango, 27-30 September 2009) In Algeria, as we shall see later in this paper, when polarization reached a peak, and the violence reached extremely high levels in the 1990's, there was deadlock, which had to be broken to allow a process of political settlement to begin. The measures taken by the Algerian authorities will be assessed to determine

the extent to which, if any, they have been successful in achieving their objective: national reconciliation and most importantly, what needs to be done in order to address any shortcomings.

The crisis:

The quasi civil war that Algeria experienced from 1992 until 1999 has been one of the bloodiest in recent history as evidenced by the human cost. The decade of violence had cost 200,000 lives, according to current President Abdelaziz Bouteflika. In addition, the direct cost to the Algerian economy is also staggering; the estimate of the damage was put at between \$20 and \$30 billion. The crisis had also led to the internal displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, the disappearances of 20,000 person, according to families of victims and about half a million qualified people chose to immigrate (Joffe, 2005) This is significant brain drain has lasting and devastating impact on the economy as well the cultural/social life of nation. Furthermore, despite being nationals of one of the richest countries in the Arab World, Algerians have been living under very acute socio-economic conditions. In the 1990s, unemployment was running at almost 30 per cent, and for the young who are first time employment seekers, it is more than double that. Furthermore, in order to absorb the shortage of housing, the Algerian authorities have to build at least 3 million dwellings to meet current demands, (Bouandel, 2002)

Whilst the existing housing units are in urgent need to repair. Consequently, given these severe socio-economic conditions, the terrain was fertile for the recruitment of would be extremists. Many so-called terrorists saw these activities as a means to provide for their families.

The legitimacy of Algeria's political system seemed to have reached an all time low as popular discontent came to the forefront with the infamous riots of October 1988. Security forces massacred hundreds of rioting civilians, mainly young people. To date, no answers have been provided to the victims, and the perpetrators of the violence have not explained their actions. Once the regime's popularity and legitimacy had been

discredited by these events, it began to seek new sources of legitimacy, and as a result embarked on a liberalisation programme. Nonetheless, October 1988, marked, at least on the surface, the beginning of a process of transition from authoritarianism to a democratic order^(brahimi, 1998)

The Algerian strategy of the 1990's can be described as a democratization process that went completely awry. The events of October 1988 led to the opening of the political space. The constitution adopted in February 1989 led to a mushrooming of political parties and allowed for independent associations. Among the parties that were legalised was the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS). Elections at the local and regional levels were held in June 1990, and the FIS emerged as the victor.

Confident of its popularity, FIS was calling for legislative and presidential elections to be held. The Algerian authorities, fearing another victory for the Islamic party if legislative elections were held, opted to redraw the electoral constituencies and to change the electoral system (Bouandel, 2005) These moves were designed to reduce the FIS's chances of another spectacular win. Nonetheless, the first round of the first post-Independence legislative election was held on December 16, 1991. The FIS took 188 of the 216 seats; the remaining 214 seats would be contested in the second round scheduled for January 16, 1992. The FIS was poised to repeat its impressive showing in the second round, and in fact, it needed only another 28 seats to form a government (Bouandel, 1993)The prospect of Islamic party forming a government sent shock waves not only through Algeria but also through much of the West, France in particular. Frustrated with the new developments precipitated by the president's reforms, the military intervened to force his resignation, and then established the *Haut Comité d'Etat (HCE)*, a five-member committee under the leadership of Mohammed Boudiaf, to run the country. It also established the *Conseil National de Transition (CNT)*, an appointed 60-member 'parliament' tasked only with rubber-stamping decisions taken by executive authorities.

The HCE took three particular decisions that would have a significant impact on the development of the Algerian crisis. The first was the declaration of a state of emergency in February

1992. The second was the banning of the FIS, a month later. The third was internment of FIS supporters and activists to concentration camps in the Sahara desert. The HCE, and thus the military as collaborators, argued that these decisions were necessary to save the “republic.” The FIS and its supporters meanwhile saw these measures as a “confiscation of the popular will.” The result of these two diametrically opposed positions was a level of violence reminiscent of the Algerian War of independence (1954-62). This situation was exacerbated by the continued deterioration of socio-economic conditions, as well as by the establishment of paramilitary style militia acting alongside state forces, whose actions led to extreme human rights abuses. (Bouandel and Yahia zoubir., 1998) More importantly, the conflict radicalised both sides as they descended into a vicious cycle of violence.

Algerian Reconciliation and Amnesties

Solving the Algerian crisis has been a long and arduous process, which began well before the arrival of the current president, Bouteflika. In late 1994 and early 1995, the Saint Egidio Catholic Community in Rome facilitated a series of meetings between some of the main Algerian political parties in addition the Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights. The meetings concluded on January 13, 1995 with the signing of a “Platform for a Political and Peaceful Solution of the Algerian Crisis.”

The Algerian government, which was not a party to this agreement, condemned it as an interference in the domestic affairs of the country. Meanwhile, the authorities in Algiers engaged in their own process to resolve the crisis. Secret negotiations took place between representatives of then President Zeroual (1994-1999) and the jailed FIS leadership. While the negotiations themselves failed, Zeroual still introduced the *Rahma* (clemency) law. This legislation attempted to put an end the violence by offering leniency to the “terrorists” who gave themselves over to the authorities. The move was designed to alienate the extreme elements within the armed groups.

In addition to Zeroual's efforts, the military engaged in secret negotiations with Madani Mezerg, leader of the FIS's military wing, the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS). While the two parties claimed to have reached an agreement that would pave the way to end the bloodshed, the terms of the agreement were never made public. According to former Algerian finance minister Ghazi Hidouci, "in October 1997, an agreement, that was kept secret for a long time and whose specific content and terms are still unknown, was signed between the military command and the largest and most well-known armed factions (such as the Islamic Salvation Army, AIS). When President Bouteflika took office, on July 13, 1999, this agreement became the "law related to the restoration of the civil concord (Gaz, 2005).

The Law on Civil Harmony

President Bouteflika's attempts to put an end to the violence were incremental and were dictated by the circumstances in which he found himself as head of state. The first measure he took was to enact a law on civil harmony, which president Zeroual had initiated. The law granted amnesties, lenient treatment, and a place in society to those terrorists who willingly lay down their arms. It is important to note that Bouteflika's attempts to introduce an amnesty was also conflated with of the restructuring of political system as well as establishing some means to legitimize his rule. His plan for ending the crisis was put into practice in July 1999, a few months after he won the presidential contest in dubious circumstances. On July 13, 1999, the National Assembly passed law no. 99-08, establishing the Law on Civil Harmony (Djazayriyya, 1999) The passage of the bill in the National Assembly was, in the eyes of the President, not sufficient for an important law of this kind; instead, he opted for a referendum, scheduled for on September 16, 1999, in order to gather popular support. Nothing was spared to publicise this law and to raise the people's awareness of its merits in order to ensure that it would receive overwhelming support in the referendum. As expected, the results of the referendum gave the president the much-needed vote of confidence he clearly craved. Of the 85 percent voter turnout, almost 99 percent of the voters were in favour of this law.

In an attempt to encourage those who took up arms to rally behind the law on Civil Harmony, in the bill, the death penalty was excluded as a punishment, regardless of both the nature of the crimes committed and the provisions of the Algerian Penal Code. The President argued that this did not amount to a call for impunity, but rather for leniency. The law stipulated that the maximum punishment would be 20 years imprisonment for those who committed collective massacres. Those implicated in acts of “terrorism and subversion,” which had not involved death were exempt from prosecution. Except for those cases, which involved massacres or the use of explosives in public places, the law provided for a probationary period of three to ten years, depending on the nature of the crime committed. Furthermore, except for cases of rape, the provisions of this law would reduce all other penalties prescribed in the Penal Code. The granting of the seemingly lenient treatment prescribed in this Law would be dependent on the amnesty granted fighter’s behaviour. In other words, applicants had to give up arms and voluntarily surrender to the authorities within six months of the passage of law by the National Assembly, by January 13, 2000. One major problem with the Law – particularly in cases involving the acts of killing – is that the state is not in a position to provide leniency unless the victims and their families give the government the right to do so. Otherwise, the amnesty program would end up ‘rehabilitating’ some people and deepening the injustices for others.

Individuals wishing to benefit from this Law had to disclose the acts they committed or had taken part in, as well as provide other information that was deemed relevant to the offence committed. This includes information such as the circumstances under which it was committed, the time and date of the crime, as well as the names of those involved. In order to ensure the “smooth” application of this Law, the government set up probation committees in each of the 48 *wilayas* (administrative districts) of the country. These committees were charged with the evaluation of each individual application and consider the appropriate punishment. Nevertheless, the composition of each committee was not publicised – as is often the case in issues pertaining to human rights in Algeria, detailed information was

hard to come by. In fact, the public had no input in the formation of the law on Civil Harmony. This lack of public input damaged the law's credibility, especially as victims and their families were not called to give evidence when cases were assessed. Furthermore, the work of these committees was conducted behind closed doors, and was not accountable to the public.

In theory, the Law could be perceived as a genuine attempt by the new Algerian leadership to establish peace in a country tarnished by a decade-long quasi civil war. However, the new leadership kept sending mixed and incoherent messages. The then interior minister, Abdelmalek Sellal, in a conciliatory tone, argued, "we should not talk about terrorists any more, but talk about our lost children whom we are trying to bring back (Liberation, 1999) Furthermore, Bouteflika himself reminded everybody that the door would still be open for everybody to return to the right path until January 13, 2000. After the set deadline, however, Bouteflika made it clear that "neither Amnesty International, nor anybody else would prevent the Algerian security services and the Algerian army from doing what needs to be done." (boutefeurope, 2000) This is a clear indication that the Algerian President would use any means deemed necessary to eradicate terrorism from the country. What was perplexing, however, was that on January 10, 2000, three days before the deadline of the Law on Civil Harmony, the President, instead of issuing orders to his security forces to prepare for a relentless campaign to eradicate terrorism, issued a *grace amnistiante* decree. This decree was a blanket exemption for two armed groups, and unlike the Law on Civil Harmony, it neither required individuals to disclose past behaviour nor was the decree discussed in the parliament. This decree, the authorities argued, was another step in the painful process of ending the violence that had tarnished the country. Critics, on the other hand, argued that it was another move in the strategy of exonerating the security forces from any involvement in the massacres. These moves only resulted in obscuring the truth about the Algerian tragedy, which might never be known fully. It would be impossible for a commission of inquiry, if it were ever established, to start looking into the behaviour of the Algerian security forces that fought "terrorism" while the

“terrorists” who were allegedly responsible for unspeakable atrocities received lenient treatment.

The Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation

The adoption of the Law on Civil Harmony had decreased the level of violence but not eradicated it completely. Nonetheless, Bouteflika had always made it clear that the Law on Civil Harmony was the first step in a long and difficult process that would result in peace and harmony. This process, it was argued, would be achieved through national reconciliation. He said, “civil peace has been restored in our society thanks to the benefits of the Law on Civil Harmony immediately transformed into national reconciliation.” (aljazeera,2005) The national reconciliation project, on the surface, could convince the last remaining radical fighters to give up their arms. Consequently, during the April 2004 Presidential election, national reconciliation was the dominant theme of his election campaign. He won an unprecedented 84.99 percent of the vote cast in what seemed to be an open and fair contest. The landslide vote for Bouteflika could be interpreted as an overwhelming vote for the policy of national reconciliation. (Bouandel Y. 2004)

While the issue of national reconciliation caught the imagination of the Algerian electorate, no one knew the exact content of the president’s proposals. Senior political figures as well as political parties were not sure what national reconciliation consisted of and only made vague statements in principle supporting this policy. (Khabar,2005) For instance, Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia stated that “[t]he state reaches out to anybody who seeks to respond to the reconciliation call and leave the circle of those ostracized.” He went on to say that “[it was] a large-scale and all-out project aimed at boosting national unity, recovering state authority and dignity, and restoring civic awareness.” (Tribune, 2004)

Bouteflika himself seemed aware of the general atmosphere of confusion regarding the content of the proposed national reconciliation. In a speech on November 1, 2004, marking the fiftieth anniversary of the Algerian War of Independence, he stressed that Algerians had no other “alternative to bring an end to insecurity and to achieve a reconciliation that the majority of

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the Algerians would like to see come true.” (.aljazeera, 2005) He also stated that he would be releasing a draft general amnesty that would be submitted to a general referendum; second one in the span of a decade.

In order to administer this strategy of national reconciliation, a national commission composed of 22 independent members was established. The leader of the Party of Algerian Renewal, Abdelrazzak Ismail, chaired it, initially. The main aim of the commission was to mobilise the necessary support for the holding of a referendum and the declaration of general amnesty. According to Ahmed Ben Bella, the first president of independent Algeria (162-65), who later assumed the leadership of the body, stated that one condition before accepting the chair of the commission that it, “should enjoy complete autonomy and comprise of national and political figures who sincerely intended to work for the public interest.” (Ben Bella,2001)

While the president's call for national reconciliation has been well received in principle, as was clear in his success in the April 2004 election, there was criticism and hostility toward the reconciliation strategy from several quarters. This is evidenced by the fact, that several interested parties had orchestrated attempts to sabotage his project, as acknowledged by the President himself in a speech given in Lisbon (Ayar, 2005) The criticism, and in fact, wide spread scepticism, came as a result of the ambiguity surrounding the content of the national reconciliation project and the general impression that it would result in complete amnesty for everybody, regardless of the crimes committed. For example, the leader of the Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights, agreed with the national reconciliation in principle, but argued that it should be handled differently. National reconciliation, he argued, if a general amnesty takes place, will be seen as betrayal to the victims and their families. He went on to argue that amnesty should not apply to those who committed crimes against humanity. (Liberte, 2005) It was further argued that the President did not have the constitutional right to decree an amnesty in this manner. Indeed, according to the provisions of the 1997 constitution, the President has the power to grant pardon, but this pardon can only be granted to someone after

they have been found guilty by a court of law. Furthermore, amnesties that result in impunity for gross violations of human rights clearly breach the provisions of international law. According to the dominant legal view, amnesties and other measures, that codify impunity, should not be an option for serious human rights abuses.

Nevertheless, in August 2005, the “Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation” was made public. The proposed Charter was overwhelmingly approved by a national referendum on September 29, 2005. The Charter was to come into force in March 2006. Its main aims were to provide amnesty to those who had committed or been implicated in the violence between January 1992 and March 2006. Those involved in collective massacres, rapes, and the use of explosives in public places were excluded from such provisions. The law also provided for financial compensation for the families of the ‘disappeared,’ and granted permission to former members of the banned Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) to take part in political activity. The most obvious winner in this process was the security services. Indeed, through the Charter, the “Algerian people pay a vibrant tribute to the People’s National Army, to the security services ... which permitted to save Algeria.” Furthermore, the Charter points out that, “in numerous cases [these] disappearances are consequences of criminal activities of blood-thirsty terrorists who have assumed the right of life or death of everybody.” A process that sweeps most of the abuses under the carpet and not does allow for due process to take place is hardly the basis for a lasting peace.

Throughout the last decade where Algeria has engaged in a process of achieving national reconciliation and peace, two questions have been of particular concern. The first, and mentioned above, is that of impunity. The second relates to the disappeared. Bouteflika, through the introduction of the Law on Civil Harmony and the Charter for National Reconciliation seemed to pursue a policy that supported a huge degree of impunity. Not only that -security forces that have allegedly been responsible for gross violations of human rights (Habib, 2001) are not likely to face prosecution for their acts, the issue of the disappeared is of equal importance. President Bouteflika and

Farouk Ksentini, chair of the ad hoc commission on the disappeared, have made comments suggesting that the families of the victims should move on, and that those who continue to raise the issue of the disappeared are politically motivated bent on obstructing efforts to establish peace. The fate of the disappeared, however, is still a subject of pain and fear, not only for the families of the victims but society. The President appointed a special commission to look into the issue and in March 2005, a report detailing the Commission's findings was submitted. According the various sources, between 1992 and 1998, 6,146 people were "disappeared" at the hand of the security forces, a clear indictment of their conduct in the conflict. The report opted for reparatory justice by recommending financial compensation for the families.

The victims' families, however, were not satisfied with these findings. In order to move on, the truth needs to be known. Lila Ighil, President of the National Association for Families of the Disappeared, believes that there was no political will to search for the truth. Another group, *SOS Disparus*, felt that the work of the Commission fell short of expectations because, according to its president Fatima Yus, "they still do not know who took away their children and where their bodies are." She delivered a damning assessment to the work of the Commission in particular and the policy of national reconciliation in general when she stated that "they cannot pardon the killers if [they did] not know who they are." (alJazeera, 2005).

Conclusions:

The Algerian path towards national reconciliation, that paper argued, concentrated on the use of amnesty, which provided a way out for insurgents fighting against the state, particularly for those who had not committed serious crimes. It provided a viable alternative to violence and militancy by offering reintegration and normalization. It, in fact, offered hope as a replacement to fear and retaliation, and in turn, many ex-militants embraced this hope for a better future and a place within the larger society. Nonetheless, this process followed a top-down model approach that confined its terms to serving the interests of the ruling party while limiting the rights of the

opposition and victims. In other words, it did not address the grievances of all parties to the conflict. The Algerian authorities decided who the guilty party was and offered them a “chance” to redeem themselves and exonerated regime forces that were allegedly involved in human rights violations, torture, and imprisonment of insurgents and other political prisoners. Consequently, far from achieving its objectives, this process confirms the principle of impunity. Both retributive justice and restorative justice were ignored and reparative justice was present when the authorities offered financial compensation for the families of the disappeared. As such, this process has indeed reduced the levels of violence in the short term, but it is doubtful that it would lead to a long and lasting peace. The regular sit-ins of the families of those who lost their lives is a constant reminder that what happened cannot be swept away under the carpet by a presidential decree. The granting of amnesty by Bouteflika raises questions about the relationship between the state and its citizens. In particular, to what extent can the president, or the government, represent the victims and their families to forgive perpetrators, among both the insurgents and police force, for their wrongdoing. The state can certainly negotiate with fighters, in groups or individually, and engage in deals, if they wish, but only with respect to the dimension of disrupting of public life. For cases of individual rights, it is only those persons involved, the victims, that may grant amnesty, not the state, and hence, any effective amnesty law it must be drawn under terms that address these concerns of the victims.

Policy Recommendations

As this paper has argued above, amnesty in Algeria made progress towards the achievement of political stability especially during the 1990s, reducing levels of violence and starting a new political process. However, Algerian authorities should not take this relative stability for granted. Many things have changed since the launching of Bouteflika’s amnesty. With advent of the Arab Spring, much has changed, and in particular, the social contract that allowed Arab leaders such as Bouteflika to govern has been brought into question. They can no longer take for granted an ability to make decisions on the fate of their people

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without being held accountable. The entire regional context has changed, and the collapse of the social contract provides an opportunity to hold leaders accountable for their decisions. While the Algerian political landscape has changed significantly from 1990's, the human rights violations and grievances of the victims of violence has never disappeared. These grievances linger just below the surface will resurface themselves in some form eventually. The Algerian authorities, therefore, should now engage in serious reforms to avoid an aggravation of these grievances in ways that could threaten public order in Algeria. The following recommendations provide ways to help Algeria deal with this chapter of its history in the new regional context of the Arab Spring.

- Policy makers in Algeria ought to build on what amnesty has accomplished in the past by engaging in meaningful dialogue with major Algerian stakeholders to identify the strategies and measures needed to further the national reconciliation process.

- There is no other alternative to coming to terms with the past in order to move on and knowing the truth goes a long way towards that end. The government ought to help in establishing independent truth commissions to investigate, to interview the victims and perpetrators, and to document their findings.

- A formal apology, followed by financial compensation, given to the victims and their families is also to be considered. The most powerful apology that helps victims let go and move forward is one that comes from the perpetrators themselves.

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