



**Q09667. Algeria - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 02 April 2009**

**Evidence on whether the Algerian authorities are at present persecuting suspected members of terrorist groups/Al-Qaeda?**

The *US Department of State* in their 2008 Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Algeria notes:

“According to human rights lawyers, in July authorities charged Kamal Akkache with belonging to a terrorist organization, and he remained in detention at year's end. Amnesty International (AI) reported that DRS agents detained Akkache in September 2007 and held him without charge for 10 months. At year's end Mohamed Fatmia remained detained in Serkadji prison on terrorism charges after DRS agents arrested him and held him incommunicado throughout 2007. Human rights advocates reported that authorities continued to hold Mohamed Rahmouni at the military tribunal in Blida without access to a lawyer.

Authorities released Fethi Hamaddouche in October 2007; Hamaddouche had been held without charge in DRS custody since March 2007. NGOs reported that authorities also released Youcef Belmouaz and Brahim Abed in 2007 after seven months of incommunicado detention. The two men were tried and acquitted on charges of belonging to a terrorist organization active abroad.

In 2006 according to local and international NGOs, Mohammed Rabah Ajine, Zeineddine Belacel, and Habib Boukhatemi disappeared and were later placed in pretrial detention in Algiers. Four months later, they appeared before a judge and were charged with belonging to a terrorist group operating in Algeria and abroad. A court acquitted Belacel; Ajine and Boukhatemi were sentenced to three years in prison.” (US Department of State (25 February 2009) - *Algeria: Country Report on Human Rights Practices – 2008*)

*Algeria Watch* quotes an Amnesty International report and notes:

“The UK authorities deported two Algerian men, known as “V” and “I”, to Algeria on 16 and 17 June respectively, on the grounds that they presented a “threat to the national security” of the UK. The men's families have had no contact with them since they arrived at Algiers airport, and Amnesty International fears that they are being held in a military barracks in Algiers, part of which is used as a secret detention centre, and that they are at risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

In London the Algerian consulate had reportedly assured the men that they were not wanted for any crimes in Algeria and that they would be released after they had spent a few hours in police custody at the airport to satisfy formalities. Despite this, the men have been held at an undisclosed location since they arrived, and have been allowed no contact with their families, in violation of Algerian law." (Algeria Watch (20 June 2006) - *ALGERIA: Two Algerian men, known as "V" and "I"*)

An *Afrol News* report states:

"A European Council investigation into the "global spider's web" of secret CIA prisons and illegal abduction suspected of terrorist has named the three North African capitals Algiers, Cairo and Rabat as "detainee transfer/drop off points", together with more famous locations such as Guantánamo (Cuba), Baghdad (Iraq) and Kabul (Afghanistan). The report documents frequent flights of CIA abductees to the capitals of Algeria, Egypt and Morocco and torture cases in Egypt and Morocco." (Afrol News (07 June 2008) - *"Algiers, Cairo, Rabat used as CIA detention centres"*)

This report continues

"On this map, the North African cities of Algiers (Algeria), Cairo (Egypt) and Rabat (Morocco) are marked in the same way as the US military base at Guantánamo Bay, Baghdad and Kabul - and as the Polish town of Szymany and the Romanian cities of Bucharest and Timisoara. These three European destinations are the ones Mr Marty holds have been the CIA's illegal secret detention centres in Europe.

The capitals of Algeria, Egypt and Morocco - briefly described as "detainee transfer/drop off points" "where flights tend to stop for just short periods, mostly far off the obvious route, either ... close to a site of a known detention facility or a prima facie case can be made to indicate a detention facility in their vicinity" - thus have been used as secret detention centres for CIA prisoners abducted or captured in other countries, the report strongly indicates. According to Mr Marty, operations of such a scale must have been known and authorised by national authorities." (ibid)

According to a report in the *New York Times*, it is noted:

"The epicenter of the group remains in the hills east of Algiers, where the roads are blocked by skittish police officers who finger their rifle triggers when cars approach. Who told you to get out of the car? a checkpoint officer yelled at one driver, backing away as the other guards swung their weapons into the faces of the passengers.

Inside police headquarters in nearby Naciria, the commander said he was so busy battling militants that he had no time to hang photographs of three officers killed in recent suicide bombings. These terrorists don't know any mercy, he said. This is Al Qaeda, what do you think?

Even as the group expands its ambitions beyond Algeria, parts of the country remain a bleak battleground between militants and an oppressive government that follows its citizens and limits political opposition.

The Algerian government killed or captured an estimated 1,100 militants last year nearly double the number in 2006, according to the State Department. But the group has begun using sophisticated recruitment videos to replenish its ranks with a new generation of youth that the State Department says is more hard-line.

The group has also benefited from a national amnesty program. Wanted posters at police stations and checkpoints include numerous men who were pardoned and released only to join the new Qaeda franchise. (New York Times (01 July 2008) - *Ragtag Insurgency Gains a Lifeline From Al Qaeda* Mekhennet, Souad)

This report continues:

"The group has also stepped up its use of remote-controlled roadside bombs, and there are increasingly deadly clashes with militias armed by the government to fight the militants.

We don't arrest them anymore, said Mohammad Mendri, 65, the mayor of a village who leads a militia near the coastal city of Jijel. We just kill them. (ibid)

The Summary of a paper published by the *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* states:

"Despite the repression of radical Islamist movements since 1992 and the promulgation of a National Reconciliation law in 1999 aimed at encouraging the repentance of jihadi fighters, Algeria is still subject to regular terrorist attacks." (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (08 October 2008) - *Salafism and Radical Politics in Postconflict Algeria* Boubekeur, Amel, p.1)

The Introduction to this paper states:

"The government has succeeded in destroying the more openly political manifestation of Salafism, the Islamic Salvation Front (Front Islamique du Salut, FIS, or al-Jabha al-Islamiyya lil-Inqadh), but it has not solved the issue of the political reintegration of its former leaders and followers. It has reduced the violent jihadi manifestation to just a fraction of what it was during the 1990s, but this jihadi movement is now again present in the emergence of the al-Qaeda Organization in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)." (ibid, p.2)

In a section of this same paper titled "Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb: The Emergence of an Internationalized, Media-Savvy", Jihadi Salafism states:

"This new orientation of Algerian Jihadi Salafism was explicitly announced in December 2006, when the GSPC changed its name to the Organization of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and announced its affiliation with bin Laden's al-Qaeda. Even if it is unlikely that the GSPC/AQIM is active beyond Algerian borders today, or even has close ties to bin Laden, the use of the al-Qaeda label has allowed the GSPC/AQIM to stage a reappearance on the international scene. To generate international attention, AQIM has tried to

draw different Maghrebi Jihadi Salafi groups together under its banner (the Algerian GSPC, the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group, the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, and the Tunisian Islamic Combatant Group), although they are not linked to each other operationally.” (ibid, p.9)

A *Voice of America* report on these attacks states:

“The Middle East and North Africa editor for the Jane's Country Risk publication, David Hartwell, says terrorism in Algeria came about this decade after the end of the country's civil war. He says radical elements of former rebel groups, the Armed Islamic Group, known as the GIA, and the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, known as the GSPC, have morphed into terrorists. ‘The groups were slowly whittled down to sort of a rump of maybe 100 terrorists in each group,’ he said. ‘Eventually, the GIA announced a cease-fire. The GSPC continued fighting. But even that group was under severe pressure by the government.’ Hartwell says it has been a slow progression from little activity, to more and more terrorist type attacks under the al-Qaida name. ‘What happens in the 2004 and 2005 time frame, you had splits that were forming within the GSPC with some of the internal group disagreeing with decisions made by the more radical elements to try and hook up to an al-Qaida based agenda,’ he said. ‘That split was confirmed in 2005-2006 period when the group effectively renamed itself and rebranded itself al-Qaida Islamic Maghreb and that group has become much more active in the last two years. The number of attacks has increased.’” (Voice of America (20 August 2008) - *More Bombings rock Algeria* Colombant, Nico)

In a section titled “An eye for an eye or how to hold ground” a *France 24* report states:

“The terrorist groups are essentially avenging the death of 12 of their members killed by the army and the security forces in Beni Douala (province of Tizi Ouzou),” on Aug. 8, the Algerian interior minister Yazid Zerhouni said in an interview with the El Khabar daily the day after the attack of a police station in Zemmouri El Bahri (Boumerdes). The succession of terrorist attacks and combing operations by government forces is very representative of this policy where a blow answers to a blow.” (France 24 (02 September 2008) - *Terrorist attacks in Algeria : why now ?* El Khoury, Tatiana)

The report continues:

“Declarations by AQIM spokesperson Salah Abou Mohamed also support the idea of reprisals. In a statement broadcast by Al-Jazira, AQIM claimed responsibility for the attacks of August 17 and 19 as well as for the double attack of August 20, justifying a revenge expedition launched after a wicked operation by the secret services.” (ibid)

A report published by the US sponsored North African news website *Magharebia* states:

“Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb claimed responsibility Thursday night (August 21st) for a recent string of suicide bombings in which 68 Algerians

were killed. In an audio recording broadcast on Qatari channel Aljazeera around 10:30 pm Algeria time, group spokesman Abu Mohamed Salah confirmed that the attacks came in response to operations launched by the Algerian army against the group's headquarters in Tizi Ouzou on August 8th. A dozen al-Qaeda members were killed in the Tizi Ouzou offensive. On the tape, Salah vowed a 'severe response' to any future operation by security forces. Prior to the release of any claim of responsibility, Algerian Interior Minister Noureddine Yazid Zerhouni had said that the Zemmouri, Issers and Bouira attacks were a reaction to successful counter-terror operations in Algeria which killed several al-Qaeda leaders." (Magharebia (22 August 2008) - *Al-Qaeda claims responsibility for latest Algeria attacks*, Jameh, Said)

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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