



## Egypt

26 January 2011

### Egypt/ Algeria: Unprecedented social and democratic protests : Arbitrary repression

**January 26, 2011 - The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) is following very closely the movement of social protests that is spreading in the region, and in particular in Egypt and Algeria echoing the Tunisian revolution. FIDH urges the authorities of both countries to consider such protests as legitimate : they should be taken seriously with concrete and effective reforms to address democratic and social gaps.**

The demonstrations that have taken place in all Egypt on January 25, 2011, initiated through social networks, are unprecedented as they gathered thousands of protesters in a country under Emergency law where protests are illegal. Anger, the economic desperation of a population suffocated by the lack of freedoms, have encouraged Egyptians to confront the very large number of police and anti-riot units that had been deployed in the streets.

FIDH notes that political parties have not called for protests, even though some of them may have participated in their personal capacity.

FIDH strongly condemns the death of two protesters and one policeman and calls upon the Egyptian authorities to immediately release the approximately 500 protesters arrested and to guarantee the freedom of peaceful assembly and the freedom of expression including by restoring free use of mobile phones and social networks in accordance with Egypt's international and regional human rights commitments. FIDH calls the international community to condemn any excessive use of force by security forces to repress demonstrators and to urge the Egyptian authorities to respect freedoms of demonstration, expression and information.

In Algeria, also under Emergency law, last Saturday's protests have been severely repressed by the security forces. FIDH has repeatedly expressed its concerns at the rise of the violent social protests that have been shaking the country since beginning of January 2011.

This popular uprising, also led mainly by young people, is fueled by the corruption scandals affecting state institutions, and government's inability to meet the needs of the population in access to housing, education and public health, while the country has, thanks to oil exports, foreign reserves of around 155 billion dollars.

FIDH recalls that the economic and social situation in Algeria was a serious concern for several months. Our organization, together with its Algerian partners, published in April 2010 a report entitled "The bad life: situation of economic, social and cultural rights in Algeria" (<http://www.fidh.org/La-mal-vie-rapport-sur-les-droits-economiques>) in which it put forward the possibility of an

uprising of a population in desperate need of human perspective.

FIDH recalls the Algerian authorities that they shall refrain from repressing legitimate protests and allow the peaceful expression of people's claims by removing restrictive laws, including the state of emergency.

"Beyond the terrible economic and social situation in these countries, the revolts primarily express the exasperation of the people silenced by the restrictions on fundamental freedoms" declared Souhayr Belhassen, FIDH President. "Arbitrary repression shall in no way constitute an answer to such legitimate social and democratic protests" she concluded.

<http://www.fidh.org/Egypt-Algeria-Unprecedented-social-and-democratic>