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Covid-19 pandemic in Algeria

“Undisciplined people” face eternal lockdown

- IV Online magazine - 2020 - IV545 - June 2020 -

Publication date: Monday 1 June 2020

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Lockdown is not eternal, just as Covid-19 is not inevitable! The modes of governance and the profits of the pharmaceutical lobbies have blurred all visibility for the population and have combined confusion (with a multiplication of contradictory information), conspiracy (the search for a culprit such as China) and authoritarian management by the political powers (repression, sanctions, opacity of decisions and manipulation of statistics).

In Algeria, this authoritarian governance, which is based on a Jacobin administration and decision-makers turned in on themselves, took advantage of this pandemic to arrest, imprison, summon and intimidate dozens of *hirakists* and activists on social networks. Almost a hundred have been arbitrarily detained. It has used lockdown to break up the networking of the *hirak* and re-establish the curfew, which has nothing to do with Covid-19, while postponing the start of the academic year until September to put the students on vacation... from the *hirak*!

This done, the regime is refocusing its communication on the indiscipline of the population, on the rise in the curve of the pandemic and on an amplification of social anxiety to generate divisions and contradictions. So it manages to make Algerians blame each other and the "populace" become the privileged target of certain comments from educated people and even *hirakists* in social networks! Shocking remarks, of a rare violence, circulate on these networks. We need a fierce dictatorship, napalm is necessary for this people, vermin and so on.

The trap is tightly closed. The regime can thus be legitimized in its repression, the *hirak* will detach itself from the "populace" and will become elitist. The radicalism of the *hirak* can be shifted onto the terrain of reason by the authorities (the recuperation of the Berber movement is always in our minds) .. and the regime recovers!

We must remember that we don't choose our parents, we live with them and we love them despite all their "faults". We do not choose the people we want, we live with the people we have, despite their shortcomings, their indiscipline ... we can, however, change the consciousness of these people! First by education, then culture and also by collective movements which make it possible to integrate values of sociability, fraternity and learning humanism! The *hirak* is part of this process of awareness and politicization, however ambiguous or limited it may be. It is because the elites are little involved and trapped in their culture of allegiance or ideologization that this politicization and intellectualization of the *hirak* appears derisory. The people is not a concept but a catch all formula where politicians enter what suits them. In this vague conglomerate called the people, there are workers, civil servants, unemployed young people, all those who live in the informal sector for their survival, people who live on the margins and in the most unbearable marginalization and even a part of the middle layers. Everyone lives with their families in difficult urban conditions, targeted by the degrading media and with precarious incomes.

It is indeed the power of the state, through this system denounced by the *hirak*, which has placed these people in these conditions of economic, social and mental degradation. The informal economy, the informal society, the culture of the informal is a creation of the regime power and it has served the latter while giving the illusion to this informal population that they were being considered.

So let's come back to more reason and lucidity. Let us focus our anger and our emotions and try to locate the real responsibilities in the face of this relative failure of lockdown. For containment to be successful, it is necessary to have objective conditions for these people, to associate them with decisions, to integrate them into the management of containment by neighbourhoods. Where are the associations the Prime Minister talked about? The demonized *hirak* was not associated when it could have developed a dynamic of self-organization and proposed suitable containment scenarios. Managing the pandemic through democracy is not the scenario of an illegitimate political

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regime. Let us regain confidence and prepare to get the *hirak* out of this lockdown impasse.

26 May 2020

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