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Algeria

# For the defence of democratic and trade-union rights in Algeria

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**For the defence of democratic and trade-union freedoms! No to the referendum and the Tebboune constitution! For the election of a sovereign Constituent Assembly! This statement was issued by the Socialist Workers Party (PST) Algeria on 19 September 2020.**

## Regime continuity

Contrary to the propaganda of the de facto government, resulting from the masquerade of December 12, 2019, the continuity of the regime is striking. Neither its populist outbursts against corruption and the “3issaba”, nor its attempt to appropriate the Hirak, sometimes referred to as “moubarek”, have changed one iota its nature as an oligarchic liberal class, authoritarian and anti-social. Nor have they alleviated its chronic lack of legitimacy.

But the regime's latent crisis, which the fifth term [1], had sharpened and the popular Hirak had deepened, made possible a reorganization of state power around the army. The shattering return of the General Staff to the centre of political decision-making, after its relative “marginalization” following the defeat of its protege in the 2004 presidential election, is the most striking fact of the evolution of the crisis of the regime.

## Against submission to the interests of foreign powers!

This continuity of the regime is also striking in its relations of submission to the foreign imperialist powers. Their support for the regime as well as their compliments are well rewarded. To be convinced of this, it suffices to recall the gifts offered to multinationals in the new law on hydrocarbons or the abandonment of sovereignist and protectionist provisions such as the 51/49% rule, etc. On the military level, it is also necessary to recall the constitutionalisation in progress of the possibility of intervention of the ANP (Algerian armed forces) in other countries or its very recent participation in the latest military manoeuvres of NATO in the Mediterranean.

## A constitution at the service of the regime

Taking advantage of the outbreak of Covid-19, which had forced the popular Hirak to take a long break, the de facto power of the army has become permanent. Indeed, its new constitution, drawn up without the slightest democratic participation of the Algerian people, will be the subject of a mock referendum on November 1. It is, as it was before, under the corrupt and authoritarian power of Bouteflika, aimed at simulating a popular plebiscite in the hope of attributing some legitimacy to Tebboune and to the high military hierarchy which appointed him. But, what legitimacy can such a referendum bring when the Algerian people are subject to curfew and democratic freedoms are violated and muzzled? What credit can we give it when the public and private media are closed to free and adversarial debate? What “freedom of choice for the Algerian people” can we take advantage of when the arrests and convictions of young Hirak activists, political and union activists, journalists and simple bloggers are multiplying?

No, the constitution is neither a matter of a commission of experts, nor a subject of one-sided debate between “doutours” in constitutional law as they want to make us think. The constitution is not a technical question. It is an eminently political question which must be discussed in complete freedom by all the Algerian people. All political

sensitivities and all currents of opinion, which traverse our people, must be able to express their opinions freely and fairly in the media and to present their ideas to the people without any constraint.

The PST unequivocally rejects this alleged referendum on 1 November and calls for the democratic election of a sovereign Constituent Assembly which will be representative of the democratic and social aspirations of workers, women, youth and the masses of our country. It is to this democratically elected constituent assembly, after a free national debate in a context where all obstacles to the effective exercise of democratic freedoms are lifted, that the task of writing our constitution will fall. It will then be presented to a vote of the Algerian people by democratic referendum.

# Tebboune is at the service of the bosses of the private sector!

On another level, it is in this same context marked by the Covid-19, and its heavy economic and social consequences on workers, small peasants, small traders and the popular masses in general, that Tebboune and his government decide to grant the equivalent of 20 billion dollars, or 1900 billion dinars of public funding, to private employers, presented as – private - investment for the current year. At the same time, after the insignificant and miserable increase in the SNMG (minimum wage) of 2000 DA, more than 500,000 workers have lost their jobs without any compensation. Of course, this figure would be much higher if we count the workers who found themselves overnight forced, by these same bosses, into technical unemployment or forced to take unpaid leave. But, on this subject, Tebboune and his government let these same bosses dismiss and trample on the few provisions of the laws relating to union rights as well as court decisions favorable to workers. As such, the examples of Cevital , whose boss has fired hundreds of workers from Numilog in Béjaia, and the firing of workers at Smaha-Brandt in Sétif, who however only wanted to set up a union section, are edifying as to the inclinations towards slave labour of the "productive" private sector in our country and its political protectors.

Let us build unity of action and the convergence of democratic and social struggles!

For the defense of democratic freedoms!

Stop repression and arrests!

Demand the release of all political prisoners!

Let us stand in solidarity with the struggles of the workers and with the popular resistance!

Let us impose in the private sector and everywhere else the respect of trade union freedoms!

No to the undemocratic constitutional referendum on 1 November!

For the election of a sovereign Constituent Assembly!

*The National Leadership*

*19 September 2020*

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Translated by *International Viewpoint* from "[Pour la défense des libertés démocratiques et syndicales ! ...](#)".

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[1] Algerian president Abdulaziz Bouteflika announced in 2019 that he would run for a fifth term of office. In the face of widespread popular opposition, embodied by the Hirak movement, he had to abandon the attempt.