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Algeria

**"Many women have become
conscious of the value of
claiming their rights and
demanding the end of the
system"**

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Titi Haddad, a feminist activist in Algeria was interviewed by Antoine Larrache

How are women involved in the present movement?

Since the beginning of this popular movement, women have immediately become involved in the various demonstrations. We saw very strong support among women following appeals launched by women's groups, particularly in Algiers, Bejaia and Bouira, for International Women's Day on March 8th.

From there, many other women became aware of the usefulness of organizing and forming groups to claim their rights and at the same time demand the end of the system in place, alongside their fellow Algerians as was the case during the National Liberation War.

And let us remember, it is thanks to their effective and glorious participation that we were able to extract considerable gains, including the rejection of the personal statute of 1966, inspired by Shari'ā'a, and other democratic and social achievements such as education and the right to work.

((In relation to the attacks that took place during a recent demonstration, can you tell us about it and explain the reactions?

On the morning of March 29th in Algiers, women of a newly created collective were attacked by some demonstrators. Other feminists, who were publicising articles of the Family Code to raise awareness of the situation of women, suffered the same fate. They were insulted and abused in front of the security services who did not even react to this reprehensible act.

This of course provoked caused a lot of reactions: some people condemned these attacks, others rejoiced at this turn of events. This tells us a lot about the worrying situation in which Algerian women find themselves, which is the product of the hardening of conservative and retrograde ideas and the discontinuity of progressive struggles.

Can you explain the effects of the black decade and of tradition on the women's struggle?

With the rise of Islamism in the early 1980s, there was a blatant deterioration of the situation of women in Algeria, although they resisted fundamentalist terror with extraordinary mobilizations, such as that of March 8th, 1989. But the women's movement continued to regress; the tsunami for the Islamist FIS in the local elections of June 12th, 1990 put an end to this dynamic, a huge retrograde wave surfaced, with subsequent brutal attacks, a misogynistic terror and assassinations.

The women's movement that was built on demands like the repeal of the Family Code and gender equality turned towards resistance and survival against terrorism, so the women's struggle was drained of its vital forces. Some women left the country, others preferred to remain silent for fear of suffering the same fate as that of the murdered activist Nabila Djahnine, or of Katia Ben Gana, who refused the diktat of the fundamentalists on how to dress. But despite all these difficulties, women must not give up their fight, there is still ground for hope.

Our country is experiencing a real revolution that aims to bring down the existing system and move towards a

sovereign constituent assembly, representative of the aspirations of workers, students, the unemployed, pensioners, but also women. That is why all these categories of society must self-organize and make their struggles converge to achieve a just and equal society.

PS:

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