

<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article7133>



Algeria

Between May Day struggles and indiscriminate repression in Algeria

- IV Online magazine - 2021 - IV556 - May 2021 -

Publication date: Friday 7 May 2021

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights reserved

The trade union movement is formally pluralist but in fact corporatist and bureaucratized. Workers' struggles remain defensive and atomized. The industrial centres remain silent while the peripheral sectors are more combative. The fighting spirit of the teachers in education is intact but the union apparatuses have become bureaucratized.

Weaknesses of the trade union and workers' movement

Béjaïa is today at the forefront of new experiences of struggle and the Numilog workers are leading the way. The autonomous unions are attempting unity in action and the UGTA is calling for a general strike. Bougie indicates a future configuration of the trade union and workers' movement. A process that is at its beginning, fragile and reversible. The trade union movement remains fundamentally bureaucratized and institutionalized, acting through declarations and formal organic activism. Trade union competition is more about apparatus and egos than ideas and action. The trade union figures who make up the consensus are no longer there. Achour Idir was closing a cycle of trade union awakening and class consciousness. He paid with his life, as did Osmane Redouane. Neo-liberal policies, privatization, de-industrialization and employer authoritarianism have had their effect. We must add the weakness of the workers' parties, a sanitized left and very damaging traditions of fragmentation.

Today, the trade union and workers' movement cannot influence the political course of events and even less weigh on the political balance of power. The labour movement is paying dearly for this and the revolutionary utopia is still far from reality. All the indicators show that revolutionary change brought about by the workers' movement is not for tomorrow. Nevertheless, what is happening in the field of social struggles and the salutary advent of the hirak shows that a new political cycle is taking shape, characterized by a radicality of antisystemic political demands and a programmatic formulation that is still in its infancy and very confused.

Singularities of the hirak

The hirak, as a radical and mobilizing popular movement, brings a singularity to this political cycle where the political and social awakening is more citizen than class. The inter-class dimension of the hirak contributes to this accumulation of ambiguities, confusions or political contradictions within the hirak because its sociology is bipolar. Between a heterogeneous social "bloc" made up of workers, civil servants, unemployed people, socially downgraded young people, etc. and a social "bloc" of middle strata ranging from academics to shopkeepers or independent entrepreneurs, the interplay of interests is complex and convergence is even more difficult. The whole strategy of the government and the political police is to break the connection that was made between the two social blocks through the hirak. The fear of a political convergence against a background of radicalization pushes the strategists of this illegitimate power to break the activist elements or influencers considered as subversive.

From the Rachad activists to the trade unionist Chouicha, from the poet Tadadjit to the student icon Abdenour Ait Said, from the academic Mhanna Abdesselam to Dalila Touat, from the journalist Drareni to Jamila Loukil: the objective is to break this fraternity between two social poles, which carries an alternative political project to the government. The objective of the zealous reformers of the system is to reappropriate the middle classes by freeing them from radicalized elements and then to make them a privileged actor in an economic and socio-political model

Between May Day struggles and indiscriminate repression in Algeria

validated by the supporters of capitalist globalization. The social bloc of the “oppressed”, where workers and the lumpen, the unemployed and the socially declassified cohabit, will be isolated in a classic permanent confrontation with a state power that is used to social crises.

This indiscriminate repression is the expression of this strategic desire of the government and at the same time the expression of its difficulty. It must be countered by a concrete mobilization of solidarity on the ground. Working for the hirak to integrate social and labour demands and that the trade union and labour movement to integrate the hirak and contribute to giving it a political perspective, this is the task of the hirakists, bearers of democratic and progressive values.

6 May 2021

PS:

If you like this article or have found it useful, please consider donating towards the work of International Viewpoint. Simply follow this link: [Donate](#) then enter an amount of your choice. One-off donations are very welcome. But regular donations by standing order are also vital to our continuing functioning. See the last paragraph of [this article](#) for our bank account details and take out a standing order. Thanks.