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Algeria

Legislative elections without any legitimacy

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The legislative elections of 12 June, like the presidential elections of 12 December 2019, constitute a passage in force for the continuity of the regime. Because the 22 February movement raises the question of popular sovereignty on political, economic and social issues.

The regime is not hegemonic over society. In two years, it has not succeeded in building a social base or a new political apparatus. It has only recycled the old FLN and RND members, the old caciques of the system, with a few new faces but linked to the clientelist networks of the regime.

Repression everywhere

To impose its electoral roadmap, it resorted to an unprecedented repression, and created a climate of terror in society. After a year of interruption of the movement because of Covid, it had counted on the movement not resuming. But since last February, there has been a resumption of the movement. It is true that it is not as big as before, but Fridays have resumed in most of the departments. This has pushed the authorities to start a process of repression. The regime in power has a legitimacy deficit.

It has therefore chosen repression as a response, as a way of managing popular demands.

The repression did not only affect the Hirak, but the whole social movement: the firemen's strike, the education workers' strike, etc. They were afraid that there would be a conflict between the two movements. They were afraid that there would be a junction between the popular movement and the social movement.

The population is experiencing an unprecedented social crisis: redundancies, job cuts in the context of Covid, even if deindustrialization has been a policy since Bouteflika. They have transformed the Algerian economy into an economic import mode and broken the national productive sector.

For the population, after two years, there is no defeat, but there is a lot of questioning, drawing back. Is Friday enough, why march on Friday and not on other days, what are our objectives? The rejection of the system is intact and structural. 2019 has created a rupture between the population and the central regime.

Indifference to the elections

The process of terrorization is impressive. Since the beginning of the electoral campaign, there have been more than 2,000 arrests, more than 226 people imprisoned, especially young activists, and bans on all militant activities. On 10 June, the Penal Code was amended to introduce activities that can be characterised as terrorist, such as political organizations aiming to challenge the current governance system. Kabyle organisations such as the MAC and Islamist organisations such as Rachad are labelled as terrorists even though they are not really organizations that participate in the Hirak movement.

Those who prevent the election or try to dissuade people from voting are punishable by law – they are liable to 20

years in prison.

Concerning the legislative elections, in the usual departments, especially in Kabylia and the neighbouring departments, there are very few voters. In Bejaïa, for example, they announced 4,000 voters out of 500,000 voters. They tried to open the polling stations this morning, but without success. Often it is the forces of order, army and police, who vote, almost secretly.

The turnout is very low.

At the national level, they announced a 10% turnout at 1pm and 14.5% at 4pm, which represents about 2.2 million voters out of a total electorate of 24.5 million.

Building an anti-repression front

We always put forward the same orientation: any revolution must be organized at the base, where we must discuss how to confront repression, what system we want to build... If we don't have this organization at the base, the representatives will be designated by the bourgeois media, by the spheres close to power. It is from there that we can provide the movement with a democratic and social platform that is the outline of the new system we want to build. Try to link up with all the social and democratic movements. So we have this triptych: self-organization, joining the social and popular movement, a sovereign constituent assembly that is the emanation of the needs of the population at the base.

For the past two months, the PST has been fighting to build an anti-repression front. The PST itself is threatened with dissolution, as are many other organizations: all those involved in the PAD (Pact for Democratic Alternative) have been threatened with dissolution, and proceedings against some have been initiated at the Council of State. They have also put pressure on associations, such as SOS Bab el Oued or RAJ. They have arrested many activists who are active in the field. A leader of the MDS was arrested at his bus stop.

We consider that in the face of the terror that they want to impose, we need a front against repression, as broad as possible, with all the forces and all the groups that want to resist. Freedoms are precious, for the workers, for the popular camp.

When we build these fronts against repression, our aim is also that the young people who gather, who discuss, take advantage of it to build nuclei of self-organization. Because self-organization only comes from the concrete needs of the popular masses, it's not a slogan that doesn't fit the reality, the dynamics of society.

The regime is illegitimate

A few days ago, President Tebboune said that participation would be massive and now he says that the important thing is just to have organized the vote, that the participation rate is secondary! This is a statement worthy of dictators: the democratic minimum of a president would be to worry about establishing his legitimacy.

Now he says that the minority must respect the majority. But who is the majority? It is those who did not vote! Yes, the majority has not been respected: a minority decides for the majority of Algerians, who reject the elections. It is time to cancel all the elections that have no value for the people, no legitimacy.

12 June 2021

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