

Amnesty International

*Oral statement on the outcome on Algeria under the UPR*

*10 June 2008*

*Check against delivery*

Mr President,

Amnesty International welcomes Algeria's responsiveness to recommendations by states during the review to implement measures to protect detainees from torture and other ill-treatment; to strengthen efforts to protect women's rights; to ensure the rights of detainees, including access to a lawyer; and to cooperate with the Special Procedures.

Amnesty International believes that in acting on these recommendations, account should be taken of the serious concern about a persistent pattern of secret detention and torture by the Department for Information and Security (DRS).<sup>1</sup> Detainees appear to be routinely held in military barracks and are not allowed access to independent medical assistance or a lawyer of their own choosing, or to communicate with relatives. Human rights lawyers, including Amine Sidhoum, who have exposed systematic human rights violations in terrorism-related cases, have faced prosecution on groundless charges.

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<sup>1</sup> *Département du Renseignement et de la Sécurité*, (DRS), an intelligence agency which specializes in interrogating individuals who are believed to have information about terrorist activities

The Algerian authorities need also to take account of numerous reports of individuals who have disappeared while held in secret detention centres operated by the DRS. The families of the disappeared have demanded that investigations be carried; however, in most cases the justice system has failed to provide satisfactory answers to the families and there has been no progress in the investigations.

Mr President,

Amnesty International shares the concerns expressed during the review about discrimination against women in the Family Code and about continuing reports of violence against women, including in the family. Hundreds of women were raped by members of armed groups during the internal conflict, and many continue to suffer physical and mental trauma as result. Yet there have been hardly any prosecutions of members of armed groups on charges of rape.

Amnesty International believes that to give full effect to its commitments, Algeria should take immediate steps to ensure that officers of the DRS no longer exercise judicial police functions; open full, independent and impartial investigations into all reports of enforced disappearance, torture, violence against women, and secret detention; bring to justice those responsible for such violations; repeal laws that discriminate against women; and criminalize acts of domestic violence.