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ALGERIA:
THE PEOPLE'S NATIONAL ASSEMBLY:
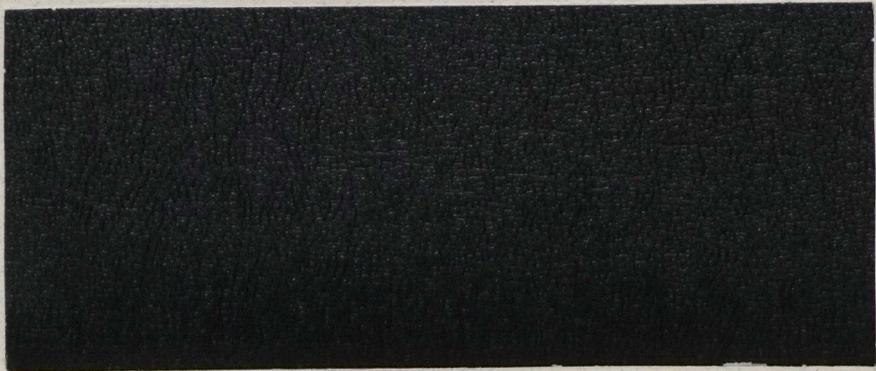**THE PAST 18 MONTHS**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

President Zéroual's announcement of his resignation in September 1998 represented something very new in Algerian politics. He is the first elected head of state since the country gained independence in 1962 to step down before his term expires in order to prepare the way for presidential elections to find his successor. The People's National Assembly (PNA), dating from the June 1997 legislative elections, faces a real test of stability in the period running up to the elections now planned for April 1999. It is in this body that the main political issues and divisions of Algerian society are concentrated.

Algerians elected this, the first multi-party Assembly in the country's history, against a background of chronic violence in June 1997, six years after the previous aborted elections. Although controversy surrounded the 1997 elections, they did produce a clear political landscape in which three distinct tendencies stand out. The first of these is identified as 'nationalist' and is represented by the FLN and the RND, which are often split internally as they devise strategies for maintaining their increasingly shaky hold on power. The second force is 'Islamist', officially represented by the MSP/Hamas and Nadhda, which share the same strategic objectives as the FIS in their desire for an Islamic state based on the application of *Chari'âa* (Koranic law). As the third and 'democratic' trend is divided between RCD 'eradicators' and FFS and PT 'conciliators', its influence has been considerably reduced. These 'democratic' parties follow a 'modernist' path directed towards political, cultural and linguistic pluralism, respect for human rights, equal rights for men and women, rejection of the existing code of family law, and the separation of politics and religion. They have a limited influence over the passing of bills, but they speak out freely and have succeeded on several occasions in bending the government away from its rigid and authoritarian line.

During the eighteen months of its existence, the PNA has registered some progress towards democracy. It acts as a forum for the opposition and for discussion of such sensitive subjects as the security situation and the drama of the 'disappeared'. However, despite its constitutional prerogatives, the PNA has only a limited margin for manoeuvre in regard to law-making and the exercise of control over the government. To a certain extent this can be explained by its lack of experience as a functioning parliamentary body and by the reluctance of the majority of its members, who were previously connected with the machinery of the former one-party state, to accept the need for transparency.

The PNA must become an independent branch of the executive that will not act as an alibi for the government. Democratic progress in Algeria will be measured by its performance – and freedom - in dealing with dossiers on such matters as the family law code and the press code

In order to establish the legitimacy of existing institutions, and avoid the large-scale fraud associated with the June 1997 legislative elections, it is essential that there be complete openness in the holding of the April 1999 presidential elections.

The Algerian government must therefore guarantee total transparency throughout the election process and encourage political debate between the different candidates. The political parties must have free and equal access to the press and other media. The government must also ensure the security of all candidates. Finally, international organisations must be given access to the whole country before, during and after the elections.

I.   INTRODUCTION

Algeria finally won its struggle to achieve independence from France on 5 July 1962 after a bloody war that lasted more than seven years. In the ensuing disorder the country immediately faced a power struggle between the various nationalist factions. Indeed, the ceasefire had hardly been declared before the provisional government under Benyoucef Benkhedda[1] was challenged by the leadership of the "frontier army"[2] headed by Colonel Houari Boumédiène. Although the military were the victors in this "fratricidal" confrontation that cost the lives of thousands, they put a civilian, Ahmed Ben Bella, in charge of the government. This inaugurated the practice of government by shadow figures working in the background. It was also the beginning of an anti-democratic and multi-facetted regime that has succeeded in adapting to the various—and sometimes dramatic—upheavals that have shaken the country.

After aborted elections in December 1991, the country was caught up in a spiral of instability and violence that resulted in tens of thousands of deaths. However, Algerian hopes were raised with the election of Liamine Zéroual to the presidency on 16 November 1995. Despite widespread electoral fraud, the new head of state succeeded in reinstating the country's legitimate institutions.

Algerians were therefore taken by surprise at President Zéroual's announcement three years later that he intended to resign in order to *"ensure the changeover of power".*[3] This represents something new in the Algerian political tradition. He is the first elected president since independence and the first to leave office by preparing for a successor to replace him through the ballot box. The elections, planned for April 1999, have already attracted several candidates, and will represent a first test of the stability of the institutional framework set up three years ago.

The People's National Assembly (PNA), formed after the multi-party elections held on 5 June 1997, is the most reliable indicator of political evolution in Algeria and a guide to understanding the main issues and divisions in Algerian society. The Assembly's credibility and its degree of independence from the government can be gauged by evaluating how it has functioned over the past eighteen months since its inauguration.

Does the PNA play a role in building democracy? Or does it act only as an alibi for the regime? What are its prerogatives in drawing up laws? Is it able to exercise control over the government? This report attempts to answer such questions.

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[1] Benyoucef Benkhedda was backed by members of the resistance movement that had fought inside the country and by the unions.

[2] An army set up along traditional lines. Stationed in Morocco and Tunisia, it never fought on Algerian territory and only returned to the country on 5 July 1962 in order to claim power.

[3] In a speech broadcast on radio and television on 11 September 1998.

II.   'LEGISLATIVE POWER' FROM 1962 TO 1997

From the beginning of independence in July 1962 Algeria's leaders opted for a one-party state. Parliament, when it existed, was nominated by the executive, for which it became a rubber stamp.

A.   The period of one-party dictatorship

1.   1962-1965: the first Assembly

On 20 September 1962 the government and the political office of the *Front de libération nationale* (FLN—National Liberation Front), the independence movement that had become the only party in power, nominated 196 members to the constituent Assembly. At the same time as the Assembly members were debating the text of a proposed basic law, Ahmed Ben Bella, chairman of the Council, proposed an alternative, which was adopted unconditionally by his supporters at a separate meeting. This text, sanctioning a one-party state, was passed by referendum on 15 September 1963 with a majority vote of 99.7%, and Ben Bella was elected president of the republic with a majority of 99.6%.

This was the beginning of an era of rigged elections and referenda for which the country is still paying a price today. The "Constituent Assembly", without any other form of election being held, simply continued under the new name of "Legislative Assembly". According to Krim Belkacem, leader of the national resistance movement and signatory of the Evian agreement[4], this Assembly *"is not a product of the will of the people"*. He added that the designated Assembly was neither a constituent authority nor, even less, a legislative body for it allowed the government to legislate through a spate of orders and laws, thus disrupting the country's institutions to a greater or lesser extent.[5]

Ferhat Abbas, chairman of the Assembly, handed in his resignation declaring that: *"The representatives of the people must be democratically elected by the people. I refuse to sit in an assembly appointed by the government, and I will only return if the people have the right to choose their own representatives."*[6]

Mohamed Boudiaf, one of the 'historic leaders of the revolution'[7] criticised the government and set up the *Parti de la révolution socialiste* (PRS] , the first opposition party.[8] He was arrested and held in secret detention. His friend and supporter, Hocine Aït-Ahmed, another symbolic figure in the liberation struggle, protested this arrest and tried, in vain, to encourage a

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[4] The Evian agreements were signed after lengthy negotiations between the provisional government of Algeria and the French government. They brought the war to an end and provided for a referendum on self-government.

[5] Interview in the newspaper *Le Monde* on 12/07/1963.

[6] Debate in the National Assembly reported in *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord*, Paris, 1963.

[7] These were the men responsible for the war of independence that began on 1 November 1954.

[8] *Parti de la révolution socialiste* (Party of the Socialist Revolution).

'constructive opposition' within the Assembly itself. He created the FFS[9] and then began an armed underground resistance when he was forced into hiding. Clashes with government forces resulted in 400 deaths among his fellow resistance fighters. In April 1964 he was arrested and sentenced to death, and then pardoned.

However, despite ferociously repressing any hint of opposition, the government was unable to put an end to the internal dissent and President Ben Bella was overthrown by Colonel Boumédiène, his Minister of Defence, on 19 June 1965.

2. 1965-1977: The 'Revolutionary Council'

From the moment he took power Colonel Boumédiène never showed any scruples about 'juridical formality'. He dissolved the Assembly, suspended the Constitution and accumulated all executive and legislative power in the name of the Revolutionary Council whose 25 members were co-opted from among his supporters.

With an intransigence rooted in Soviet-style socialism and the despotism of Islamic ideology, Boumédiène ruled the country with an iron fist for 12 years thanks to the unlimited power given to his formidable security force[10].

3. 1977-1991: The People's National Assembly (PNA)

In 1976 Houari Boumédiène used a referendum to ensure the adoption of a new constitution. This did not fundamentally differ from its predecessor in that it was based on socialism and a one-party state. The People's National Assembly (Assemblée populaire nationale), 'elected' for a five-year period,[11] acted as a rubber stamp for government decisions for the government and had no real political power of its own. Its membership was renewed in 1982 and again in 1987.

B. 'Opening up to democracy'

A major turning point in the post-independence political life of Algeria was reached on 5 October 1988 when demonstrations broke out throughout the country. Groups of young people ransacked and set fire to public buildings and other symbols of the FLN. President Chadli Bendjedid[12] declared a state of emergency the following day. The army took over the streets and fired into the crowds resulting in several hundred dead and wounded. Opponents of the government were subjected to large-scale torture.

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[9] Front des forces socialistes (Front of Socialist Forces) created on 29 September 1963.
[10] Sécurité militaire (SM): political security force.
[11] The candidates, two for each seat, were selected by the government from among members of the FLN.
[12] After the death of Houari Boumédiène in December 1978, following a mysterious illness, Colonel Chadli, the only candidate to succeed him, was 'elected' in February 1979 with a majority of over 98%.

On 10 October, in order to calm the situation, President Chadli promised *"significant political reforms"*.[13] A referendum on 23 February 1989 led to the adoption of a new constitution[14], despite attempts to block it by intransigent supporters of the former regime. Article 40 of the new constitution recognised a multi-party system, thus putting an end to 27 years of one-party rule.

1. The end of the one-party system

More than 60 parties registered within a few months, many composed only of the required 15 founding members. Other organisations, hardened by years of secrecy and repression, began to emerge from the shadows. The FLN, still the party in power, was faced by an opposition divided into two principal camps, each favouring either a democratic or an Islamic state, and a minor camp composed of the smaller parties.

a. The "democratic" parties

Hocine Aït-Ahmed's FSS and the MDA[15] of former President Ben Bella were both legally registered. Saïd Sadi's RCD[16], which grew out of the Berber cultural movement[17], openly advocates a secular state. These parties, inspired by their clandestine struggle for pluralism and democracy, are trying to prepare the ground for a political life based on tolerance and respect for the diversity of Algerian society.

b. The "Islamist" parties

A number of small underground groups fighting for the institution of an Islamic state have come together in the *Front Islamique du salut* (FIS: Islamic Salvation Front) whose leaders, Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj, are well known. Two other, reputedly 'moderate', Islamist parties, have followed in the wake of the FIS: Hamas,[18] headed by Mahfoud Nahnah, and Nahdha[19], led by Abdellah Djaballah.

c. The 'mini-parties'

These have produced a host of initials and a series of more or less outlandish messages Prompted by stalwarts of the regime in an attempt to cloud the issues and drown out the opposition, their leaders are former

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[13] In a speech broadcast on radio and television on 10 October 1988.

[14] This was the third constitution since independence. The fourth, and present, constitution was adopted in November 1996.

[15] *Mouvement pour la démocratie en Algérie* (Movement for Democracy in Algeria), set up in exile in 1981. It was dissolved in 1998 because of its refusal to conform to the law governing political parties.

[16] *Rassemblement pour la culture et la démocratie* (Rally for Culture and Democracy).

[17] The *Mouvement culturel berbère* (MCB) calls for Berber, the thousand-year-old language of North Africa, to be recognised as an official language. Although it is spoken by a third of all Algerians, Berber is still suppressed and has no official status.

[18] Hamas: *Mouvement de la société islamique* (Islamic Society Movement) formed in 1990.

[19] Nahdha: *Mouvement de la renaissance islamique* (Islamic Renaissance Movement) set up in 1990.

members of the FLN. In most cases, their support is limited to small circles of their personal followers.

On 12 June 1990 the first multi-party local elections were won by the FIS in the majority of *Assemblées populaires communales* (APC: People's Communal Assemblies, at the level of the communes) and the *Assemblées populaires de wilaya* (APW: People's *Wilaya* Assemblies, at the level of the *wilaya*, or departmental councils). Many analysts believed that the regime had encouraged an Islamist victory. By letting in the fervent fundamentalists, they hoped to discredit those who supported democracy and then present themselves as the only defence against the 'green peril'.

In a poisonous atmosphere marked by the rise of the Islamists and an underground battle between government factions grouped into "reformers"[20] and "conservatives"[21], legislative elections were scheduled for 27 June 1991.

2. May/June 1991: FIS insurrection and call for strike

In order to protest against the distribution of constituencies in a way that seemed to favour the FLN, as well as to demand early presidential elections, the FIS called for a *"total general strike"* on 25 May 1991. Although poorly supported, the strike was transformed into a demonstration of force in the capital, Algiers, when FIS militants from all over the country occupied public buildings and blocked the roads on a daily basis. Demonstrating 'Afghans'[22] came out with disturbing slogans: *"no charter, no constitution; this is what God has said, what the Prophet has said"*, *"an Islamic state without elections"* and *"Chadli must go"*.

The army intervened to remove the insurgents during the night of 4 June 1991 and arrested the two FIS leaders, Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj. The confrontations between Islamists and the security forces resulted in several deaths and hundreds of wounded. Mouloud Hamrouche handed in his government's resignation and the legislative elections were postponed indefinitely. He was replaced by Sid-Ahmed Ghozali, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who promised *"clean and fair elections"*.[23]

3. December 1991: The first multi-party legislative elections are aborted

A national conference held between the political parties and the government in July 1991 fixed the first round of legislative elections for 26

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[20] The 'reformers' support pluralism and a market economy. They are headed by Mouloud Hamrouche, who served as prime minister from September 1989 to June 1991. He is presently one of the favourite candidates for the April 1999 presidential elections.

[21] The 'conservatives', who follow the FLN, are opposed to these reforms and want to hang on to their privileges.

[22] Islamist Algerians trained in Afghanistan during the war against the Soviet invaders. Supporters of violence in pursuit of an Islamic state, since January 1992 they represent the core of the armed Islamist groups.

[23] In a speech broadcast on radio and television on 8 June 1991.

December 1991[24]. Despite the lack of [any] charismatic leaders, these elections produced a victory for the FIS. The party was verging on an absolute majority after the first round and was favourably placed for the second ballot in several remaining constituencies.

However, in the face of this fundamentalist flood, the army intervened a second time. On 11 January 1992 President Chadli Bendjedid was forced to resign and the electoral process was suspended. At the same time, it was discovered that the PNA had been dissolved the previous week. This meant that the chairman, Abdelaziz Belkhadem, who was close to the Islamists, could not serve an interim term of 45 days in order to organise new elections, as required under the constitution.

4. 1992-1997: The 'transition' period

On 16 January 1992 a *Haut comité d'Etat* (HCE: a high council of state)[25] was designated by the *Haut conseil de sécurité* (HCS: the Higher Security Council)[26] to carry out the presidential mandate for an interim term expiring in January 1994. A collegial body composed of five members, the HCE was presided over by Mohamed Boudiaf[27]. Boudiaf, an opponent of the regime, had returned from exile in Morocco where he had been living since 1964.

The HCE decreed a state of emergency on 9 February, and dissolved the FIS a month later. A 60-member *Conseil consultatif national* (CCN: National Consultative Council) was nominated from among leaders of non-political associations. Lacking any real legislative power, it was supposed to debate certain bills and submit its opinions to the HCE, which would legislate by edict.

In January 1994 Liamine Zéroual, Minister of Defence was nominated president of the republic by an overwhelming majority during a national conference of the smaller parties[28] and several civil associations. He then took his place on the HCE. A *Conseil national de transition* (CNT: National Council of Transition) was designated to serve as an interim parliament.

After his election to the presidency on 16 November 1995 Liamine Zéroual promised to reinstate the country's legitimate institutions and set 5 June 1997 as the date for holding elections to the legislature.

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[24] Members are elected by majority in single-seat constituencies, in two rounds of voting.

[25] The HCE, presided over by Mohamed Boudiaf is composed of five members: Khaled Nezzar (Minister of Defence), Ali Kafi (secretaray of the *Organisation des Moudjahidine*, an association of former combattants), Ali Haroun (minister responsible for human rights), and Tedjini Haddam, rector of the Paris mosque). The HCE is not foreseen by the constitution.

[26] According to the constitution, the HCS is a consultative body composed of the head of state, the prime minister, the chairman of the PNA and the ministers in charge of defence, the interior, justice, foreign affairs and the economy.

[27] President Mohamed Boudiaf was assassinated on 29 June 1992 by a member of his bodyguard.

[28] The FFS, the RCD and the FLN all boycotted this conference.

III.   THE JUNE 1997 LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS

Six years after the aborted elections of December 1991 the Algerian people elected the first multi-party assembly in the country's history. Although the electionis were controversial, and the results contested, they did inaugurate a new political tradition.

A.   Proportional representation

The electoral law adopted by the CNT provided for a system of proportional representation based on the *wilaya* (department). The number of seats allocated to each of the 48 constituencies was determined in line with population density. Out of 380 seats, eight are reserved for the Algerian community living outside of Algeria.

B.   A multi-party election[29]

39 parties, an alliance of small parties, and 68 lists of "independents" lined up to campaign for the 380 seats. There was a total of 7,747 candidates, 300 of whom were women.

C.   Election controls

A national independent commission to oversee legislative elections (CNISEL) was responsible for ensuring that there were no irregularities in the election process. It was composed of representatives of the administration and of the parties contending the election.

In order to win greater credibility for the elections, the Algerian government called on the United Nations, the Organisation for African Unity and the Arab League to send observers. On the day of the elections 106 observers were deployed in 40 of the 48 *wilayas* under UN co-ordination.

D.   A controversial campaign

The official election campaign, which began on 15 March, was conducted in a tense atmosphere marked by several bloody attacks. However, those political meetings and gatherings that were closely protected by the police were never attacked.

Although there were several parties in the race, a face to face confrontation developed very early on between Hamas and the RND, recalling the aborted campaign of 1991 and the polarisation between the FIS and the FLN.

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[29] See Annexe A, Table 1: Principal lists of candidates.

Mahfoud Nahnah presented his party, Hamas, as *"the only alternative"* and threatened to *"divulge the contents of files that would compromise the government"*.[30]

For Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia, head of the RND's list in the capital, his party was *"the only bulwark"* against the danger of fundamentalism. He warned against those who *"promise paradise, but if they reach power, hell will follow."*[31]

Radio and television time was reserved for the parties according to the number of candidates each put forward, and lots were drawn to decide the order in which they would be broadcast. Their speeches were recorded in advance and closely scrutinised by CNISEL. CNISEL twice censored speeches recorded by the FFS and the PT because they considered them too favourable to the FIS and hostile to the army. Television news bulletins largely favoured the activities of the RND.

During the campaign the security forces often intimidated opposition activists throughout the country. FFS militants were arrested in El Bayadh in the east of the country for possession of "subversive material". In fact, this was electoral posters and leaflets. Much more seriously, HAMAS accused the police in Medea (70 km south of Algiers) of torturing to death a supporter who had been putting up their posters.[32]

E. A very tense election period

The state of insecurity that had terrorised several provincial regions reached the capital the week before the elections. On 31 May 1997 a bomb exploded in a movie theatre in the centre of Algiers. Although not very powerful, it injured five people. On 1 June a bus was targeted resulting in five deaths and several wounded. The following day an attack on a market caused seven deaths and 40 wounded.

On 5 June 1997, the day of the elections, 300,000 soldiers and police were deployed throughout the country. Despite these precautions, the turnout was low compared to the presidential elections of November 1995.

Opposition fears were confirmed by numerous incidents in the polling stations. The 'special polling stations' reserved for the army and security forces were completely unsupervised. The same was true for the 'mobile polling stations'. Originally foreseen for the desert nomads and populations living in isolated regions, their numbers grew, even in the coastal towns and Algiers itself. According to opposition estimates, almost two million voters out of the 15 million who registered, avoided all 'prying eyes' and increased the score for the RND.

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[30] In a statement made during a meeting in Algiers.
[31] In a statement made during a meeting in Algiers. He also warned against '*those who saw down telephone poles"*, in an allusion to the leader of Hamas, arrested for that offence in 1975.
[32] Press release of 5 June 1997.

During vote counting party representatives and candidates, with the exception of the RND, were forcibly ejected from the polling stations. All efforts to prevent the manipulation of results was left to the 'discretionary powers' of the authorities at every level.

F. Contested results[33]

Mostepha Benmansour, Minister of the Interior, announced the official results on 6 June 1997, after several hours' delay. These results confirmed what the observers had predicted and the opposition feared. Despite the low turnout of voters that had already been noted, the "official" rate of participation was given as 65.6%.

The opposition introduced almost a thousand appeals to the Constitutional Council. Although these were rejected, mainly on the basis of 'legal flaws', two seats were withdrawn from the FLN in favour of the FFS and the RND.

G. Opposition grievances

As soon as the results were announced the opposition unanimously denounced the electoral fraud. Their many grievances included: the overestimation of voter turnout, the confiscation of ballot papers from mobile polling stations and from those provided for the security forces to were used to benefit the RND, pressure and violence against activists who were prevented from being present at vote-counting and the registration of results.

The FFS called for the elections to be annulled because *"The results were worked out in the laboratories of power. (...) The people's voices have been used against them. This is a provocation against society."* [34]

The RCD agreed with this verdict, but responded in more measured terms: *"We knew that the government wasn't going to change its habits, but it was only by participating that we could ensure a democratic presence on the political scene."* [35]. Even the FLN, formerly the only political party allowed and still close to the government, went further and said: *"The administration acted on behalf of the RND. The number of uncontrolled mobile polling stations rose to 5,200, and were even set up in the north of the country and Algiers. Despite these excesses, the FLN has decided to put national interest above party interest."* [36]

Hamas, the main victim of the fraud, did not hide its anger: *"the celebration of democracy has been spoiled by the administration's excesses. The fraud that marked this election is a terrorist act just as*

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[33] See annex A, Table 2.
[34] Statement made by Seddik Debaïli, first secretary of the FFS, at the International Press Centre (IPC) in Algiers on 6 June 1997.
[35] Press conference given by Saïd Sadi, president of the RCD, on 6 June at the IPC.
[36] Press conference given by Boualem Benhamouda, secretary general, on 10 June in Algiers.

much to be condemned as the assassinations carried out by the GIA[37]. We hold the proofs of a fraud that has deprived our party of victory in several constituencies." [38] Despite his real desire to calm things down, Mahfoud Nahnah, Hamas' leader, had to respond to the simmering discontent among his grassroots supporters. He threatened: "Watch out! The people in the streets are seething with anger!" [39]. During the electoral campaign his militants had been chanting: "For the presidential elections we said nothing, but this time nothing will get past us!" [40] After the results were announced, he had difficulty in restraining the fury of his rank and file who were all set to take to the streets to challenge the results. But the 'FIS syndrome' was still working in him and he knew that he would be the loser in any direct confrontation with the government. He therefore preferred to limit himself to a token protest in the belief that time was on his side.

NAHDA, the other 'moderate' Islamist party, noted "several examples of electoral excesses and fraud ... In some polling stations the urns were hijacked by communal security guards before voting began and our supporters were threatened by firearms. However, we accept the election results." [41]

The RND was the only party satisfied with results that produced a flood of protests. For Abdelkader Bensalah: "the results of these elections are a first step towards the successful reconstruction of legitimate state institutions, and represent a collective victory for the Algerian people." [42]

H. International observers divided

The international observers were divided in their conclusions. The most curious reaction came from the representatives of the Arab League whose spokesman declared: "All Arab brothers are proud that Algeria has succeeded in making the passage towards multipartism. (...) We have observed no irregularities in voting and counting operations! Even if there have been some errors, these are normal given the Algerian situation. (...) We are observers and not controllers." [43]

This whitewashing was tempered by the UN delegation. It appears that differences of opinion between delegation members precipitated the unexplained cancellation of a press conference. These differences of opinion were made clearer in a press release published on 8 June. [44] This stated that:

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[37] Groupe islamique armé (Armed Islamic Group).

[38] Press conference given by Mahfoud Nahnah during the night of 5 June at his party headquarters.

[39] Idem.

[40] This slogan was chanted at every meeting held by Mahfoud Nahnah.

[41] Press conference given by Abdellah Djaballah during the evneing of 5 June at his party headquarters.

[42] Press conference held on 7 June at the IPC. Mr. Bensalah, elected president of the PNA, was replaced as the leader of the RND by Tahar Benbaïbèche, during the first party congress in April 1998.

[43] Press conference held at the IPC on 7June 1997.

[44] The newspaper El Watan of 09/06/97.

"several observers considered that security measures were used as a screen in order to increase control over the delegation's activities, although others felt that they had been able to carry out their tasks without constraint." The same statement also stressed that: *"the observers were impressed by the material and logistical preparations for the elections, the professionalism of those working in the polling stations and the harmonious atmosphere in which the elections took place."*

While it acknowledged some success in regard to the form of the elections, the delegation had several reservations in regard to their substance. Commenting on the consolidation of results at the level of the communes and the *wilayas*, the delegation reported that *"the majority of observers were able to follow the overall process without any major problem, although others were refused access by some electoral commissions in the wilayas. As regards the special polling stations reserved for the security forces, and the mobile polling stations, the majority of observers are agreed that the process did not provide sufficient guarantees of neutrality and transparency."*

Although their numbers were restricted and the government was particularly solicitous towards them, the UN observers shared the same grievances as the opposition parties regarding the electoral process in the polling stations to which they had no access. That is to say, they agree on the extent of the fraud practised in those places where no controls were permitted.

IV.   THE MULTI-PARTY ASSEMBLY

As of January 1992 the political landscape was divided between two camps that would confront each other first over the interruption of the electoral process, and then over the dissolution of the FIS. This fault line, which found its roots within the government itself, also affected the opposition. Thus the FFS and the PT found themselves at the side of the Islamists and the FLN in the camp of the "conciliators", advocating dialogue with the FIS in order to resolve the crisis. The RCD allied with other forces, particularly women's associations, trade unions and professional organisations, and drew closer to the army. It supported the suspension of the elections and the dissolution of the FIS, and the subsequent repression of the armed Islamist groups. RCD members were known as the 'eradicators' by their opponents.

This over-simplified division, which placed the FIS at the centre of the political field, has shown its limits over the course of time. The aspirations of the Algerian people are hidden when the political situation is reduced in this way to a confrontation between a 'military power' and an 'Islamist opposition'. The struggle for democracy appears to be no more than a decision to back one group or another. Notwithstanding the fluctuating tactical alliances, sometimes intended to lay a false scent, the political parties have not renounced their original objectives.

A. Redrawing the political landscape

Despite the electoral fraud falsifying the extent of support for each party and the extent to which each is truly representative, the political landscape resulting from the elections of 5 June 1997 can be summarised into three main movements.

1. The "nationalist" movement

This movement is represented by the FLN and the RND.

a. The FLN

The FLN, which rose out of the independence struggle and was formerly the only party permitted, has had great difficulty in adapting to the way the cards are now dealt. The party's platform, based on *"national independence and national unity"*, remains nostalgic for an antiquated epoch, and is often out of step with the social and political realities of the country.

Divided into two main groups, the 'reformers' and the 'conservatives', the FLN changes its alliances according to the balance of power within the party and what best serves its own interests at the time. In January 1992 the FLN became a 'fellow traveller" with the FIS and found itself in opposition. However, in February 1996 the party returned to power following a 'palace revolution' among its leaders who preferred a change of tactic. However, the brief spell of virtual opposition to a government of which it was the architect has allowed the FLN to present an image of itself as being open to democracy in a way that it could not have hoped for previously.

b. The RND

Regarded as an FLN *'clone'* [45], the RND developed the same line of overall thinking and the same reflexes as the former single party, of which it was an extension. The leadership of the RND, created in February 1997 to support President Zéroual, is composed of members of the administration and former FLN staff.

If this fortuitous recruitment pattern relies on the RND's proximity to power and the privileges that it therefore has to offer, its position in the political field leaves the door open to all sorts of alliances, as much with the 'Islamists' as with the 'democrats'. The internal balance of power within the party is constantly fluctuating between the 'democratic nationalists' and the 'Islamic nationalists'.

Set up to provide backing for President Zéroual's policies, the RND has been going through turbulent times since the announcement of his 'resignation' on 11 September 1998, and there is a risk that it may eventually implode. This situation is caused by the lack of any new personality of calibre emerging from the ranks capable of winning the consensual support of the party. As a result, the different factions are

[45] This term, which was much commented on, was used for the first time by Mahfoud Nahnah, the HAMAS leader.

lining up behind the presidential candidates of the other parties, particularly the FLN.

2. The 'Islamist' movement

The MSP/Hamas and Nahdha are the registered representatives of the Islamist movement. Although presenting themselves as 'moderate' in regard to tactics, their objective does not differ from that of the FIS: to impose an Islamic state based on application of the *Chari'âa* (Koranic law), but in a gradual manner. However, the strategy of violence and murderous madness employed by the FIS served as a lesson to them in how not to go about achieving this objective. Their progress, and that of the FIS a short while ago, stems in great part from the way they have successfully fostered confusion between "Islam", the religion professed by almost all Algerians, and an intolerant "Islamism" based on a fundamentalist interpretation of the Koran.

a. MSP/Hamas

By a policy of "one step at a time" and a gradual 'infiltration' into state institutions, the *Mouvement de la société pour la paix*[46] (MSP/Hamas) has achieved unexpected results. In the presidential elections of 16 November 1995, its leader, Mahfoud Nahnah gained 25% of the votes and came in second place behind Liamine Zéroual. Despite fraud during the legislative elections of 5 June 1997, the party gained second place behind the RND. The RND still describes itself as an "opposition party" even though it entered the government with 7 ministerial portfolios.

Thanks to its links with a very large number of 'charitable and humanitarian associations, Hamas has woven a veritable spider's web through Algerian society. As the main party to benefit from the dissolution of the FIS and heir to a significant number of its former voters, Hamas is developing ambiguous tactical positions, and often acts opportunistically. While it denounces terrorism in order to guard its links with the government, it is calling for a general amnesty during the election period so as to win support from the FIS grassroots.

b. Nahdha[47]

Less widespread than Hamas, Nahdha is mainly implanted in the east of the country. The sometimes virulent speeches given by Abdellah Djaballah, its leader, are tempered by those of his associates, who are attracted by the 'participationist' strategy used by Hamas. Negotiations began with the RND and the FLN in spring 1998. However, just when it seemed that Nahdha was about to join the government, an internal crisis created a split between the radical supporters of Abdellah Djaballah and

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[46] In order to conform to the constitution, which forbids the use of Islam for political ends, the name was changed from the *Mouvement de la société islamique* to *Mouvement de la société pour la paix* (Movement of Society for Peace), thus retaining the inititials 'Hamas' in Arabic.

[47] Idem for the *Mouvement de la renaissance islamique* (MNI), which became *Mouvement de la renaissance*. In both cases it is known as 'Nahdha' (meaning "the renaissance").

the leaders of the party's political bureau. Although negotiations were suspended on news of President Zéroual's resignation and the announcement of early presidential elections in April 1999, the crisis that shook the party is still lying latent.

The balance of power does not presently favour the 'moderate' Islamist parties. They are therefore obliged to provide reassurances and professions of good faith, but these promulgations should not be allowed to delude. Their strategic objective remains unchanged: to succeed by the ballot box where the FIS failed by armed force, and then to impose an Islamic state.

During the years of one-party dictatorship, they were happy to criticise 'the government's socialist option', and to demand a greater 'Islamisation' of society, but without ever repudiating democracy or the multi-party system without which could have no legal existence. Nonetheless, their vision of society remains stamped with the unicity of Arab-Islamic ideology: one nation, one language, one religion, one leader and one party.

When Nahdha was set up in 1990 its leader declared: *"democracy and a secular state are the inventions of the Judeo-Christian west, contrary to our Arab-Islamic values. We are presently subject to a constitution, which we respect. When we reach power we will adopt an Islamic constitution based on the Chari'âa (Koranic law). Secular parties and communists, that do not conform to this constitution, that is to the principles of Islam, will not be tolerated."*[48]

3.   The 'democratic' movement

The movement in favour of democracy is represented by the FFS, the RCD and the PT. Despite relatively limited support in the centre of the country and among the middle-classes, these parties are developing a platform described as 'modernist'. They support political, cultural and linguistic pluralism, respect for human rights, equal rights for men and women, rejection of the existing code of family law, and the separation of politics and religion.

Contrary to the Islamists, the main themes of their programmes are an extension of the ideas they fought for clandestinely during the years of one-party dictatorship; they are not the result of constraints arising from the political evolution of the past ten years. However, because they each have their own interpretation of the Islamist phenomenon, they remain divided, which considerably reduces their influence.

a.   The RCD 'eradicators'

The RCD supported the cancellation of the legislative elections of 26 December 1991 and the subsequent interruption of the electoral process, but is opposed to any dialogue with the FIS. The RCD believes that the

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[48] Statement made during the Algerian television programme *Face à la presse* (Face the press) in October 1990.

only way to counter the armed Islamist groups is to employ legally-sanctioned anti-terrorism measures.

Described by the Islamists as the *'Rassemblement contre Dieu'* ('Assembly Against God') because of their secular stand, the RCD has been the particular target of the FIS since well before terrorist tactics began to be used. Between 1990 and 1991 public meetings held by the RCD were disturbed time and again by FIS militants using axes and swords, and a number of people were wounded. Since 1992 armed Islamist groups have assassinated scores of RCD activists. Finally, in February 1994, the RCD felt forced to call for armed 'resistance' to the GIA, and a large number of RCD activists and sympathisers have now joined *Groupes de légitimes défense*[49] (legitimate defence groups), with the support of the authorities.

b. The FFS and PT 'conciliators'

Both these parties have taken part in the 'national reconciliation' process and share the belief that peace lies in dialogue with the FIS.

Under the sponsorship of the Catholic community of Sant'Egidio the FFS and PT, together with the FIS, Nahdha and the FLN signed a *contrat national pour la paix et la réconciliation nationale* (national contract for peace and national reconciliation) in Rome on 13 January 1995. However, despite this apparent opening, the proposed political solution for ending the crisis in the country soon showed its limits. The FFS and the PT claimed that the FIS had agreed under the terms of the contract to abide by the rules of the democratic game and reject violence. But the Islamists had a different interpretation and claimed that the democrats had accepted their arguments by signing for *"the primacy of the Law (la loi légitime) above all other laws."*[50]

The FFS and the PT found themselves caught in a trap. While intending to insist on the supremacy of a legal system adopted by an elected parliament, they used the same expression that translates from Arabic to mean the application of 'the *Chari'âa'* (Koranic law)" as opposed to any institutionally composed body of law.

Rejected by the government and by a large section of the political community, this deal was never likely to succeed. The final straw was the explosion of a booby-trapped car in the center of Algiers resulting in several civilian casualties only the day after the agreement was announced. Anouar Haddam, one of the leaders of the GIA, claimed responsibility for the attack on behalf of that group. Anouar Haddam, living in refuge in the US, had previously signed the peace agreement in Rome on behalf of the FIS.

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[49] The GLD, also known as the 'patriots' are responsible for defending isolated villages against terrorist incursions.

[50] *Contrat national*, a platform adopted in Rome on 13 January 1995.

This split in the 'democrats' between 'eradicators' and 'conciliators' has been sharpened by the multi-facetted manipulations of the government, which succeeded in infiltrating its agents into the highest reaches of the 'democratic' parties. The emergence of a current of democratic thought, which might have constituted a credible alternative to both the government and the Islamists, remained a pious hope.

4. The 'independents'

The 11 'independent' members of the PNA are not without importance, even if they have no influence over the passage of bills. Although they have no clear political identification, they issue mainly from circles and organisations close to the government and could, if the occasion arose, offer it considerable support.

B.   The 'objective' alliances

Despite the artificial division in the political domain between "eradicators" and "conciliators", "objective alliances" are formed within the PNA on the basis of ideological affinities.

1. The majority: the 'Islamist nationalist' bloc

The day after the elections to the legislature, Ahmed Ouyahia was re-appointed prime minister by President Zéroual. After three weeks of bargaining he formed an "Islamist national" coalition government composed of 30 ministers and eight secretaries of state. The RND held the central position in the cabinet. Despite the skirmishes of the electoral campaign, and the controversy surrounding the results, Hamas and the FLN each received seven portfolios. Although the partners diverge over less important matters, the coalition is held together by an "Arab-Islamic" ideology[51] which translates into an aggressive, dogmatic policy aimed at the 'Arabisation'[52] and 'Islamisation' of Algerian society and state institutions.

2. The divided opposition

Drowned in the tide of "Islamist conservatives", [53] the secular opposition parties have been unable to surmount their differences and unite around the common values they continue to claim. Nonetheless, although they only have limited influence over the passage of bills, their freedom to speak out has successfully tempered government rigidity and its authoritarian reflexes on several occasions.[54] Despite a relatively low electoral tally, their best ally remains public opinion, which follows with

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[51] Unlike the culture that might be described as 'Arab-Muslim', 'Arab-Islamic' ideology is intolerant and exclusive.
[52] Since 5 July 1998 the govrnment has decide to 'Arabise' all sectors of public life.
[53] For the Algerian press 'Islamist conservatives' and 'Islamist nationalists' are both used to describe the government coalition.
[54] See under V-C-3: Sensitive questions under debate .

interest the live televised transmission of debates in the assembly chamber.

The confrontation between an arrogant majority and a splintered opposition was turned on its head twice, resulting in surprising adjustments to the situation. The first occasion was when the opposition protested against the fraud following the local elections on 23 October 1997; the second occasion arose during the passage of a law dealing with parliamentary salaries.[55]

V. HOW THE ASSEMBLY FUNCTIONS

The workings of the Assembly are governed by the constitution and by a set of standing orders.[56] It meets twice a year in ordinary session in autumn and spring. These sessions begin on the second working day of October and March respectively. The president of the republic may convoke an extraordinary session on his own initiative, at the request of the prime minister, or of two-thirds of the members. Debates are held in public and transmitted live on television. Either the prime minister, the chairman of the Assembly or a simple majority of members may request that the Assembly meet in closed session.

A. Organisation chart

The organisation chart can be found in annexes E and E1 of this report.

B. Parliamentary immunity

Members of the Assembly (the deputies) are protected by parliamentary immunity during their term of office. They are therefore not subject to any *"legal proceedings, arrest, or, in general, any civil or penal action or pressure by reason of opinions expressed, remarks made or votes cast in the exercise of their mandate"*[57]

Legal proceedings in regard to a crime or misdemeanour may only be taken against a member *"if the member concerned waives his immunity, or with the authorisation of the Assembly, if a majority of its members so decides."*[58]

However, *"in cases of flagrante delicto a member may be arrested. The Assembly must be so informed immediately. The bureau may then call for proceedings to be suspended and the member released from detention"*[59] until such time as his parliamentary immunity may be lifted. The procedure for withdrawal of immunity begins with an application from the minister of justice to the bureau of the Assembly. If the committee on legal affairs admits the application, it is referred to the whole house, which votes by secret ballot.

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[55] See under V-C-2 et V-D-2.
[56] See Annexes F and I.
[57] Art. 109 of the constitution.
[58] Art. 110 of the constitution.
[59] Art. 111 of the constitution.

Voting takes place in closed session, following the reading of the committee's report and after the Assembly has heard the member concerned, who may be assisted by one of his colleagues. [60]

If a member is convicted by a court of *"conduct unbecoming"* [61], the Assembly may revoke the member's mandate.

C.   Law-making

The constitution and the standing orders of the Assembly provide sufficient guarantee that members will be able to play their part at various stages in the law-making process.

1.   Government bills and private members' bills

Bills may be initiated either by the government or by private members.

2.   Amendments

When a bill reaches the bureau of the PNA, it is immediately submitted to the appropriate committee, which gives its opinion and draws up a report covering both the form and the content.

In the three days following the distribution of the committee's report, any group of ten members may present amendments. The admissibility of amendments is considered by the bureau of the Assembly, which may accept or reject them on grounds of form. However, amendments proposed by the government or responsible committee may be presented at any time before the vote is taken on the article to which they apply.

3.   Voting procedures

Government and private members' bills may be considered in general debate, restricted debate or without debate. Voting may be by secret ballot, by a public show of hands, or by public roll-call. After consulting with the chairmen of the parliamentary groups, the bureau of the Assembly determines the form of voting which will be employed.

a.   Voting in general debate

This is the normal procedure. It takes place in two phases: a general discussion and a discussion on each article.[62]

b.   Voting in restricted debate

This procedure excludes any general discussion of the bill. Only the individual articles are discussed, and only the government, delegates of

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[60] Art. 13 of the standing orders.
[61] Art. 14 of the standing orders.
[62] See annexes containing the Assembly's standing orders, Art. 83 to 86.

the authors of amendments, the chairman and the rapporteur of the responsible committee are authorised to speak. After consulting the coordination committee, the decision to follow this procedure is taken by the bureau of the Assembly at the request of the government or of the responsible committee.

c. Voting without debate

This procedure, excludes any amendment or discussion of substance, and is employed only at the request of the president of the republic. It is applicable only to orders submitted for the approval of the PNA[63] and to the ratification of international agreements and conventions.

D. Power of control over the executive

Despite its presidential character, the amended constitution of November 1996 confers on the PNA a limited but undeniable power of control over the executive.[64] Both the constitution and the Assembly's standing orders provide procedures for the exercise of this control.

1. Approving the government's programme

Within 45 days of the government's nomination, the prime minister submits his programme to the Assembly, which then holds a general debate on the contents. This debate may not exceed seven days. At the conclusion of the debate the government's programme, including any amendments, is put to the vote. If it is not voted through, the prime minister must submit his government's resignation to the president of the republic, who will then designate a new cabinet. If its programme does not receive the approval of a majority of elected members, the PNA is automatically dissolved.

2. Oral and written questions

Any member may address a written or oral question to any member of the government. The minister questioned must respond in the same form within seven days for oral questions and 30 days for written questions.

3. Government summoned to answer questions ('interpellation')

Members may summon the government to answer questions concerning matters of current concern. The question must be signed by 30 members in order to be admissible. It is dealt with in plenary session within 15 days of submission. If the Assembly is not satisfied by the prime minister's response, or that of his representative, a committee of enquiry may be constituted.

4. Resolutions on government policy

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[63] Art. 124 of the constitution: "When the Assembly is in recess, and between session, the president of the republic may enact legislation in the form of orders. The president submits any such order for the approval of each of the parliamentary chambers when next in session."

[64] See annex G: The APN's powers under the constitution.

4. Resolutions on government policy

Once a year the government presents a statement of general policy to the Assembly. This is followed by a debate. A resolution, proposed by at least 20 members, may be adopted. If there are a number of draft resolutions, these are put to the vote in the order in which they have been deposited. Once a resolution is adopted, the others fall.

5. Censure motions

To be admissible, a censure motion must be signed by one-seventh[65] of the total number of members. During the debate preceding the vote only the government, the delegate of the authors of the censure motion, an opposing member and another in favour of the motion are authorised to speak. If the censure motion is adopted by two-thirds of the members, the prime minister submits his resignation to the president of the republic.

6. Votes of confidence

The prime minister may call for a vote of confidence. During the subsequent debate only the government, a member in favour of the vote of confidence and another opposed may speak. If the vote of confidence does not secure an absolute majority of members, the prime minister submits his resignation to the president of the republic.

7. Committees of enquiry

A committee of enquiry into matters of general interest may be constituted at any moment. The creation of such a committee results from a resolution proposed by at least 20 members and requires a straightforward majority vote. The Assembly nominates the members of such a committee from among its elected members. The parliamentary groups are represented in proportion to the number of seats held by each group. Committee members are required to keep silent about committee proceedings while they are underway. The committee's report is presented to the chairman of the Assembly and distributed to the members. The president of the republic and the prime minister are informed. The bureau of the Assembly, after consulting the government, may decide to publish all or part of the report. If it decides not to publish, the PNA votes on the report by majority of its members either without any debate or in closed session.

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[65] I.e. 55 elected members.

VI.   ASSESSING THE ASSEMBLY'S WORK OVER THE PAST 18 MONTHS

Thanks to the quality of debates and the deputies' freedom of speech, the PNA has become a forum for peaceful confrontation between the different political forces. By examining what the PNA has achieved over the past 18 months, it is possible to assess its role in law-making, and its ability to exercise control over the executive.

A.   A difficult beginning

The inaugural session of the first multi-party Assembly in an independent Algeria was held on 15 June 1997. It was presided over by its most senior member, the Trotskyist Mustapha Benmohamed of the *Parti des travailleurs* (Workers' Party) and began with readings from the Koran, a tradition inherited from the former one-party PNA that has resisted any attempt at change. However, a significant new "tradition" was the live television broadcast of debates at the insistence of a majority of members.

After four days of arguments, raised voices and backstage manoeuvrings, Abdelkader Bensalah of the RND was elected chairman of the Assembly and a committee was nominated to draft a set of standing orders. Some FFS and PT members protested that they were being intimidated and accused RND members of threatening them with firearms.[66] The resulting tension led to the suspension of the session.

When work began again in plenary session on 8 July 140 members were registered to speak and it looked as though the debates would be stormy. Many opposition members were claiming that the proposed set of standing orders was *"a penal code that limits parliamentary prerogatives"*.[67] Article 4, which specifies that only Arabic may be used in debates, led to virulent clashes between the 'Islamist nationalists', who were to become the majority grouping, and the secular opposition. There were no arguments in favour of using French, a foreign language, but FFS, RCD and PT members battled on behalf of Berber. When an RCD member tried to take the floor speaking in Berber, members of the RND, FLN and Hamas created uproar, shouting and banging on their desks. The speaker was reduced to silence, but Khalida Messaoudi, a colleague from the same party, denounced this *"racist and intolerant reaction"*[68] The proposed creation of a permanent commission for human rights and other freedoms led to another row. This proposal was put forward by the secular opposition, but was thrown out by the "Islamist nationalist" majority.

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[66] Some elected members, such as Zidane El Mokhfi of the RND and Nordine Aït-Hamouda of the RCD, are leaders of groups of 'patriots', responsible for defending isolated villages against terrorist incursions.
[67] Newspaper *Le Matin* of 9 July 1997.
[68] idem.

A total of 131 proposed amendments were debated before the standing orders were voted on 22 July 1997, article by article. They were adopted without any fundamental change after an arrangement was reached between the RND, the FLN and Hamas.

The Algerian people reacted positively to these first Assembly debates, interpreting them as a certain sign of change and hope.

B.   The main topics of debate[69]

The autumn session, planned for the beginning of November 1997 was disrupted by the fraud marring the local elections of 23 October and the subsequent protests.[70] With the exception of the finance bill for 1998, adopted without incident, and a stormy debate on the security situation[71], no other bill has been debated.

Several bills that had remained in suspense were adopted during the spring session, which opened on 2 March 1998. The debates over some of these, such as the customs code, the bill to protect the cultural patrimony, and that concerning scientific research and technological development, took place in an atmosphere of calm. Even a bill on the organisation of the judiciary passed without causing a stir, despite some clauses threatening the independence of the judiciary, which is, however, guaranteed by the constitution.

Other bills produced raised passions, even outside the debating chamber, because of the immediate repercussions they would have on Algerian society. These included a government bill on security companies that was rejected by a crushing majority in April 1998. It would have allowed private companies, equipped with firearms, to guard businesses, transport money and provide bodyguards for public figures.

Other bills, some even more sensitive, such as those covering the family and the press, were due to be debated in April 1998, but were held back for the autumn session. This was also the case for a bill on the privatisation of state-owned agricultural land. Many members, including some from the RND and the FLN, expressed hostility to this government bill, which, it was rumoured, only had the backing of Hamas.

Many deputies believe that debate on such sensitive matters should be deferred in the light of the presidential elections foreseen for April 1999.

C.   Signs of progress towards democracy

During the past 18 months the PNA has definitely shown signs of progress, albeit superficial, towards democracy. It provides a framework in which to learn the practice of tolerance.

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[69] See Annexe F: Bills that have been debated..
[70] See under VI-A-2.
[71] See under VI-A-3.

1. A forum for opposition

Although political parties with opposing platforms are confronting one another, sometimes virulently, across the Assembly floor, a state of "peaceful coexistence" has been maintained. This is surprising given that some members remember numerous confrontations on the university campuses between Islamists and democrats, sometimes with knives, in which they were involved in the 70s and 80s.

Others, such as Saïd Sadi of the RCD, Djamel Zénati of the FFS, and Louiza Hannoun of the PT were imprisoned during the period of one-party dictatorship. The convictions that were relayed at that time via illicitly produced pamphlets, and which got them into so much trouble, are today relayed by national television and reach millions of Algerians.

Such sensitive subjects as the tragedy of the "disappeared", or the need for the army to quit the political field and occupy itself with its constitutional task of national defence, have been brought up on several occasions.

2. The refusal to accept electoral fraud

According to a number of observers, the local elections of 23 October 1997 were even more fraudulent than the legislative elections of 5 June 1997. Newspapers reported *"massive and unprecedented fraud".*[72] There were also reports of fighting in several polling stations, particularly in the provinces, between RND activists, supported by the administration, and sometimes also by the police and gendarmerie, and opposition supporters.

Police and security forces molested deputies who tried to witness the vote counting. With the exception of the RND, which benefited from the fraud and greeted the results as *"an expression of the people's will"*[73], all parties joined in public outcry.

There was proof of various "techniques" used to rig the elections. One television channel even succeeded in filming government agents involved in illicit vote-fixing ploys.[74]

After a week of consultations, all the political parties, except the RND, agreed on 'large-scale united action'. On Thursday, 30 October 1997 parliamentarians belonging to the FLN, Hamas, FFS, RCD and PT planned a demonstration in Algiers and took to the streets to test the government's reaction. This produced the highly symbolic image of the representatives of the people, encircled by the forces of law and order, taking part in an unauthorised demonstration. Some were knocked down and beaten. The protest movement grew and lasted several days. Tens of thousands of demonstrators took to the streets of the capital in response to a call from the political parties.

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[72] Expression used by most of the independent newspapers on 25 October 1997.
[73] Press releases of 25 October 1997.
[74] Film was broadcast in February 1998 by ARTE, during a documentary about Algeria.

The movement came to an abrupt end when an agreement was reached between the RND and its majority allies, the FLN and Hamas. However, during those days of insurrection the members of the Assembly showed that, despite mutual antagonism, it was possible for them to unite on questions of major importance.

3.   Sensitive questions under debate

Although the Assembly's powers are hostage to the majority of its membership which is opposed to more freedom, the pressure of public opinion, both national and international, has made it possible to discuss matters previously considered "taboo".

a.   The security situation

The general debate on the security situation, which took place in February 1998, is doubtless the best example of how sensitive questions have been dealt with. This was a particularly difficult time in Algerian politics. In September 1997 several hundred civilians were massacred in an Algiers suburb, and by the end of December, the terror was affecting the Relizane region in the west of the country.

During the night of 11 January a further massacre in the area of Sidi-Hamed, near Algiers, resulted in more than 200 deaths. These killings, which included both women and children among their victims, were particularly barbarous and created a wave of indignation among international opinion. Western capitals questioned the identity of the killers and the inability of the authorities to ensure the security of isolated populations. Several non-governmental organisations called for an international commission of enquiry and the European Troika was due to arrive in Algiers on 19 January 1998 for a 24-hour visit. In this context of internal terror and international pressure, the deputies decided to block the work of the Assembly and go on strike in demand of a debate on the security situation.

This opposition move was hijacked by the RND, which took over the initiative in order to avoid losing control of the situation. During the night of 21 January 1998, the government was called to answer questions. On February 2, during a session which lasted from 2100 to 0400, the members, dissatisfied with the Prime Minister's relies, adopted a resolution which called for a general debate. The resolution, sponsored by 120 members from all parliamentary groups, including 60 from the RND, was passed with 221 votes in favour, 14 against and 12 abstentions. A general debate took place on Friday, 6 February from 1530 to 0500 the following morning.[75] The stormy session was closely observed by many Algerians, but also by the international press, present in force to cover the programmed visit of a European Parliament delegation due to arrive on 8 February.

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[75] Friday is the customary weekly day of rest.

b. The tragedy of the "disappeared"

Every Thursday that the Assembly is in session the morning is put aside for oral questions. Louiza Hannoun, an elected member and spokesperson of the Workers' Party, has questioned the minister of the interior on three occasions in regard to one of the most pertinent and sensitive issues in Algeria today, that of the "disappeared". After much debate, the government finally recognised the existence of the problem in regard to the 'disappeared' and agreed to carry out research, although it continues to minimise the number of cases.

D. Room for improvement

These unquestionable signs of progress towards democracy must be understood within the context in which they take place. Although the constitution and standing orders appear to be formally respected, in practice the PNA is allowed only a limited margin for manoeuvre in regard to law-making and its control over the executive, despite its wide constitutional prerogatives.

Furthermore, deputies of all parties demonstrate a general lack of will to raise standards of morality in public life, particularly in regard to fighting, corruption, and the illicit accumulation of wealth. This passivity may seriously affect their standing in the eyes of the people.

1. Law-making

The procedure for submitting private members' bills has produced a real battle. Because of the numbers of RND members, the opposition's margin for manoeuvre has been reduced to mere formality.

Once a draft bill has been submitted by 20 members, it goes to the Assembly's bureau, which rules on admissibility *"in conformity with the provisions of the constitution, the law and the standing orders."*[76]. It then risks a collision with government, which may oppose it by invoking article 121 of the constitution[77]. If it succeeds in passing these obstacles, an opposition bill may be emptied of all substance by a volley of amendments, and becomes incapable of achieving its objective. Or it may simply be rejected by a majority vote.

Since this Assembly opened two private members' bills have been put forward by the FFS. One called for the lifting of the state of emergency, which has been in force since 9 February 1992, and the other covered public demonstrations. These bills have still not been dealt with.

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[76] Art. 70 of the Assembly's standing orders.
[77] Art. 121 of the constitution : " No bill is admissible if has as object or effect a reduction in public revenue or an increase in public expenditure, except if it is accompanied by measures aimed at increasing state revenue or at making savings that are at least equivalent in other items of public expenditure.

2. Exercising control over the executive

Since the government was installed on 15 July 1997, the PNA has called on it to answer questions (*interpellation*) on two occasions. The first was after the elections of 23 October 1997 and two committees of enquiry were established to investigate the electoral fraud and violations of parliamentary immunity. Neither committee had reached any conclusions more than a year later. The second occasion arose in February 1998 and concerned the massacres of civilians. There was a general debate, but, when it came to a vote the resolution to institute a committee of enquiry failed to receive the required majority.

In neither case, despite the accusations made against his government, did the prime minister proceed to a vote of confidence. Nor did the deputies resort to a censure motion.

The 19 members of the RCD parliamentary group called for a fourth committee of enquiry to examine the suspension of seven independent newspapers for almost a month. However, the resolution failed to gather the twentieth signature required for it to be admissible.

3. Bringing morality into public life

Eighteen months after beginning their term of office, the deputies still have not conformed to an order dated January 1995 requiring them to publicly declare their wealth Algerian public opinion interprets this lack of openness as an indication that they have no real will to act against the corruption that continues to blight the government.

A law passed on 11 February further discredited the deputies. The law was the only law to be unanimously passed after prior consensus had been reached in the Assembly's coordination body. The law provides deputies with salaries 40 times higher than the national guaranteed minimum wage, two years of special leave when their terms expire, during which time they will retain all these advantages, and pension rights calculated on the basis of their parliamentary salaries. Although this law was later rejected by the Constitutional Council, the deputies continued to fight for it until they succeeded in granting themselves very similar advantages under a law on parliamentary status. Most Algerians, who face a constantly falling standard of living, were shocked by this episode.

VII. IMPORTANT ISSUES STILL TO BE DEALT WITH

Three important maters were due to be debated in April 1998, but remain in suspense: the family law code, the press code and the law on education reform.

A. **Family law code**

Since its adoption in 1984 the family law code has become one of the main questions dividing 'democrats' and 'Islamist conservatives'.

As far as the democrats are concerned, the family code is a discriminatory law, inspired by the *Chari'âa* (Koranic law), which confines women to the status of "minors for life". The FFS, the RCD and the PT, supported by women's associations, are fighting for its repeal and replacement by civil laws establishing women's rights and the equality of the sexes, particularly by outlawing polygamy.

However, the 'Islamist nationalists' have quite another approach. For the RND, the FLN and Hamas, as well as Nahdha, anything concerning the family, particularly women, must 'respect our Arab-Islamic' values. They may tolerate purely formal amendments, but will oppose changing anything that, according to them, falls under 'divine law'.

B. **The press code**

Journalists describe the existing press code, which dates from 1990, as *"penal code 'a'"*. Since 1993 several independent newspapers have been forced to suspend publication, and a number of journalists have been imprisoned.[78] The reasons invoked to justify these attempts to force the press and journalists to toe the line have never succeeded in concealing the political thinking that lies behind them. On 17 October 1998, the government suspended seven newspapers for a month for 'economic reasons', claiming that they still owed money to the public printing works. However, the editors believed the suspensions were a reprisal for a "lack of reverence" on the part of the press and for the publication of information about scandals implicating government dignitaries.

The democrats would like the code to be revised in a liberal direction, because they believe that *"without freedom of the press, there will be neither freedom of expression nor democracy"*. Although the 'Islamist nationalists' may also wish for change, their approach focuses on dissuasive 'safeguards' against 'excessive freedom' of the press. They would like to see the independent press, which they criticise as 'francophile and secular", targeted and its influence limited.

C. **Reform of the education system**

Many Algerians believe that the country's schools have been '*struck by disaster.*'[79] The democrats blame the 'Arabisation' of the school system and the strong influence of Islam on education programmes for the terrorism that is tearing the country apart.

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[78] See *Entre menace, censure et liberté : la presse algérienne se bat pour survivre*, ICG Report N°1, Avril 1998. A summary is available in English.
[79] This was acknowledged for the first time by President Mohamed Boudiaf in April 1992.

But for the Islamists, the school system remains essential to their vision of 'civilisation'. They therefore reject any change in the policy of 'Arabisation' and the role of Islam in school programmes. A great deal is at stake here, perhaps even the future of Algerian society in the short term. There are more than seven and a half million schoolchildren, out of a population of nearly 30 million inhabitants. Each party dreams of fashioning these young people to its own image.

Debate on such issues, all of them arousing strong passions, will lead to an inevitable confrontation between 'democrats' and 'Islamist nationalists' over their irreconcilable visions of society.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

The present multi-party Assembly resulting from the June 1997 elections undoubtedly represents some progress towards democracy. However, the present regime, which operates from behind a democratic smokescreen, is not rooted in the same principles of democracy as those favoured by the Algerian people. Although Assembly debates may demonstrate real freedom of expression, parliamentary independence can really only be gauged by the extent to which the Assembly is substantially involved in the law-making process and exercises real control over the executive. At the moment, the country's institutions are all dependent on decisions taken within the confines of a power game being played out behind the scenes by a selected few. This is not how a truly democratic state functions, and it is not meeting the aspirations of the Algerian people.

The constitution establishes the separation of powers, guaranteeing the autonomy of the legislative body and granting it wide prerogatives both in law-making and the exercise of control over the government. However, the application of these prerogatives needs to be improved. The shortcomings are mainly the result of a lack of experience given that this is the first relatively pluralist assembly. Above all, there are the problems related to mentality, culture, and reflex resulting from the inheritance of a long period of one party dictatorship. The persistence of habits from an era that is supposed to be in the past is encouraged by two factors: electoral fraud and an Arab-Islamic ideology.

A.   Electoral fraud

Electoral fraud, a political "tradition" in Algeria, is intended to achieve a double objective:

- to perpetuate "the system" behind a deceptive screen that gives the appearance of being open to change,
- to tame the democratic opposition and, if need by, manipulate it so as to prevent an orderly evolution in the system.

By the use of electoral fraud, which distorts the picture of how much support there really is for each party throughout the country, the government ensures

itself of a docile majority. And the members of this majority, originating mainly from the FLN and its satellite organisations, are indebted to the government for their parliamentary careers and the accompanying privileges.

B. Arab-Islamic ideology

Although their platforms may sometimes diverge, the three parties of the 'nationalist Islamist' majority join forces the moment the government is seriously threatened. During protests against the fraudulent elections of 23 October 1997, the FLN and Hamas came to an arrangement behind the scenes with the RND and dissociated themselves from the opposition.

Bolstered by this Arab-Islamic ideology and hostile to any demand for increased freedom, the parties of the majority, under pressure from the Algerian people and the international community, have put up with recent moves in the direction of democracy. But in reality they regard them as an inconvenient necessity to be got rid of at the first opportunity. Their allegiance to the government is well illustrated by the debate on the security situation that took place in February 1998.

Some foreign observers welcomed this debate as a sign of progress towards democracy, and a unique phenomenon in the Arab-Muslim world. While it certainly indicates a formal respect for the Algerian constitution, it would be wrong to make a judgement based only on appearances; a more detailed analysis is required. More than any other subject addressed by the PNA, this debate highlights the major question with which this report is concerned: in dealing with such a sensitive issue, has the Assembly made strides towards democracy, or has it simply served as an alibi for the government?

The security debate was imposed on the Assembly by the pugnacity of the opposition. However, RND deputies succeeded in winning back support by making the first move in giving a rough ride to a prime minister from their own ranks. By so doing, they sought to avoid any real move away from their chosen path. Compelled by international opinion, the government is primarily concerned with providing the "proof of transparency", albeit selective.

It could therefore be concluded that the Assembly has served to vindicate the government. Indeed, the parliamentary commission of enquiry into the massacres called for by FFS and PT deputies has never seen the light of day. This is because, for the RND, the FLN, and Hamas, as well as the RCD – all of whom are opposed to it – such a commission might distract attention from the real identity of the assassins, who can be none other than GIA terrorists.

It is difficult to make a completely objective judgement of an Assembly that has been distorted by an artificial majority resulting from massive electoral fraud. What is clear is that it is imperative to concentrate every effort on establishing safeguards to avoid further fraud during the next elections. For this reason the international community must carefully observe the presidential elections, planned for April 1999, and the legislative elections, which will probably take place in June 1999.

IX.   RECOMMENDATIONS

A.   Set up a framework conducive to free and open elections

It is absolutely essential that the new president be legitimised through a transparent electoral campaign. The government must guarantee free access to a free press for each of the candidates, and allow them to hold political meetings. Starting now, the government must facilitate the entry of foreign journalists' into Algeria and their travel throughout the country.

It is also the government's responsibility to guarantee the security of each of the presidential candidates.

B   Preventing electoral fraud

The fraud that marked the last elections distorted the real picture of support for the different parties throughout the country. As a result, the 'elected' members of the majority, who are indebted to the government for their privileges, are unable to exercise any real control over it.

During future elections, including both the presidential elections planned for April 1999 and the legislative elections that will follow, there must be guarantees that all voting operations will be properly controlled throughout the whole of the country, without any exceptions.

1.   National controls

The national independent commission for supervising the presidential elections (CNISEP), as well as representatives of the parties and the candidates, must be able to control the different stages of the election, from the moment voting stations are opened until the official proclamation of results. They must obtain a copy of the recorded results at each station.

There must be a limit to the number of mobile voting stations for isolated populations. These mobile stations, as well as the special voting stations reserved for security forces, must be permanently controlled by the CNISEP, party representatives, and the candidates.

2.   International controls

The Algerian government has agreed to international involvement; the organisations that are being asked to provide observers must begin nominating them now. Observers should be sufficient in number and should remain in the country until the results are proclaimed and the new president inaugurated.

In addition to the organisations that supervised the last elections (UN, OAU and the Arab League), ICG recommends that the European

Parliament should also send observers. These observers should start arriving in Algeria as from now.

The observers' mandate should be clearly defined and they must be guaranteed free access to all voting operations throughout the country.

C.   Revision of sensitive laws

The revision of the family law code and the press code must be closely followed. The decisions that are made will determine the future for women and for the freedom of expression, and remain important parameters for gauging the advance – or retreat – of democracy in Algeria.

D.   Human rights

A permanent parliamentary commission must be set up as soon as possible to ensure that human rights are respected and safeguarded. This commission must have wide prerogatives, particularly in regard to receiving and investigating complaints from citizens.

Particular attention must be given to the tragedy of the "disappeared", and to the use of torture.

E.   Support for the democracy movement

The international community must support those parties, associations and personalities involved in the democratic movement that reject fundamentalism and demonstrate independence from the government. Such support relies on government guarantees that representatives of foreign governments, international bodies, non-governmental organisations and the press will be permitted to enter Algeria and remain there in safety prior to, during and after the elections. The same condition holds for the representatives of civil associations of Algerians living in other countries, particularly in Europe and the United States.

ANNEXES

Annex A: The legislative elections of 5 June 1997

Table 1: List of principal candidates

Parties	Number on lists	Number of candidates	Number elected
" Independents "	68	553	11
FLN (Front de libération nationale)	54	532	62
RND (Rassemblement national démocratique)	54	532	156
NAHDHA (La " Renaissance ")	52	526	34
MSP/HAMAS(Mouvement de la société pour la paix)	52	521	69
PRA (Parti du renouveau algérien)	51	526	0
ANR (Alliance nationale républicaine)	46	484	0
RCD (Rassemblement pour la culture et la démocratie)	38	395	19
FFS (Front des forces socialistes)	36	391	20
PT (Parti des travailleurs)	24	253	4
PSL (Parti social libéral)	13	119	1
UDL (Union pour la démocratie et les libertés)	8	91	1
PRP (Parti républicain populaire)	2	31	3

Table 2: Election results

Parties	Number of elected members
RND (Rassemblement national démocratique)	156
MSP/HAMAS (Mouvement de la société pour la paix)	69
FLN (Front de libération nationale)	62
NAHDHA (La 'Renaissance')	34
FFS (Front des forces socialistes)	20
RCD (Rassemblement pour la culture et la démocratie)	19
'Independents'	11
PT (Parti des travailleurs)	4
PRP (Parti républicain populaire)	3
PSL (Parti social libéral)*	1
UDL (Union pour la démocratie et les libertés)	1

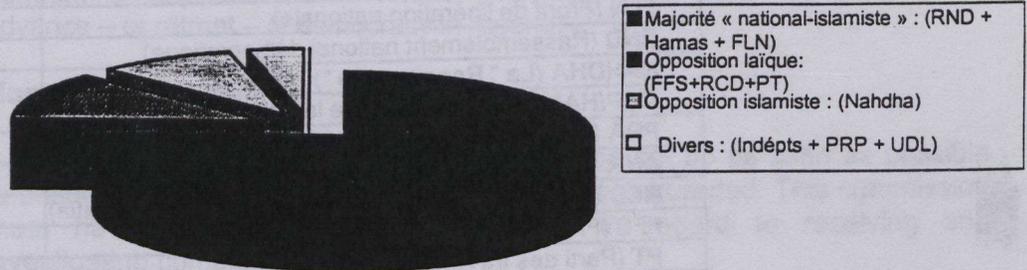*The one elected member of the PSL crossed over to the RND in October 1998

APN: configuration
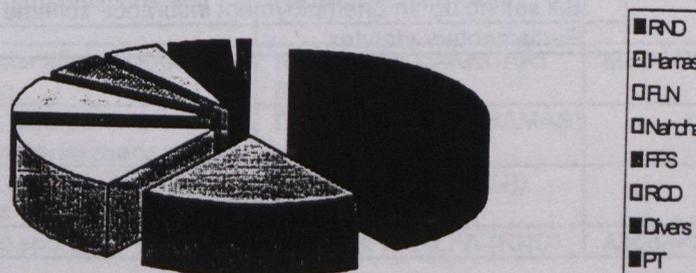
Annex B: The multi-party Assembly

Table 1: The configuration of the Assembly: 'objective alliances'

Alliances	Number of elected members
'Islamist nationalist' majority: (RND + HAMAS + FLN)	288
Secular opposition: (FFS+RCD+PT)	43
Islamist opposition: (NAHDHA)	34
Others: ('Independents' + PRP + UDL)	15

APN: Les alliances

■ Majorité « national-islamiste » : (RND + Hamas + FLN)
■ Opposition laïque: (FFS+RCD+PT)
▨ Opposition islamiste : (Nahdha)
□ Divers : (Indépts + PRP + UDL)

Annex C: Bills debated during the first year of the legislature

(**A**: adopted by the APN, **S** : adopted by the senate, **Ra**: rejected by the APN, **Rs**: rejected by the senate, **Rc**: rejected by the Constitutional Council.)

Bill	Observations
Finance bill 1998	A, S,
Bill for the protection of the cultural patrimony	A, S
Bill relative to the organisation of the judiciary	A, S
Customs code	A, S
Civil aviation code	A, S
Maritime code	A, S
Bill dealing with security companies	Ra
Bill dealing with parliamentary salaries	A, S, Rc
Bill dealing with the *Conseil d'Etat* (Council of State)	A, S
Bill dealing with administrative tribunals	A, S
Bill dealing with the conflict tribunal	A, S
Bill dealing with health prevention	A, S
Energy bill	A,S
Bill setting up an unemployment insurance scheme	A, S
Parliamentary statutes	A, Rs

Annex E: Organisation chart of the APN

Table 1: PNA bureau

Function	Incumbent	Party
president	Abdelkader BENSALALAH	RND
vice-president	Tahar BENBAÏBECHE*	RND
"	Mokaad SIFI	RND
	Kacem KEBIR	RND
	BENDAOUD	HAMAS
	RAHMANI	HAMAS
	MEDJAHED	FLN
	General CHERIF	FLN
	Lehbib ADAMI	Nahdha

*Replaced by Nordine BAHBOUH on 19/11/98.

Table 2: Presidents of the parliamentary groups

Parties	Past presidents (June 1997 à June 1998)	New presidents (since October 1998)
RND	Nordine BAHBOUH	Mohamed MAGHLAOUI
HAMAS	Abderazak MOKRI	Omar GHOUL
FLN	Ahmed MIMOUN	Ahmed MIMOUN
Nahdha	Abdelwahab DERBAL	Abdelwahab DERBAL
FFS	Abdeslam ALI-RACHEDI	Mustapha BOUHADEF
RCD	Amara BENYOUNES	Hamid LOUNAOUCI

Table 3: Permanent committees

Committee	President	Changes since 19/11/98
1-.C. for juridical and administrative affairs, and freedoms	SIDI-MOUSSA (RND)	
2- C. of foreign affairs, co-operation and emigration	Abdelkader HADJAR (FLN)	
3- C. for national defence	Md MAGHLAOUI (RND)	Ali REZGUI (RND)
4- C. for finance and the budget	LAÏCHOUBI (RND)	BENYAKOUB (RND)
5- C. for economic affairs, development, industry, commerce and planning	Lalaoui BELMOKHI (Nahdha)	
6- C. for education, higher education, scientific research and religious affairs	Ali SEDDIKI (FLN)	
7- C. for agriculture, fishing and the protection of the environment	TORCHI (HAMAS)	
8- C. for culture, communications and tourism	HICHOUR (HAMAS)	
9- C. for health, social affairs, labour and professional training	Md Lakhdar LAKHDARI (RND)	MEBARKI (RND)
10- C. for *housing, equipment, hydraulics and territorial management*	Djamel LAMARA (HAMAS)	
11- C. for transport and telecommunications	Amar SAÏDANI (FLN))	
12- C. for youth and sports	Mebarek KHALFA (RND)	Abdelwahab OUGHEDNI

Annex D: The main parties represented in the PNA

Parties	Dated created	Programmes	Leaders
RND Address: rue des quatre Canons, Alger Tel:(02) 71 05 75	Created in February 97, to provide support for President Zéroual.	Market economy, privatisation public sector; support for President Zéroual's policy of national recovery.	**Tahar Benbaïbèche**, 42 years, former FLN member, Secretary-General of the Organisation des enfants de Chouhada (children's organisation named after a revolutionary hero)
FLN Address: 7, rue du Stade, Ilydra, Alger Tel:(02) 60 81 33	National liberation movement created in October 1954, the FLN became the only party permitted, in power from 1962 to 1991.		**Boualem Benhamouda**, 65 years. Held a ministerial portfolio several times in the 60s and 70s. Leader of the conservative movement, he is one of the people behind the policy of total Arabisation.
HAMAS Address: El Mouradia, Alger Tel: (02)66.09.41	Created in 1990 from the framework of a charitable organisation *"El Islah Wel Irchad"* (reform and advice) by a group of underground militants during the 70s.	To correct moral, cultural and economic "deviations, and preserve the "enduring features" of the Algerian identity: Islam and the Arabic language.	**Mahfoud Nahnah**, 57 years, professor of Arabic language and literature. Underground activist in the 70s, he was sentenced to 15 years in prison in 1975 and pardoned in 1979. Candidate for the 1995 presidential elections, he came in second place with 25% of the vote.
NAHDHA Address: El Mouradia, Alger Tel:(02) 76 76 66	Created in 1990. Grew out of underground organisation of the same name implanted in the east of Algeria since the beginning of the 70s. 70	Islamisation of society, to prevent the sexes mixing in schools and public places. Basic economic programme based on a bazaar economy.	**Abdellah Djaballah**, 44 years, lawyer. Led attacks armed with knives against students supporting secularity at Constantine university in the 70s.
FFS Address: 56, rue Souidani Boudjemâa, Algiers. Tel.: (02).59.02.60	Created in September 1963 and worked underground during the years of repression when 400 of its members died under the repression. Reborn in 1989 when it became a registered party.	Democracy, respect for cultural diversity and human rights. Supports a social market economy.	**Hocine Aït-Ahmed**, 72 years, one of the "historic leaders of the Algerian revolution". In opposition since 1962. Condemned to death in 1965, then pardoned, he escaped from prison in 1966 and went into exile; broken only return between 1989 and 1992.
RCD Address: 87, rue Didouche Mourad, Algiers. Tel: (02).92.50.76	Created in February 1989, by activists of the Mouvement culturel Berbère (Berber Cultural Movement), which call for recognition of the Berber language and identity.	Favours a secular state, market economy, cultural and linguistic pluralism, anti-Islamist.	**Saïd Sadi**, 51 years, psychiatrist. Former leader of the Mouvement culturel berbère, he was imprisoned in 1980 and 1985. Candidate in the 1995 presidential elections, he finished third place with 10% of the vote.
PT Address: El Harrach, Alger Tel: (02).52.62.46	Created in 1990, the PT succeeded OST, (Organisation socialiste des travailleurs—Socialist Workers) affiliated to the 4th Trotskyist Internationale.	Defends democratic freedoms the public sector, opposed to the IMF and public sector privatisation.	**Louiza Hannoun**, 43 years, lawyer and militant feminist. Imprisoned in 1963. Only woman leading a political party.

Annex F: The Assembly's prerogatives (extracts from the Constitution)

Art. 80: The prime minister shall submit his programme for the approval of the APN. The Assembly. A general debate shall then take place. The prime minister may amend his programme in the light of the debate.

Art. 81: If the Assembly does not approve his programme, the prime minister shall submit his government's resignation to the president of the republic. The president shall then appoint another prime minister, by the same procedure.

Art. 82: The Assembly again refuses its approval, it is shall be automatically dissolved.

Art. 84: The government shall submit a statement of general policy to the Assembly every year. The statement of general policy shall be followed by a debate on the government's conduct of affairs. This debate must conclude with the adoption of a resolution. It may also conclude with the adoption of a censure motion by the Assembly, in conformity with articles 135, 136, 137 below.

Art. 119: Bills may be initiated by the prime minister or by members of the Assembly. Bills must be submitted by twenty members.

Art. 127: Within thirty days of the passing of a bill, the president may require that it be read a second time. A majority of two-thirds of the members shall then be required.

Art. 130: Parliament may debate foreign policy at the request of the president of the republic or of the chairman of either chamber. The debate may conclude with the adoption of a resolution by the two chambers sitting in joint session, which resolution shall be communicated to the president of the republic.

Art. 133: The members of parliament may summon the government to answer questions on a matter of current concern. The parliamentary commission may take hearings from the members of government.

Art. 134: Members of parliament may address any question to any minister. Written questions shall be answered in writing within 30 days. Oral questions shall be answered at a sitting.

Art. 135: During the debate on a statement of general policy, the Assembly may challenge the government's conduct of affairs by passing a motion of censure. Such a motion shall be admissible only if signed by at least one-seventh of the total of members.[80]

Art. 136: In order to be passed a motion of censure must be approved by two-thirds of the members.

Art.137: If the Assembly passes the motion of censure, the prime minister shall submit his government's resignation to the president of the republic.

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[80] That is, 55 out of the 380 elected members.

Annex E1: Organisation chart of the PNA

The standing orders provide for the following bodies.

1. The bureau

The president of the APN is elected for the term of the legislature, in plenary session, by secret ballot.

He is assisted by eight vice-presidents. They are designated, after agreement has been reached between the representatives of the parliamentary groups, on a list that is submitted to the Assembly for adoption. If agreement is not reached, this list is drawn up by the groups representing the majority in the Assembly.

2. The presidential conference

Composed of the vice-presidents of the APN and the presidents of the permanent commissions, this body is responsible for:
- drawing up the agenda for Assembly sessions;
- preparing and evaluating the sessions;
- organising and co-ordinating the work of the permanent commissions;
- organising the work of the Assembly.

3. The co-ordination committee

This is composed of the members of the presidential conference plus the presidents of the parliamentary groups. As a co-ordinating body, it is consulted on questions relative to:
- the agenda;
- the organisation and smooth functioning of the work of the Assembly;
- the means required for the parliamentary groups to function properly;
Its meetings are convoked by the president or at the request of two or more parliamentary groups.

4. The permanent commissions

Twelve permanent commissions are constituted for renewable term of one year.
Each elected member may be a member of one permanent commission.
Seats are divided up in the commissions in proportion to the number of members from each parliamentary group.

5. The parliamentary groups

A minimum of 15 elected members is required to create a parliamentary group and thereby accede to representation on a co-ordination committee.

The Assembly bodies at all levels are dominated by the RND, followed by its allies from the majority "Islamist nationalist" grouping.

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP...

The International Crisis Group (ICG) is a private, multinational organisation committed to strengthening the capacity of the international community to understand and respond to impending crises.

ICG's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts based on the ground in countries at risk of crisis, gather information from a wide range of sources, assess local conditions and produce regular analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers.

The nest step is advocacy. ICG reports are distributed widely to officials in foreign ministries and international organisations, to journalists and others. The organisation works closely with governments and the press to highlight key issues identified in the field and to stimulate discussion of potential policy responses. The ICG Board - which includes prominent figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media - is also involved in helping to bring ICG reports and recommendations to the attention of senior policy-makers around the world. The ICG Board is chaired by former US Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, who recently brokered the "Good Friday" Peace Agreement in Northern Ireland.

ICG currently operates field projects in eight countries world wide: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Macedonia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Algeria, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Cambodia. The organisation is headquartered in Brussels with a U.S. branch in Washington DC. Belgian Senator Alain Destexhe has been ICG's president since October 1997.

ICG's projected budget for 1998 is approximately $ US 2.5 million, rising to $US 3.3 million during 1999. The organisation raises funds from governments, charitable foundations, companies and individual donors. The following governments currently have funding agreements with ICG: Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, The Netherlands, Norway, the Republic of China (Taiwan), States of Jersey (Channel Islands), Sweden, Switzerland and the United States.

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Annex G: Index of initials and abbreviations.

APC:	Assemblée populaire communale (People's Communal Assembly)
APN:	Assemblée populaire nationale (People's National Assembly)
APW:	Assemblée populaire de wilaya (People's Wilaya Assembly)
CCN:	Conseil consultatif national (National Consultative Council)
CIP:	Centre international de presse (International Press Centre)
CNISEL:	Commission nationale indépendante pour la surveillance des élections législatives (National Independent Commission for the Supervision of Legislative Elections)
CNT:	Conseil national de transition (National Council of Transition)
FFS:	Front des forces socialistes (Front of Socialist Forces)
FIS:	Front islamique du salut (Islamic Salvation Front)
FLN:	Front de libération nationale (National Liberation Front)
GIA:	Groupe islamiste armé (Armed Islamist Group)
GPRA:	Gouvernement provisoire de la république algérienne (Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic)
HCE:	Haut comité d'état (High Committee of State)
HCS:	Haut conseil de sécurité (High Security Council)
MCB:	Mouvement culturel berbère (Berber Cultural Movement)
MDA:	Mouvement pour la démocratie en Algérie (Movement for Democracy in Algeria)
MSP:	Mouvement de la société pour la paix (HAMAS) (Movement of Society for Peace)
NAHDHA:	"La Renaissance" ("The Renaissance")
OAU:	Organisation de l'unité africaine/Organisation for African Unity
PRP:	Parti républicain populaire (People's Republican Party)
PRS:	Parti de la révolution socialiste (Party of the Socialist Revolution)
PSL:	Parti social libéral (Liberal Social Party)
PT:	Parti des travailleurs (Workers' Party)
RCD:	Rassemblement pour la culture et la démocratie (Rally for Culture and Democracy)
RND:	Rassemblement national démocratique (National Democratic Rally)
UDL:	Union pour la démocratie et les libertés (Union for Democracy and Freedoms)

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