

Algeria

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| Response to Information Request Number: | DZA99001.ZAR |
| Date: | 9 July 1999 |
| Subject: | Algeria: Whether wives and/or family members of high-level FIS members face a well-founded fear of persecution if returned to Algeria |
| From: | INS Resource Information Center, Washington, DC |
| Keywords: | Algeria / Terrorism / Political violence / Family members / Arrested persons / Suspected persons |

Query:

Whether wives and/or family members of high-level FIS members face a well-founded fear of persecution if returned to Algeria

Response:

The Islamic Salvation Front (Front Islamique du Salut – FIS) was banned in Algeria in March 1992 after Algeria's military intervened and cancelled the 1991-1992 elections which the FIS was poised to win. Thousands of FIS supporters were detained under a state of emergency following the cancellation of the 1992 elections, and the FIS began its campaign of terror in the second half of that year (*Freedom in the World 1997-1998* 1998, p. 112). According to Freedom House, violence by FIS activists had already become chronic by the time of the cancellation of the election. After the government began arresting hundreds of FIS activists, the movement's armed wing, the Islamic Salvation Army (Armée Islamique du Salut – AIS) began the systematic campaign of terror "that was taken to revolting extremes by its offshoot, which it has officially disavowed, the GIA" (Armed Islamic Group, Groupe Islamique Armé)(*Freedom in the World 1997-1998* 1998, p. 68).

For more information about the FIS and its possible involvement in violent and terrorist activities, please consult Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board, Documentation, Information, and Research Branch (DIRB), Response to Information Request DZA19684.E (DIRB 10 Feb. 1995).

Country conditions information indicates that the government of Algeria will arrest and detain relatives of suspected terrorists to force those suspects to surrender. According to the U.S. Department of State, during 1998, in some cases, "police purposely arrested close relatives of suspected terrorists in order to force those suspects to surrender" (*Country Reports 1998*, § 1.d; see also §1.f).

Amnesty International notes that relatives and acquaintances of persons suspected of being involved with an armed group are at risk. "Vast numbers of people have been arrested and many may have 'disappeared' because they had received a visit from an old school friend, relative, or relative of a friend and had given him or her hospitality in the customary way without knowing that the person was, or was suspected of being, involved with an armed group" (AI 3 Mar. 1999). Amnesty International also reports that relatives of persons wanted by the government may be arrested, or may disappear. "Many people have been tortured and some may have 'disappeared' because the security forces

presumed that they were in possession of information relating to the activities of a family member in an armed group, or that they themselves were involved in these activities, even if they were not" (AI 3 Mar. 1999).

Eric Goldstein, research director of Human Rights Watch/Middle East, also stated that the government in Algeria will arrest and detain family members as a means of pressuring those who are wanted to turn themselves in. In addition, he stated that the government will arrest relatives, or cause them to disappear, if the government thinks that the relatives could have information that would lead to the arrest of a wanted person (HRW 18 Mar. 1999).

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RIC within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

References:

Amnesty International Online. 3 March 1999. *Algeria: "Disappearances" – the Wall of Silence Begins to Crumble*. (AI Index: MDE 28/01/99). [Internet]
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http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/1998_hrp_report [Internet]
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Documentation, Information, and Research Branch (DIRB), Ottawa. 10 February 1995. Response to Information Request DZA19684.E – as reported on UNHCR/CDR REFWORLD CD-ROM.

Freedom in the World: The Annual Survey of Political Rights & Civil Liberties 1997-1998. 1998. Edited by Adrian Karatnycky et al. New York: Freedom House.

Human Rights Watch/Middle East. Telephone Interview with Eric Goldstein. (Washington, DC: 18 March 1999).

Attachment:

Documentation, Information, and Research Branch (DIRB), Ottawa. 10 February 1995.

Response to Information Request DZA19684.E – as reported on UNHCR/CDR REFWORLD CD-ROM

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