

I JOINED THE
MARCH



Algeria

The national tragedy of a decade of violent conflict in the 1990s, following the cancellation of elections and subsequent Islamist insurgency, devastated Algeria. Assassinations and massacres touched almost all sections of society, from journalists, teachers, and their pupils, artists, working women, lawyers and state officials, to anyone classed as a traitor if they did not support the Islamist project. With often equally violent state responses, Algerians were trapped in a cycle of violence that only ended with president Bouteflika's Reconciliation Charter in the early 2000s. This charter was also contested. Though it ended the violence, it did not bring truth or justice to the families of the victims. Young people were particularly affected by the traumas of the 1990s, with many losing their childhoods, educational opportunities, mental health as well as access to public spaces.

Whereas there is significant research on the role of young people in violent conflict, this study focuses on the role of young people in the period ending the conflict, in rebuilding Algeria. In particular, it explores their activism in associations and social enterprises, and since 2019, in the widespread social movement known as the Hirak. We interviewed young people engaged in civil society and political activism in the Hirak as part of the second wave of the Arab Uprisings. We also provided training programmes for youth entrepreneurship, in response to the needs identified through the initial research.



ALGERIAN HIRAK, SOMETIMES CALLED THE REVOLUTION OF SMILES, WAS A PEACEFUL MOBILISATION OF ALGERIAN YOUTH.



THE PROTESTS LED THE MILITARY TO INSIST ON PRESIDENT ABDELAZIZ BOUTEFLIKA'S IMMEDIATE RESIGNATION, WHICH TOOK PLACE ON 2ND APRIL 2019.



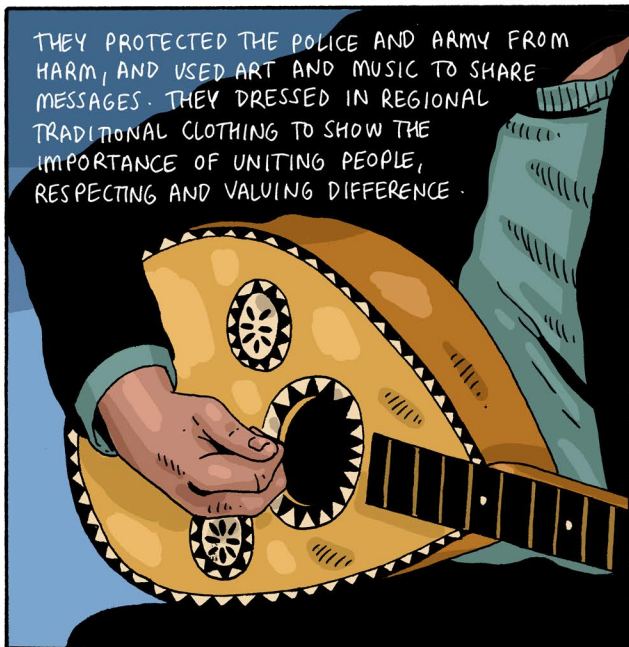
STARTING ON 16TH FEBRUARY 2019, SIX DAYS AFTER BOUTEFLIKA ANNOUNCED HIS CANDIDACY FOR A FIFTH PRESIDENTIAL TERM.



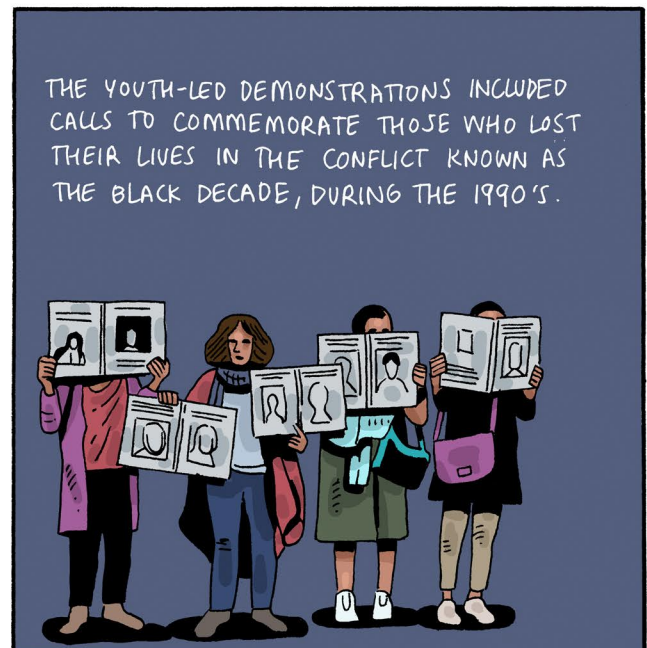
DURING 54 WEEKS OF MARCHES, IN CITIES ACROSS ALGERIA, YOUNG PEOPLE CHANTED "SILMIYA" MEANING "PEACEFUL" TO PREVENT ANY FORM OF VIOLENCE.



THEY PROTECTED THE POLICE AND ARMY FROM HARM, AND USED ART AND MUSIC TO SHARE MESSAGES. THEY DRESSED IN REGIONAL TRADITIONAL CLOTHING TO SHOW THE IMPORTANCE OF UNITING PEOPLE, RESPECTING AND VALUING DIFFERENCE.



THE YOUTH-LED DEMONSTRATIONS INCLUDED CALLS TO COMMEMORATE THOSE WHO LOST THEIR LIVES IN THE CONFLICT KNOWN AS THE BLACK DECADE, DURING THE 1990'S.



DEMANDING A VOICE AND BETTER OPPORTUNITIES, THEY ALSO DREW ON ALGERIA'S REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY, THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE (1954-1962.)

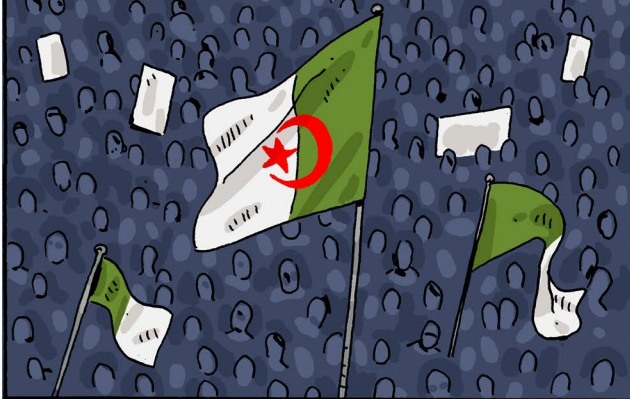


THE DEMONSTRATIONS WERE FRAMED AS A CONTINUATION OF THE FIGHT AGAINST COLONIALISM AND THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY AND JUSTICE.



THE ALGERIAN ACADEMIC AND ACTIVIST HAMZA HAMOUCHE NE DESCRIBED THE EVENTS THAT TOOK PLACE IN ALGERIA DURING 2019-2021 AS TRULY HISTORIC.

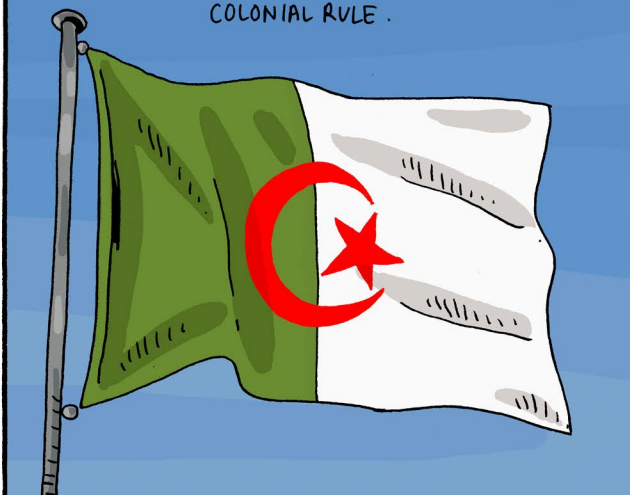
"THE HIRAK IS UNIQUE IN ITS HUGE SCALE, PEACEFUL CHARACTER, AND NATIONAL SPREAD."



ACTIVISM WAS FOUND ACROSS THE COUNTRY AND POPULATION, INCLUDING THE MARGINALISED SOUTH. IT INCLUDED MASSIVE PARTICIPATION FROM WOMEN AND YOUNG PEOPLE, WHO CONSTITUTE THE MAJORITY OF ALGERIA'S POPULATION.



THIS KIND OF MOBILISATION HAD NOT BEEN SEEN IN ALGERIA SINCE 1962, WHEN PEOPLE WENT TO THE STREETS TO CELEBRATE THEIR HARD-WON INDEPENDENCE FROM FRENCH COLONIAL RULE.



DISAPPOINTMENT AND FRUSTRATION WITH LEADER'S ABILITY TO MAKE CHANGE PUSHED PEOPLE TO INNOVATE.



WHICH EXPRESSED ITSELF IN CHARITIES, ENTERPRISES OR THROUGH EDUCATION. NEW INITIATIVES BEGAN TO FLOURISH.

A person with dark, curly hair and a grey hoodie is shown from the waist up, standing in front of a body of water with a blue sky in the background. They are gesturing with their right hand. Three speech bubbles contain their dialogue.

I PARTICIPATED IN ALL THE MARCHES. IT FELT SO IMPORTANT TO CONTRIBUTE AND DEMAND JUSTICE.

WE FELT WE COULD NO LONGER ACCEPT THE GOVERNMENT HUMILIATING US WITH 'AL HOGRA' (DISDAIN/DISRESPECT FROM THE STATE OR PUBLIC BODIES).

IT FELT IMPORTANT FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR COUNTRY THAT WE ORGANISED AND MADE OURSELVES HEARD.

OUR GRANDPARENTS FOUGHT FOR THIS COUNTRY, AND WE WILL ALWAYS CONTINUE THAT STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE.



WE DECIDED TO DEMONSTRATE PEACEFULLY AND RESPECTFULLY, IT WAS THRILLING TO FEEL THAT WE WERE ACTUALLY MAKING AN IMPACT.



IT FELT LIKE WE WERE IN THE PROCESS OF A TRUE REVOLUTION. OLDER PEOPLE STARTED TO DISCOVER THAT WE ARE CAPABLE OF MAKING A DIFFERENCE AND HAVE THE CAPACITY TO CONTRIBUTE.



WE SHOWED THE POSITIVITY OF ALGERIAN YOUTH, AND OUR DESIRE FOR A DECENT LIFE. WE ARE MAKING OPPORTUNITIES, AND TRYING TO INSPIRE OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE.



I AM AN ARTIST, I KNOW HOW POWERFUL IMAGES CAN BE.

SIMPLE ACTS LIKE CLEANING THE STREETS AFTER THE PROTESTS SHOWED THAT WE CARED FOR OUR COMMUNITY AND OUR COUNTRY.



LAST YEAR WE PAINTED THE WALLS OF OUR CITY, WE CLEANED UP THE HISTORIC QUARTER, WE PLANTED TREES AND PUT ARTWORK ON THE WALLS.



WE FOCUSED ON BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER WHO DIDN'T KNOW EACH OTHER.

PEOPLE TALKED TO EACH OTHER, THANKS TO THE HIRAK, IN SPITE OF THE REPRESSION. THIS IS A VICTORY.



WHEN WE WERE TAKEN INTO CUSTODY, ALGERIANS FROM THE NORTH OF THE COUNTRY WOULD MOBILISE TO DEFEND THOSE FROM THE SOUTH AND VICE VERSA. AS A RESULT OF OUR ACTIONS, THINGS HAVE CHANGED.



INCREASINGLY, THE STATE IS NOW LISTENING TO US, AND THERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPATIONS IN POLITICAL LIFE. THESE ARE MODEST DEVELOPMENTS BUT THEY ARE HELPING TO BUILD THE CONFIDENCE OF THE YOUNG.



THERE IS STILL A LOT TO DO, AND THERE ARE STILL MANY PROBLEMS. WE ARE NOT NAÏVE; THERE ARE ALSO NEW RISKS.



WE MUST STAY VIGILANT AND EXPRESS OURSELVES. ALONGSIDE MY UNIVERSITY ART STUDIES I'M CURRENTLY RUNNING WORKSHOPS TO TEACH STUDENTS PUBLIC SPEAKING.



I FOUNDED A CLUB CALLED "THE FLOOR IS MINE". IT HELPS STUDENTS HAVE CONFIDENCE AND DELIVER PRESENTATIONS IN A PROFESSIONAL WAY. COMMUNICATION IS EVERYTHING.



IN 2019, I WENT WITH MY MUM AND DAD
TO THE MARCHES.

WE WERE FIGHTING FOR THE FUTURE OF ALGERIA.
I LOVE MY COUNTRY SO MUCH.

IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR MY PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS,
AND THEIR PARENTS WHO LIVED THROUGH WAR.
WE HAVE TO PREVENT THAT FROM HAPPENING
AGAIN.

WE NEED TO PROTECT ALGERIA. WE HAVE A LONG,
RICH AND IMPORTANT HISTORY THAT WE STUDY
AT SCHOOL.

WE LIKE TO REPRESENT THESE DIFFERENT TRADITIONS
WHenever WE CAN, IN CELEBRATIONS,
IN WEDDINGS.



DURING THE MARCHES
MY MUM WORE HER
TRADITIONAL CLOTHES .

SHE SAID IT WAS
TO SHOW HOW WE
ARE ALL ALGERIAN,
AND ALL PROUD OF
OUR DIFFERENT
HERITAGES .



EACH YEAR ON THE FIRST OF JUNE MY
SCHOOL MARKS THE 'INTERNATIONAL DAY
OF THE CHILD', SET UP BY THE NATIONAL
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL. WE ALL
CELEBRATED OUR ALGERIAN CULTURAL
HERITAGE ALONGSIDE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS .



I COME FROM A SMALL VILLAGE . I LIVE
WITH MY MUM AND DAD, IT'S PRETTY
HERE BUT WE HAVE LOTS OF LITTER
SADLY.



I FIND IT REALLY UPSETTING AND I
WANT TO FIND A SOLUTION AND
IMPROVE OUR ENVIRONMENT. AT
SCHOOL I JOINED THE ECO CLUB .



THROUGH THE CLUB I'VE
PLANTED TREES. THE
SCHOOL LOOKS BETTER
NOW.

WE ALSO GO OUT WALKING
AND CLEAN UP THE FORESTS, AND
SOMETIMES THE BEACH ON THE
WEEKENDS .



THE STUDENTS FROM THE UNIVERSITY ARE FUN, THEY TAKE US THERE AND ORGANISE EVERYTHING.

WE SING SONGS ON THE BUS.



SOMETIMES, I WONDER WHAT I WILL BE WHEN I GROW UP? WHAT JOB COULD I DO?



I LIKE BEING OUTSIDE...



I HOPE I CAN HELP OTHER PEOPLE AND ALSO TRAVEL THE WORLD.



WE NEED TO LOOK AFTER THE ENVIRONMENT, SO MAYBE I CAN DO A JOB THAT PROTECTS NATURE.



A woman with dark skin, wearing a white hijab and large round glasses, is shown from the chest up. She is wearing a black garment. The background is a desert landscape with blue horizontal bands representing the sky and wavy lines representing the ground or water. There are some small brown hills in the distance. Four speech bubbles are connected to her by thin lines, containing text about her experience with leadership training and her future plans.

I HAVE RECENTLY HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO
TAKE PART IN LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND TRAINING
IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP.

IT TOOK PLACE IN THE DESERT MANY MILES
AWAY.

WE LEARNT HOW TO PLAN OUR PROJECTS, BUT
ALSO HOW TO COMMUNICATE AND SHARE OUR
PASSION AND IDEAS MORE EFFECTIVELY

I AM NOW USING THIS EXPERIENCE AND
KNOWLEDGE TO HELP ESTABLISH A NEW
CHARITABLE ASSOCIATION.

I WANT TO USE MY SKILLS AS A SCIENTIST FROM
MY UNIVERSITY DEGREE, TO SHARE INFORMATION
AND AWARENESS ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE.

THIS ALL STARTED FOR ME AT UNIVERSITY, THEY HAD AN ENTREPRENEURSHIP CENTRE AND YOU COULD SET UP A PROJECT INSTEAD OF A THESIS. WITH SOME FRIENDS WE CREATED A START-UP ENTERPRISE.



WE TOOK FRUITS FROM NATIVE PALM TREES, LIKE DATES, AND CREATED NEW PRODUCTS. THEN WE USED OUR SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING SKILLS TO SELL THEM ONLINE.



WE HAVE A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS MODEL NOW AND HAVE CREATED JOBS. IT IS NOT EASY TO FIND A GOOD JOB FOR WOMEN BUT WE HAVE MANAGED TO DO THIS.



IT IS REALLY IMPORTANT TO ME THAT WE PROTECT OUR ENVIRONMENT, BOTH ON SEA AND LAND. THE HIRAK MOVEMENT REALLY DID CHANGE PEOPLE'S MIND-SETS.



IT MADE THEM MORE ENGAGED IN PROTECTING THEIR LOCAL ENVIRONMENT.



DIDING SOMETHING GOOD AND POSITIVE WAS PART OF CREATING THE 'NEW ALGERIA' THAT SO MANY ASPIRED TO. CHANGE WAS POSITIVE.



I AM ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT ASSOCIATION. WE FOCUS ON PROTECTING THE LAND AND PEOPLE FROM FLOODING. FLOODING IS A MAJOR RISK.



EVEN IN THE DESERT, WHEN THE OVED (DESERT RIVER) FLOODS, IT CAN BE CATASTROPHIC.

BUT THERE ARE TRADITIONAL WAYS TO PROTECT OURSELVES FROM IT.



IT JUST REQUIRES EXPERTISE AND VALUING TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE. YOUNG PEOPLE WANT TO DO THAT.

WE ARE TRYING TO FIND WAYS TO ENCOURAGE YOUNG PEOPLE TO STAY ON THE LAND, NOT ABANDON IT AND GO TO THE CAPITAL.



WE ARE TRYING TO BUILD A SECURE AND BETTER WORLD.



COMMUNITY IS IMPORTANT TO US.

IF WE ALL WORK TOGETHER IN THIS WAY WE CAN COMBINE OUR SKILLS AND PROMOTE A BETTER, MORE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR EVERYONE.



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