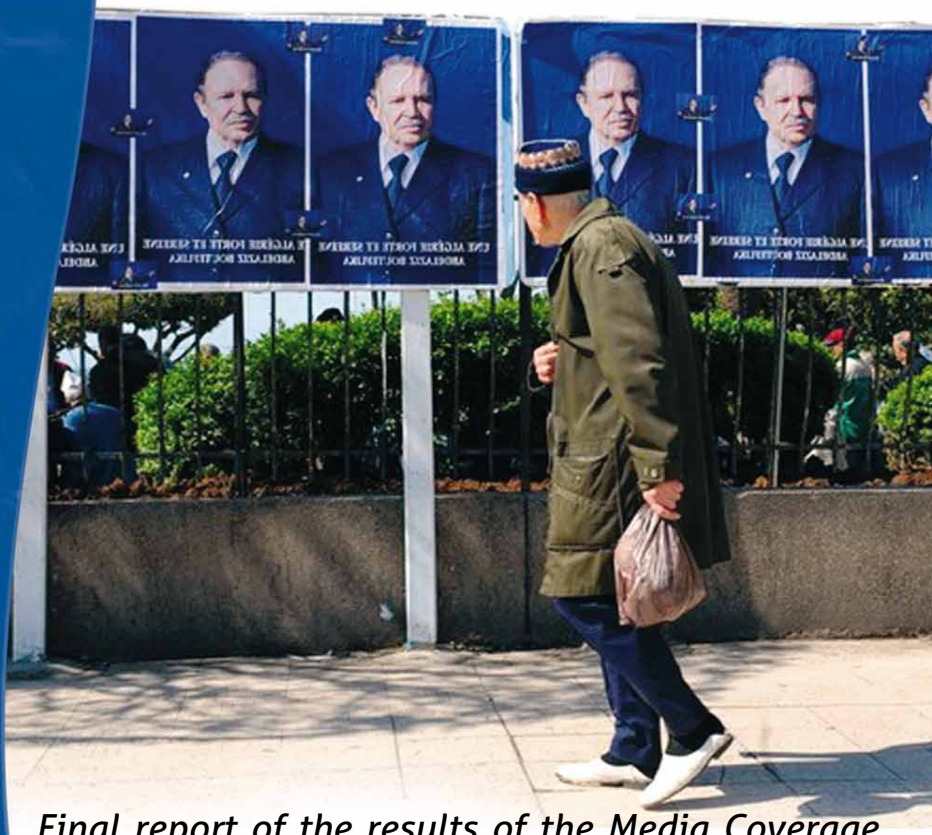
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مجموعة العمل العربية لرصد الإعلام
Arab Working Group for Media Monitoring

Monitoring of Media in the Algerian Presidential Elections 2009



Final report of the results of the Media Coverage Monitoring Program of April 9, 2009 Presidential Elections in the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

With the support of

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Monitoring of Media

in the Algerian

Presidential Elections 2009

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PRESIDENT'S WORDS

"The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures", article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers", article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Undoubtedly, media play a crucial role in electoral campaigns. Media have a large impact on the orientations of the electors and on their opinions about candidates and their political programs. Therefore, it is paramount that the media performance in electoral campaigns be fair, objective and integral. Free choice of electors is fundamentally based on true and sufficient information which portray to some extent the reality.

In order to further the media performance, the Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights conducted this first monitoring program about the national media performance in Algeria.

This program monitors performance of media during the electoral campaign of April 9th presidential elections which lasted from March 19th to April 06th, 2009. A group of young monitors followed and analyzed the performance and the role of the national press, radio and television.

The report provides an overall picture about the media coverage of 2009 presidential elections. Furthermore, it highlights the reality of the Algerian media in a context characterized by the absence of freedoms of expression and press which is an indicator about a political isolation as known in Algeria.

Pr. Mostefa BOUCHACHI

SIX ELEMENTS OF THE MONITORING

1. The media content

The total monitored area of the electoral campaign in the written press is 402.952.94 cm². Public press, spearheaded by El-Moudjahid newspaper, constitutes the largest portion of this area. As for broadcasting services, the television comes in the first position.

2. Coverage of candidate BOUTEFLIKA's campaign equals the coverage of all candidates' campaigns together

The total area occupied in the written press by all candidates (213.788 cm²) is almost the same as the total area candidate BOUTEFLIKA alone had (206.187 cm²). This fact is enough to illustrate that candidate BOUTEFLIKA cornered the majority of the areas in the public and private newspapers. If we merge all the areas BOUTEFLIKA the President and BOUTEFLIKA the candidate covered, we find that the result, 232.491 cm², exceeds by 18.703 cm² the area covered by all candidates together. This portrays the large divide the presence of candidate BOUTEFLIKA caused in the written press between BOUTEFLIKA and the rest of the candidates.

3. The tendency of the media coverage was biased in its majority

This is a proof about the lack of political debate between the six candidates, the absence of opposition parties and the unilateral bias of the official written press and broadcasting services in favour of the President-candidate. In the same time, this depicts the weak role media played and their incapacity of respecting the deontology of the profession which stipulates on accuracy, accountability and neutrality.

4. The area occupied by those who called for abstention is estimated at 3.23 %

This is the weakest percentage. The total area political parties which called for the boycott of the elections occupied in written press is estimated at 20912 cm². This area cannot be compared even with the smallest area which was allocated for candidate Mohand Said OUBELAID, i.e. 31800 cm². This means that media doors were closed in front of the majority of the opposition parties, namely the FRONT OF SOCIAL FORCES, the RALLY FOR CULTURE AND DEMOCRACY, AL-NAHDHA MOVEMENT, some leaders from the disbanded Front of Salvation and other political forces. The very limited areas which covered them in the public media were particularly used to broadcast a discourse accusing them of treachery and heresy.

5. Tendencies of the electoral campaign media coverage

Contrary to government media which were biased in their coverage (absence of criticism), the highest percentage of the neutral tendency was recorded in the private written press. Still, this percentage is very low.

6. Tendencies of the media coverage for every political party or actor

The highest positive percentage was for candidate Abdelaziz BOUTEFLIKA whereas the highest negative percentage was for abstention. Public media, in particular, addressed the issue of abstention from a very negative angle; and did not allow abstainers to express their positions.

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INTRODUCTION

The project of *"monitoring the media performance in the Algerian presidential elections of April 2009"* is a pioneering experience conducted in the context of Algeria by an organization of the civil society. This project would not have been possible without the combination of the international and regional accumulated expertise. The methodology utilized in the work conducted by the Arab Working Group for Monitoring Media during elections was designed by the European Institute for Information and is used by monitoring groups belonging to the European Union.

The monitoring of the media coverage of the electoral campaign in Algeria is the seventh Arab experience. It comes after the experiences of Morocco, Bahrain, Lebanon, Egypt, Yemen, Tunisia, and the autonomous Palestinian territories. All these monitoring operations were conducted thanks to the combined efforts of the "Arab Working Group for Media Monitoring" in elections and the "International Media Support" of Denmark.

This report about electoral campaign's media coverage for last presidential elections in Algeria is the result of combined efforts by the Arab Group for Monitoring Media in elections, the International Media Support and the Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights. The headquarters of the Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights hosted the monitoring work lead by a group of young students under the supervision of Algerian experts and an expert from the Human Rights Information and Training Center of Yemen.

The final drafting of this report lasted three months during which all statements and articles by political and civilian activists about elections as well as all articles published by journalists, organizations and other parties from inside and outside Algeria which attached interest to this event were reviewed.

The main objective of this report is to highlight the strong and weak points of the Algerian media during an important conjuncture, i.e. the presidential elections which are the most important elections in the Algerian electoral system due to various elements: the large attributions the Constitution of Algeria gives to the presidential institution, the weakness which characterizes the rest of the constitutional institutions, particularly both Houses of the Parliament which were transformed according to many observers to a commission of President's partisans.

Thus, the objective of this report is to make available a measuring device which could be used in improving the professional media performance with the view to enhance the means and methods which journalist and election supervising institutions may find helpful in providing citizens with better-quality news and information for conscious decisions the day of the polling.

Undoubtedly, freedom and fairness are among the most important necessary conditions for successful elections. Besides, freedom of speech must be guaranteed in order to allow citizens and candidates to express their opinions without fear. On the other hand, press must enjoy total freedom in performing its mission far from any pressure in order to be able to tell the truth without alteration. In this framework, the mission of a professional journalist consists in providing citizens with information supplements about various issues and available alternatives in a way that allows them to choose freely their representatives.

Elections pose great challenges for journalists. It is their responsibility to understand the electoral laws, fairly and equitably transmit the activities of candidates, political parties, and cover relevant issues. The choice of electors is formulated by the media. Journalists, even when they are limited by time, compelled to work in difficult conditions and under a lot of pressure, must observe accuracy, neutrality and accountability standards. Algerian press has often been a victim of

violence, pressure, intimidation and terror. Indeed, all these factors give to the news reports a particular importance. However, this very press can contribute to the consecration of freedoms' absence and deepen the exclusion of citizens from decision-making process.

How can we imagine a democracy in the absence of a free and fair press?

Since media provide electors with the best means for following the elections and identifying the available political options, it is vital that it should be free and fair in the coverage of the electoral campaign in order to allow citizens to understand the extent of the divergences between candidates. Moreover, press must enlighten electors about the voting process. Thus, press must enjoy absolute freedom to raise questions as concerns the transparency of elections as well as inform electors about shortcomings and defects that require solutions. With the view to dwell on all these elements, this report was drafted following an analysis methodology which we explain as follows:

CHAPTER ONE
METHODOLOGY OF THE MEDIA COVERAGE MONITORING DURING THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN

I. Objectives of the monitoring

The objective of analyzing the performance of the media coverage during the presidential elections which lasted three weeks, starting from Thursday, March 19th, 2009 through Monday, April 6th, 2009 consists in answering the following questions:

1. Did the media (written press, broadcasting) and under their different legal statutes (public and private) play their role, i.e. allowing the opportunity of free expression for all presidential elections' candidates, and objectively present their political programs far from any discrimination or favouritism?
2. Did the media respect the principle of equality and provide candidates with equal opportunities, and observe the rules and deontology of the profession while covering the electoral campaign?
3. Did citizens have access additional and unbiased information through media in order to be able to make conscious decisions the day of the polling?
4. Are the laws that provide for conducting electoral campaign relevant to the democratic orientations in the field of freedom of press and human rights as enshrined in the international treaties and charts adopted by Algeria?

5. Did the National Commission for Monitoring Elections in its capacity of a political body in charge of organizing elections respect neutrality and equity in conducting its work and carrying out the mission the law assigned to it?
6. Did the media conduct their work within the necessary freedom conditions in order to guarantee a media coverage likely to enable electors to choose freely their candidates?
7. Did public media, during the conduct of their work, respect the specifications which stipulate on guaranteeing the principle of the media service provision?

In order to answer these questions, we have collected all the media content pertaining to the presidential elections (written press and broadcasting services) generated during the legal period of the electoral campaign, Thursday, March 19th, 2009 through Monday, April 6th, 2009. The most important Algerian media were chosen on the basis of an objective combination of three determining factors, (1) the mean of the edition volume of the written press, and (2) the legal statutes of the various media) aiming at monitoring what was published and broadcasted in relation to candidates, and (3) the variable of the linguistic dichotomy in the Algerian media market: Arabic and French languages.

The chosen media are as follows:

II. Sample of the monitored media

This sample consists of eleven daily newspapers, five in Arabic language and six in French. As concerns their legal statutes, four are public newspapers governed by the regulations which stipulate on guaranteeing the principle of public service provision and by the provisions foreseen in their specifications. The rest of the newspapers are private and governed by the Law on Information of 1990.

As for broadcasting services, in addition to the unique Public Land Television Channel, two radio channels were monitored, Radio 1 in Arabic language and the Radio 3 in French language. They are public radio channels which broadcast their programs nationwide and internationally.

Table 01: Monitored media ***(1)***

Media institution	Medium	Edition volume mean per day	Legal status
Al-Shaab	Arabic-language newspaper	12000 copies	**Public**
Al-Massa	Arabic-language newspaper	12000 copies	**Public**
Al-Khabar	Arabic-language newspaper	420000 copies	**Private**
Al-Shourouk Al-Yaoumi	Arabic-language newspaper	600000 copies	**Private**
Al-Nahar Al-Djadid	Arabic-language newspaper	140000 copies	**Private**
El Watan	French-language newspaper	156000 copies	**Private**
Liberté	French-language newspaper	120000 copies	**Private**
Horizons	French-language newspaper	12000 copies	**Public**
Le Soir d'Algérie	French-language newspaper	85000 copies	**Private**
Al-Moudjahid	French-language	12000 copies	**Public**
Le Quotidien d'Oran	French-language newspaper	170000 copies	**Private**
Radio Channel 1	Arabic-language radio channel		**Public**
Radio Channel 3	French-language radio channel		**Public**
Television	Arabic-language television channel		**Public**

The total daily edition volume of these newspapers is estimated at 1739000 copies. This figure represents 90 % of the total edition volume of the press which is estimated at 2.5 million copies according to official figures issued by Secretariat of State for Communication in May 3rd, 2009. A brief introduction for these newspapers is provided in the table below:

Table 02: Technical data sheet of the monitored newspapers

Newspaper	Date of creation	Editorial Director	Language
Le Quotidien d'Oran	December 15th, 1994	Mohamed ABDOU BEN ABDOU	**French**
Liberté	June 27th, 1992	Ali WAFEK	**French**
El Watan	October 6th, 1990	Omar BELHOUCHET	**French**
Le Soir d'Algérie	September 1990	Fouad BOUGHENEM	**French**
Al-Shaab	December 11th, 1962	Azeddine BOUKARDOUS	**Arabic**
Al-Moudjahid	June 22nd, 1965	Abd-elmadjid CHARBAL	**French**
Horizon	October 1st, 1985	Naama ABBES	**French**
Al-Massa	October 1st, 1985	Ahmed TIGHANE	**Arabic**
Al Shourouk Alyaoumi	October 2nd, 2000	Ali FADIL	**Arabic**
Al-Khaber	October 1st, 1990	Sherif RAZKI	**Arabic**
Al-Nahar El-Djadid	October 1st, 2007	Mohamed MOKADEM alias *Anis RAHMANI*	**Arabic**

III. Monitored parties (political actors)

As for the category of monitored parties or political actors, we have selected all candidates for presidential elections, all the officials within constitutional institutions and from the institution in charge of the elections monitoring, and the main opposition political parties which announced their abstention. The table below presents these parties:

Table 03: Monitored parties (political activists)

Monitored parties	Monitored parties' capacities
National Commission for Monitoring Elections	Governmental institution
Government	Constitutional institution
President BOUTEFLIKA	Constitutional institution
Candidate BOUTEFLIKA	Independent candidate
Louisa HANOUNE	LABOUR PARTY's candidate
Moussa TOUATI	NATIONAL ALGERIAN FRONT's candidate
Faouzi REBAINE	AHD 54's candidate
Djahid YOUNSI	EL-ISLAH MOVEMENT's candidate
Mohand Said OUBELAID	Independent candidate
Abstainers	RALLY FOR CULTURE AND DEMOCRACY, FRONT OF SOCIAL FORCES, Islamic Opposition Movement, Abdellah DJABELLAH, Some leaders from the Disbanded Front of Salvation

In order to attain the objectives underlined by the project of monitoring the performance of the media coverage of the electoral campaign, the monitoring process used two complementary methodologies.

IV. Quantitative measurement

The project monitored the media content (unit of analysis) published in the press (sample of monitoring) and the time duration of the content (unit of analysis) broadcasted by the audiovisual media (radio and the television channels). The daily radio programs, broadcasted three times a day before and after announcements and radio news bulletins, stretched over three hours a day which starts from 6.30 am to 7.30 am, from 11.30 am to 12.30 pm and from 5.30 pm to 6.30 pm.

As regards the Television, the duration was five hours a day. The programs are broadcasted twice a day, from 12 o'clock to 2 pm within which comes a news bulletin and from 5.30 pm to 9 pm in which the main news bulletin of 8 pm is included.

This method generated three indicators:

First indicator: total area or total time duration which media allocated for the electoral campaign coverage.

Second indicator: total area or total time duration allocated for the coverage of the activities of each candidate and some political activists (government, abstainers, Commission for Monitoring Elections).

Third indicator: orientation of the media coverage: positive or negative or neutral vis-à-vis candidates and other actors.

Table 04: Total area and time duration of the monitored media coverage

Media	Monitoring period	Monitored volume or time duration
Al-Shaab	March 19th To April 6th, 2009	**70107.10 cm²**
Al-Massa	March 19th To April 6th, 2009	**59780.88 cm²**
Al-Khabar	March 19th To April 6th, 2009	**34381.94 cm²**
Al-Shourouk Al-yaoumi	March 19th To April 6th, 2009	**41004.71 cm²**
Al-Nahar Al-Djadid	March 19th To April 6th, 2009	**43726.52 cm²**
El Watan	March 19th To April 6th, 2009	**47256.31 cm²**
Liberté	March 19th To April 6th, 2009	**50242.82 cm²**
Horizons	March 19th To April 6th, 2009	**55315.78 cm²**
Le Soir d'Algérie	March 19th To April 6th, 2009	**35799.49 cm²**
El Moudjahid	March 19th To April 6th, 2009	**121959.10 cm²**
Le Quotidien d'Oran	March 19th To April 6th, 2009	**37573.32 cm²**
Radio Channel One	**81958 seconds**	
Radio Channel Three	**70396 seconds**	
Television Channel	**160579 seconds**	

V. Qualitative assessment

The qualitative assessment consists in analyzing to what extent media content reflected the professional rules and the deontology of the press profession, to what extent providing spaces for free expression was respected by the media, and whether candidates' activities were neutrally presented.

Besides, this qualitative assessment endeavours to interpret the results of the quantitative one taking into consideration the media language used in the coverage of the candidates' activities and political actors' stands vis-à-vis elections, to know to what extent journalists and press institutions have respected the principle of providing candidates with equal opportunities. Moreover, it aims at showing whether the media coverage provided the public with a clear picture about candidates' programs and the reasons underlying the calls for abstention in a way that would allow electors to freely choose their programs or abstain.

CHAPTER TWO
POLITICAL CONTEXT AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

Before presenting the legal system of the presidential elections and the conditions in which the media profession is exercised in Algeria, we have to address the political and human rights context Algeria lived in at the eve of the elections. Indeed, reports published by large international organizations for human rights and the defence of freedoms of expression and press unanimously agree that this context is characterized by restrictions imposed on freedoms of association, organization, speech and opinion.

I. Constitution revision imposes limitations on the electoral process

The revision of the Algerian Constitution moved by president BOUTEFLIKA to the two Houses of the Parliament in autumn last year constitutes the salient institutional event inasmuch as the text of the amendment was directly related to the organization of the presidential elections and the intentions of the decision-makers about accepting the principle of peaceful alternation in power, and guaranteeing the organization of free and fair elections.

Presidential elections were organized a few months after both Houses of the Algerian Parliament adopted in November 12th, 2008 amendments of the Constitution which allow for President Abdelaziz BOUTEFLIKA to move his candidacy for a third tenure. Article 74 of the

Constitution before being amended provides for two presidential tenures only. Whereas the amendment which president BOUTEFLIKA approved, the parliament adopted (500 voices for the amendment, 21 against it and 8 abstentions) provides for an unlimited number of presidential tenures.

Following the revision of the Constitution, the opposition political parties reacted and said that the amendment closes the doors in front of the possibility of peaceful alternation in power and stresses the will of the President to remain at the helm of power for all his life. The amendment pushed also several observers to say that April 9th elections were not open while authorities reacted by statements of victory as it was the case with President BOUTEFLIKA himself who, in an address he directed to the Parliament just after the amendments were adopted and which Speaker of the Council of the Nation, Abdelkader BENSALAH, read, qualified the event as a "memorable day"; and added that "Algeria, despite terror, has never overthrown democracy and frozen freedom of expression. On the contrary, it has reiterated its adoption for the republican system and maintains open relations with the rest world". He asserted: *"we are aware that democracy is a growing and promising experience. It needs enrichment and development."* ***(2)***

Opposition considers the event as a loss of what remains from of the democratic achievements which youth movement of October 1988 snatched from the jaws of a power which has never been changed for almost half a century, i.e. since the independence of Algeria in July 5th, 1962.***(3)***

In order to understand the Algerian political context in which April 9th elections were organized, we have to point out that elections took place and Algeria is still languishing under the yoke of the state of emergency decreed in February 9th, 1992.

II. Press in Algeria under tight surveillance

At the eve of last April 9th elections, breaches to freedom of press started. The French-language magazine, "l'Express", was suspended by authorities on the claim that it infringed the Algerian law and sovereignty. Other French-language newspapers, inter alia, "Le Journal du Dimanche", "Mariane" and "Africa Magazine", were suspended for writing about the support of high-ranking officials in the Army for BOUTEFLIKA's rule since he reached power in 1999, and about influence of the President's allies and family in the Algerian political life.

Foreign journalists were intimidated. Tunisian journalist and human rights activist, Siham BENSEDRINE, was denied entry to Algeria at Algiers International Airport. She came to Algeria following an invitation by the Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights in order to participate in monitoring media coverage during the elections of April 9th. Besides, Moroccan journalists were arrested by police and questioned for long hours. This led the Union of the Moroccan Journalists to denounce these acts. Algerian authorities also refused to grant working visas for foreign applicants.

Journalists stated that they wait for several months before getting entry visas to Algeria. Sometimes, their visa applications are completely ignored. Florence BEAUGÉ, journalist from "Le Monde" daily newspaper, said that she waited more than six months before getting her entry visa in order to cover the elections of April 9th. She added that when journalists try to reach official sources or meet government officials, they are met with silence.

III. Figures about Algerian media

The official figures of 2009 provided by the Written Press Directorate at the Secretariat of State in charge of Communication (former Ministry of Communication) show a large increase of newspapers ***(4)*** in the last two decades, particularly, during the most recent years. The number of newspapers recorded at the Directorate reached 300. Daily newspapers constitute the largest portion of this figure. In a recent census, they are 79 daily newspapers which edit some 2.4 million copies a day out of 2.5 million copies that are edited everyday by the government publications offices.

Although weekly newspapers and magazines come in the second position, 68 weekly newspapers and magazines, their edition (94000 copies a day) is very far from daily newspapers. The rest of the whole edition volume which is 2.5 million copies a day corresponds to periodicals, including institutional press which is the mouthpiece of the official organizations and institutions.
Private press comes in the first position of newspapers and magazines published in Algeria. A lot of newspapers emerged during the last five years, particularly daily papers. The number of Arabic-language daily newspapers exceeds the one of French-language ones. Indeed, they are 40 Arabic-language newspapers in opposition to 39 French-language newspapers.

Daily newspapers in Algeria had the largest edition volume before 1990s and still have the largest edition volume after 2000. However, the edition volume of the years before 1990s cannot be compared to the one of the years after 2000. Before 1990s, the edition volume of 50 newspapers reached 750000 copies a day, 650000 copies were edited by daily newspapers. Currently, the edition volume of daily newspapers has reached 2.4 million copies a day out of 2.5 million copies that are published daily by the publications offices.

Media institutions employ some 4100 journalists. 3000 journalists work in written press and about 1000 journalists in the broadcasting services. In addition to 800 correspondents, 5/6 of newspapers and magazines' journalists, namely 2500, work for the private press and 1/5 of journalists are in the public sector.

Figures published by the Secretariat of the State for Communication show that there are 41 foreign media which have accredited correspondents in Algeria ***(5)***. They are television channels, radio channels, newspapers and news agencies. In a press interview, Miss GHOUZLANE Meriem, assistant of the foreign press director, has stated that there are only six foreign newspapers which have accredited correspondents in Algeria ***(6)***, and there are 14 foreign news agencies accredited in Algeria where all of them have offices and correspondents who report news about Algeria to the world. The spokesperson of the Foreign Television and Radio Channels Directorate, Ministry of Communication, has said that there are 21 foreign television and radio channels that have accredited correspondents in Algeria. It is worthy to point out that Algerian authorities did not allow Al-Djazeera television channel to open an office in Algeria.

1. Journalists and press correspondents: poverty and harsh living conditions

According to Algerian official figures and media reports, 60 % of journalists working in the private sector perceive monthly salaries that are less than USD 250, 30 % of journalists have monthly salaries ranging from USD 250 to USD 350, and only 10 % of journalists from both sectors, public and private, have monthly salaries that are above USD 350 ***(7)***. In general, these journalists whose salaries are above USD 350 are either press veterans or occupying high-ranking positions within central editorial offices of major daily newspapers, television and radio channels. The monthly salaries of editors in chief and editorial directors of the majority of newspapers do not exceed USD 1000. The monthly salaries of

the directors of major newspapers which have big edition volumes are close to USD 2000 ***(8)***.

These figures reflect the poor social conditions journalists suffer from in Algeria. The large divide which exists between editors and journalist translates to some extent the gap that persists between editors and their visions for freedom of speech as well as the importance they attach to the profits generated by advertisements on one hand, and journalists who undergo professional pressure and face difficulties in respecting their deontology as well as poverty and lawsuits on the other.

According to journalists' accounts, a large number of journalists in Algeria do not have any social security coverage.

This is the case of journalists working in central editorial offices whereas correspondents from various provinces, towns and villages of the country, live in very harsh professional and social conditions. A recent academic study ***(9)***, a field enquiry conducted about public and private press correspondents, reveals that more than 85 % of correspondents perceive monthly salaries that are less than USD 120, and 75 % do not have health and social security coverage. 60 % of the correspondents recognized practicing self-censorship because of fears from being prosecuted and from what they called "local and administration mafia".

2. Media pluralism or media abundance

Often government officials boast the Algerian media and maintain that Algerian press is the freest in the Arab world. Among the reasons underlying this opinion, comes the large number of daily newspapers. However, without delving into an academic discussion about the phenomenon of newspapers abundance, its complexities and whether it is an intrinsic indicator of an underdeveloped press in this country ***(10)***, we just assert that this situation is prevailing in a conjuncture characterized by authorities' control over newspapers' editions.

Publications offices are still in the hands of the State and the public advertisements, i.e. those of public companies and institutions, are still in the hands of the State which uses it as a tool to exercise pressure on the editorial policy of the press. Authorities have also their monopoly on the information-making through the presence of only one news agency in the media arena. Still in the context of Algeria, inaccessible information sources remain one of the most important characteristics of the press. Among the most serious consequences, come a wide spread of rumours and comments on news instead of facts and analysis, as well as the absence of reportage press.

Without delving into what can be qualified as media abundance instead of media pluralism, these data alone are sufficient. Furthermore, the analysis of private press content unveils the existence of a single media approach in addressing the most important files such as terrorism, political power, human rights, victims of forced disappearances, etc. This single approach raises the question whether newspapers truly portray the reality of the society; depict the reality of the economic tissue and the network of the political power with its race for oil incomes, privatization as well as the conflicts between centers of influence and their networks.

One has to recognize that there are a lot of newspapers in Algeria; however, they do not necessarily mean a diversity of approaches as regards crucial issues in Algeria. We cannot talk about free newspapers without the presence of the private element or about free press as long as there are journalists who work in a context characterized by pressure and barriers which do not guarantee the necessary conditions for exercising a free media profession and respecting its rules.

Many observers assert that "BOUTEFLIKA's relationship with the press and broadcasting services is bad and even worse with the private press. Thanks to the official media institutions controlled and fully supported by

the government, Abdelaziz BOUTEFLIKA is the top spot in media scene since 1999. With the support of about 30 newspapers, the Algerian News Agency, the television and its three broadcasting channels, the radio and its four national stations and thirty local stations, President BOUTEFLIKA prevails over the media arena. These media have never reported even a small comment against the President. News reports seem to be purified by the official media" ***(11)***

8 pm news bulletin reports all the statements of the President, his meetings and the government's ordinary work without leaving aside any event or detail. According to sources from inside the Algerian television channel, television Director-General, HAMRAOUI Habib Shawki, who was replaced recently after ten years of duty, had requested from news presenters that whenever the name of Abdelaziz BOUTEFLIKA is mentioned, it should be preceded by *"His Excellency"* title, putting forward that it is intended to *"distinguish the President from other people who usurp the title of president, such as presidents of sport clubs or other associations"*

The Head of State is above all such "trivial" considerations however. Indeed, he stressed in relation to the fact that he cornered media during his electoral campaign of March 2004, that *"what belongs to the State must remain the State's property"*. In a broadcasted news conference and answering a question about opening the broadcasting sector for private investment, the President said angrily: *"impossible! Look at what is happening in the press!"*

Even though Abdelaziz BOUTEFLIKA feels some satisfaction about the official media institutions, he has shown his hostility since the very moment he reached the helm of power in 1999 toward freedom of expression in the private press. What the private press is found guilty about? It wrote about the President's past during the War of Liberation and his problems with the National Audit Office beginning of 1980s. The

President qualified the private press as gossip. Over time, especially when the press criticized *"National Reconciliation"* policy, acrid reactions started to heap on journalists who become *"terrorists because of their pens"* and *"traitors serving foreign interests"*; all because Abdelaziz BOUTEFLIKA does not allow for "persons with no legitimacy" to contradict his statements and criticize his policies. In 2001 a draft law consisting in measures providing for sanctions on press misdemeanours was moved to the Parliament for adoption. With the support of Presidential Alliance's political parties, the National Liberation Front, National Democratic Rally, Movement of Society of Peace, the draft law was adopted. Thus, Articles 144 and 144 (A) of the criminal law which stipulates on imprisonment and heavy fines sanctions has become the yoke under which some 3000 journalists and correspondents work.

Foreign journalists have also paid the price of isolation policy. Some of them who applied for resident permits were rejected and the President said: *"these journalists in their previous visits were biased and did cause harm to Algeria".*

According to many news reports, President Abdelaziz BOUTEFLIKA has contributed to the establishment of twenty-newspaper ***(12)*** which have sworn allegiance to him. And in return, these newspapers corner the State's sector of advertising. In the absence of an organization which would bring all journalists and papers together and in the absence of a full consciousness about the limitations imposed to journalists' freedom of expression, salaried journalists still work in very restricted professional conditions. Even senior journalists recall 1989 to 1991 as the best era. Each and everyone want desperately to see the President holding a press conference. However, it is now ten years since he is in the power and the President deems that it is not necessary to meet journalists.

IV. Legal framework of the Algerian press

1. Law on information of 1990, criminal code and state of emergency decree

The Algerian Law 04-90 on Information dated on April 3rd, 1990 is one of the best laws which provides for a pluralistic press. It is also one of the laws which do not explicitly and directly refer to defamation misdemeanour. Besides, it does not specify the sanctions imposed on it and its victims. For example, *Article 45* thereof stipulates that *"…. any person subject to information containing false facts or malevolent assertions that are likely to cause moral or material prejudice can use his right for response and/or sue the director of the institution and the journalist who are jointly responsible"* ***(13)***

Problems Algerian press has from the legal point of view are radicalized with the state of emergency decreed in Algeria in February 1992. The state of emergency gives large attributions for military and security authorities in tracking journalists, exercising censorship and suspending newspapers without judicial decisions. This resulted in many arrested journalists and the ban of several newspapers since February 1992.

Amended pursuant to law 01-09 dated on June 26th, 2001, the criminal code, codifies the incrimination of violation of the press laws. Among the most important articles that were amended, comes Article 298 which provides for the sanction imposed on defamation against individuals. The amount of the fine on defamation against an individual was increased to DZD 50000 whereas the fine imposed on defamation against groups because of their ethnic or sectarian or religious belonging was increased to DZD 100000. The provisions of *Article 298* are as follows: *"The sanction on defamation against individuals is five (5) days to six (6) months of imprisonment and a fine ranging from DZD 5000 to DZD 50000 or one of the two sanctions. The sanction on defamation against*

one person or more because of their ethnic or sectarian or religious belonging is one month to one year of imprisonment and a fine ranging from DZD 10000 to DZD 100000 or only one of the two sanctions if the purpose of the libel or slander was to instigate hatred among citizens or peoples"

Besides, among the characteristics of the amended criminal law, the presence of an article of which the provisions are exclusively devoted to the protection of the President of the Republic against libels and slanders. *Article 144 (A) "imposes three (3) to twelve (12) months of imprisonment and a fine ranging from DZD 50000 to DZD 250000 or one of the two sanctions on any person who insults or libels or slanders the President of the Republic".*

Article 144 (A) 1 defines the elements of defamation and the person that can be held responsible for it: *"when the crime provided for in article 144 (a) is committed either by a daily or weekly or monthly paper or other, a lawsuit is filed against the person held responsible for the crime, the director of the paper, its editorial board and against the paper itself. In this case people found responsible for the crime are punished with three (3) to twelve (12) months of imprisonment and a fine ranging from DZD 50000 to DZD 250000 or one of these two sanctions. The paper will be also fined with DZD 500000 to DZD 2500000".* ***(14)***

This article shows that journalist, editorial director and editor in chief are all sanctioned for one and same offense. Journalists consider this article as arbitrary and oppressive.

Besides, amended *Article 146* provides for these sanctions against whoever is found guilty of defamation against the two Houses of the Parliament (People's National Assembly and the Council of the Nation) or against one of the two; and against tribunals, courts, the People's

National Army, or against any public and official institution. Whoever is found guilty will be sanctioned pursuant to the provisions of *Articles 144 (A)* and *144 (A) 1.*

It is worthy of recall that the draft law providing for the revision of the criminal code was adopted by the Members of the People's National Assembly in May 16th, 2001, with 207 votes for and 113 votes against. Members of the National Democratic Rally, elected with a large majority during the legislative elections which opposition parties qualify as rigged, played with the members of the National Liberation Front a major role in the adoption of the amendments.

2. Legal framework of the radio and television

Authorities in Algeria still corner the broadcasting services. From the legal point of view, the Algerian television and radio channels are governed by a series of decrees. Ina accordance to the law, television and radio are two institutions in charge of guaranteeing the public service provision; especially that their funding comes mainly from the Public Treasury, State's subventions and a special tax included in the electricity and gas bills.

A. Public Enterprise of the Television

It is a public enterprise with an industrial and commercial nature. Its specifications stipulate on guaranteeing public service provision. The rules and regulations that govern the Television Enterprise can be classified as follows:

- Executive Decree 147 – 86 dated on July 01st, 1986 providing for the establishment of the National Enterprise of the Television,
- Executive Decree 100 – 91 dated on April 20th, 1991 providing for the transfer of the National Enterprise of the Television to the Public Enterprise of the Television,
- Executive Decree 101 – 91 dated on April 20th, 1991 providing for the specifications of the Television.

B. Public Enterprise of the Radio

It is a public enterprise with an industrial and commercial nature. Its specifications stipulate on guaranteeing public service provision. The rules and regulations that govern the Enterprise of the Radio can be classified as follows:

- Executive decree 146 – 86 dated on July 1st, 1986 providing for the establishment of the National enterprise of the Radio,
- Executive decree 102 – 91 dated on April 20th, 1991 providing for the transfer of the National Enterprise of the Radio to the Public Enterprise of the Radio,
- Executive decree 103 – 91 dated on April 20th, 1991 providing for the specifications of the Radio.

V. Legal framework of elections in Algeria

Presidential elections are the most important elections in Algeria given the large attributions the President has pursuant to the Constitution of 1996 which was amended in November 22nd, 2008. The most important attributions given to the President are, among others, those provided for in the provisions of *Article 77* of the Constitution.

In addition to the attributions bestowed, explicitly, upon him by other provisions of the Constitution, the President of the Republic has the following powers and prerogatives:

1- he is the Supreme Chief of all the Armed Forces of the Republic,
2- he is responsible for the National Defence,
3- he decides and conducts the foreign policy of the Nation,
4- he presides the Cabinet,
5- he appoints the Head of Government and puts an end to his functions,
6- he signs the presidential decrees,
7- he has the right of pardon, remission or commutation of punishment,

8- he can refer to the People through a referendum on any issue of national importance,
9- he concludes and ratifies international treaties,
10- he awards State medals, decorations and honorific titles,

Article 78 of the Constitution gives the President the attributions of appointing. The President of the Republic appoints officials for the following posts:

1- to posts and mandates provided by the Constitution,
2- to State civil and military posts,
3- to nominations decided in the Cabinet,
4- the President of the Council of State,
5- the Secretary General of the Government,
6- the Governor of the Bank of Algeria,
7- the Magistrates,
8- high officials of security bodies,
9- the "walis",

The President of the Republic appoints and recalls the ambassadors and the special envoys of the Republic abroad. He receives the credentials and the letters of recall of foreign diplomatic representatives. *Article 124* provides for the President's power of legislating: The President of the Republic can legislate by ordinance in case there is a vacancy of the People's National Assembly or in the inter-sessions periods of the Parliament. The President of the Republic submits the texts he enacted to be approved by each of the two chambers of the Parliament in its next session. The ordinances not adopted by the Parliament are void. The President of the Republic may legislate by ordinance in case of a state of exception defined by *Article 93* of the Constitution.

As for the electoral system in Algeria, the law texts which govern presidential elections in Algeria are: the amended and completed order 07-97 dated on March 6th, 1997 providing for the organic law of the electoral system, the Constitution of November 28th, 1996 which was

amended in November 22nd, 2008, in addition to presidential directives such as the directive issued on February 7th, 2009.

The Algerian Constitution provides also for several articles which give the Algerian people the power of sovereignty, the power of legitimating and legalizing, and the freedom to choose its representatives. Among these most important provisions of the articles of the Constitution:

"The People is the source of all powers. National sovereignty belongs to the People only" (Article 6)

"The People exercises his sovereignty through the constitutional institutions he elects..." (Article 7)

"The People is free to choose his representatives..." (Article 10)

"The State finds its legitimacy and raison d'être in the will of the People..." (Article 11)

The Algerian electoral code provides for several items, inter alia:

- the vote is personal, secret and direct,
- electoral Age: 18 years the day the ballot,
- electoral rolls are permanent and are subject to annual or
- exceptional review,
- duration of the polling lasts one day, starts at eight am and ends at seven pm,
- the polling date can be postponed for 72 hours maximum for itinerant polling stations. The polling date can be postponed for 120 hours for polling stations opened at the diplomatic and consular missions,
- during presidential elections, citizens living abroad exercise their right to vote in the Algerian diplomatic and consular missions in their countries of residence. In case of an obstacle, they can exercise their right to vote by means of a proxy at the level of the same missions.

1. Conduct of the electoral process

The municipal electoral commission in charge of preparing and verifying the electoral rolls works under the supervision of a magistrate,

Any elector has the right of access to the electoral roll he is registered in (and the possibility of lodging petition or objection at the court).

Legally-accredited representatives of the political parties and independent candidates have access to the electoral rolls and can get a copy of each.

The polling office consists of a president, a deputy president, a secretary, and two assistants.

The members of the polling office are appointed among citizens of the province (wilaya) territory. Candidates as well as their representatives have the right to object the list of the polling office's members.

If the objection is accepted, the list of the polling office's members can be changed.

A. During the vote

- the suffrage is personal and secret,
- the vote of each elector is recorded by his signature,
- candidates or their representatives can attend the process of voting.

B. After the vote

The counting of the votes is conducted publicly and is by persons among the electors enrolled at the polling stations,

The results of the vote are recorded at the polling station in the presence of the electors, candidates or their representatives,

Any candidate has the right to object the process of the vote by means of lodging a petition in the minutes of the polling station.

The Constitutional Council shall be immediately notified by telegram about the objection,

A copy of the counting minutes is delivered for each representative of each candidate,

The proceedings of the municipal electoral commission in charge of counting the elections' results at the level of the municipality shall be conducted in the presence of the candidate's representatives.

C. *Electoral calendar*

The provisions of the amended and modified Order 07 - 97 dated on March 06th, 1997 providing for the organic law pertaining to the elections stipulate on the following electoral calendar:

C.1. Process of printing the signatures forms

Start of the process: Thursday, January 08th, 2009
End of the process: Monday, February 23rd, 2009.

C.2. Summoning the electorate

Electors are summoned pursuant to a presidential decree issued sixty (60) days before the date of the ballot, i.e. Saturday, February 07th, 2009.

C.3. Exceptional review of the electoral rolls

This process lasts for ten (10) days starting from Tuesday, February 10th, to Thursday, February 19th, 2009.

C.4. Administrative applications for enrolling or removing recorded citizens

The period of time for citizens' applications for enrolment or removal from the electoral rolls at the electoral administrative commissions stretches over eight (8) days, Thursday, February 26th, 2009 is the deadline *(Article 24, paragraph 1).*

The period of time allotted for the electoral administrative commissions to examine the applications is five (5) days; Tuesday, March 3rd, 2009 is the deadline *(Article 24, paragraph 3).*

C.5. Judicial applications for enrolling or removing recorded citizens

The period of time pertaining to enrolling and removing citizens at the qualified administrative and judicial authority is eight (8) days starting from the day of submitting the application *(Article 25)*

The period of time for examining the applications at the qualified administrative and judicial authorities is ten (10) days *(Article 25)*

D. Period of time for submitting candidacies and recording them at the Constitutional Council

D.1. The statement for candidacy is submitted to the Constitutional Council within fifteen (15) days at the most following the publication of the presidential decree summoning the electorate, namely Monday, 23rd February

D.2. The Constitutional Council decides over acceptance of candidacies by means of a decision within ten (10) days starting from the date the statement is submitted. Thus, Saturday, March 7th, 2009 is the deadline *(Article 158 A)*

D.3. Applicants are directly notified about the decision of rejection *(Article 158 A).*

E. Electoral operations

E.1. Period of time for appointing proxies

The period of time for appointing proxies starts the second Saturday following the date the electorate is summoned and ends three (3) days before the polling day, namely its starts on Saturday, February 21st, 2009 and ends on Sunday, April 5th, 2009 *(Article 67).*

As concerns the vote of Algerian citizens residing abroad, the period of time for appointing proxies starts on Saturday, February 21st, 2009 and ends on Tuesday, March 31st, 2009.

E.2. Campaign's Period

The electoral campaign starts 21 days before the polling day and ends two (02) days before the polling day; namely it started on Thursday, March 19th, 2009 and ends on Monday, April 6th, 2009 *(Article 172).*

E.3. Polling process

3.1. Algerian citizens residing abroad: one hundred and twenty 120) hours before the polling day, namely Saturday, April 4th, 2009 *(Article 34)*

3.2. Itinerant polling stations: seventy-two (72) hours before the polling day, namely Monday, April 6th, 2009 *(Article 34).*

3.3. Fixed polling stations: the polling day, namely Thursday, April 9th, 2009 *(Article 34).*

Walis acting on the basis of permission from the Minister of the Interior can anticipate the opening of the vote *(Article 34)* or delay the closing of the vote *(Article 133).*

E.4. Counting the votes

Counting the votes follows directly the closing of the vote and continues without interruption until all the votes are counted *(Article 53).*

E.5 - Minutes of the results

5.1. Inside the country: minutes are drafted by the provincial electoral commissions which convene at the province's headquarters. Outside the country: these minutes are drafted by the electoral commission which convenes at Algiers province's headquarters.

5.2. The provincial electoral commission is entrusted with gathering the results of all its municipalities and with the general counting of these results *(Article 165, paragraph 1)*.

5.3. The commission shall end its proceedings on the day following the polling date at 12 o'clock as the last deadline, namely Friday, April 10th, 2009 *(Article 165, paragraph 2).*

5.4. The provincial electoral commission and the electoral commission for citizens residing abroad send directly the minutes in sealed envelopes to the Constitutional Council on the day following the polling date, namely Friday, April 10th, 2009 *(article 165, paragraph 4).*

E.6. Objecting the validity of the voting process

Any candidate or his representative can object the validity of the voting process by means of introducing a petition in the minutes of the polling station. The Constitutional Council is immediately notified about the petition by means of telegram *(Article 166).*

E.7. Announcing the results by the Constitutional Council

The Constitutional Council announces the final results of the presidential elections in a period of ten (10) days at the most starting from the date of reception of the minutes drafted by the provincial electoral commissions and the electoral commission for the vote of Algerians residing abroad, namely on Monday, April 20th, 2009 as the ultimate date. *(Article 167)*

E.8. Case of a second round

8.1. The Constitutional Council announces the results of the first round and announces the candidates concerned by the second round.

8.2. The polling date of the second round shall be fifteen (15) days following the announcement by the Constitutional Council of the results of the first round. The maximum period between the first and second rounds must not exceed thirty (30) days.

E.9. Second round campaign's period

The campaign starts 12 days before the polling day of the second round and ends two (2) days before the polling day.

E.10. Announcing the results of the second round

The Constitutional Council announces the final results of the second round in a maximum of ten (10) day-period of time starting from the reception of minutes sent by the electoral commissions *(Article 167).*

2. Electorate

A. Before the revision of the electoral rolls: 19,597,239 voters of which 927,947 voters are registered as part of the Algerian community residing abroad.

- New registered voters: 1,684,014
- Removed voters: 685,570

B. After the revision of the electoral rolls: 20,595,683 voters of which 941,455 voters are registered as part of the Algerian community living abroad ***(15)***.

3. Final results of the election of the President of the Republic as announced by the Constitutional Council

- Enrolled voters: 20595683
- Voters: 15356024
- Election's turnout: 74.56 %
- Spoilt ballot papers: 925771
- Votes: 14430253

- Results of each candidate in a descending order:

1. Abdelaziz BOUTEFLIKA: 13019787
2. Louisa HANOUNE: 649632
3. Moussa TOUATI: 294411
4. Mohamed Djahid YOUNSI: 208549
5. Mohand Said OUBELAID: 133315
6. Ali Faouzi REBAINE: 124559

4. Media campaign

Laws governing elections in Algeria provide for equal opportunities for presidential elections' candidates in order to present their programs for voters during the electoral campaign.

These laws stipulate on equal rights of access to media, inter alia, television, radio and other means of advertising such as posting flyers and holding public meetings and festivals.

Airtime at the radio and television during the media campaign beside news coverage was allotted in April 09th, 2009 by drawing lots at the National Political Commission for Monitoring Elections.

A. Timetables of the airtime at the National Television and Radio

The allocation of television and radio airtime during the electoral campaign for the six candidates and their representatives was set up by drawing lots which took place on March 15th, 2009 at the headquarters of the National Political Commission for Monitoring Presidential Elections, Algiers.

This process was carried out under the supervision of the Commission's President, Mohamed TAKKIA, in the presence of the Commission's members and representatives of the candidates as well as of the political parties which accredited the Commission. The outcome of this process consisted in allotting airtime for candidates and their representatives before main news bulletins of the National Television and Radio throughout all the electoral campaign which lasted from March 19th to April 6th.

It is worthy of recall that the time allocation respected the principle of equal opportunities for all the candidates. Every candidate was given three time units, 5 minutes each, to appear on TV and Radio before every main news bulletin.

Candidates and their representatives will be on Television three times a day during all the period of the electoral campaign before the news bulletin of one o'clock (from 12.20 pm to 12.50 pm), the news bulletin of six o'clock (from 5.20 pm to 5.50 pm) and the news bulletin of eight o'clock (from 7.20 pm to 7.50 pm).

At the Radio, Channel 1 in Arabic, Channel 2 in Tamazight and Channel 3 in French, all candidates were granted 30 minutes before every main news bulletin.

Candidates will appear in Radio Channel 1 three times per day for all the electoral campaign, before the news bulletin of 7 am (from 6.25 am to 6.55 am), before the news bulletin of 1 pm (from 12.25 pm to 12.55 pm) except Fridays (from 11.30 am to 12 o'clock) and before the evening news bulletin (from 6.55 pm to 7.25 pm)

As concerns Radio channel 2 which broadcasts in Tamazight language, candidates can explain their programs to auditors prior to the news bulletin of 7 pm (from 6.25 am to 6.55 am), before the news bulletin of 1 pm (12.25 pm to 12.55 pm) except Fridays (11.55 am to 12.25 pm), and before the evening news bulletin (6.55 pm to 7.25 pm).

As for Radio channel 3, candidates will appear three times per day: prior to the news bulletin of 7 am (from 6.25 am to 6.55 am), before midday news bulletin (from 11.55 am to 12.25 pm), and before the evening news bulletin (6.25 pm to 6.55).

Prior to drawing lots, the National Political Commission for Monitoring Elections' members agreed on the possibility for candidates' representatives to choose in every time one time unit or two.

B. *Spaces for posting flyers*

Flyers are posted in the right space in all municipalities as follows:

- 10 spaces in all municipalities which have a population of 20,000 people or less,
- 16 spaces in all municipalities which have a population number ranging from 20,001 to 40,000 people,
- 24 spaces municipalities which have a population number ranging from 40,001 to 100,000 people,
- 30 spaces in all municipalities which have a population number ranging from 100,001 to 180,000 people and one single space for every 10,000 people in municipalities which have a population of more than 180,000 people.

Several candidates complained of President-candidate Abdelaziz BOUTEFLIKA who went beyond the spaces designed for him. This fact was noticed in all municipalities where giant posters of BOUTEFLIKA were posted in places which were not designed for this purpose. All other candidates lodged complaints against these breaches at the Commission for Monitoring Elections ***(16)***. Despite the illegality of such acts, the Commission did not react.

CHAPTER THREE
RESULTS OF THE MEDIA MONITORING

I. Data of the total monitored area

It is necessary to point out that the methodology adopted in analyzing data consists in raising questions and avoiding making judgments. Reference will be made to the political actors and journalists in the analysis of these data.

It should be noted that the total area devoted to the electoral campaign in the written press is estimated at 402.949,52 cm². Public newspapers occupy the largest portion of this area. These papers follow the agenda of the government. Even though their number represents only one third of the studied sample, these papers have devoted the largest area for covering the electoral campaign compared to other newspapers as the following tables clearly depict it:

Table 01: Data of the total monitored area about the electoral campaign in the written press (cm²)

Frequency of the media unit	**14184**
Mean of the area	**28.4090**
Total area	**402952,94**

Table 02: Classification of the written press content according the statutes (public/private)

Public press	**51.42 %**
Private press	**48.58 %**

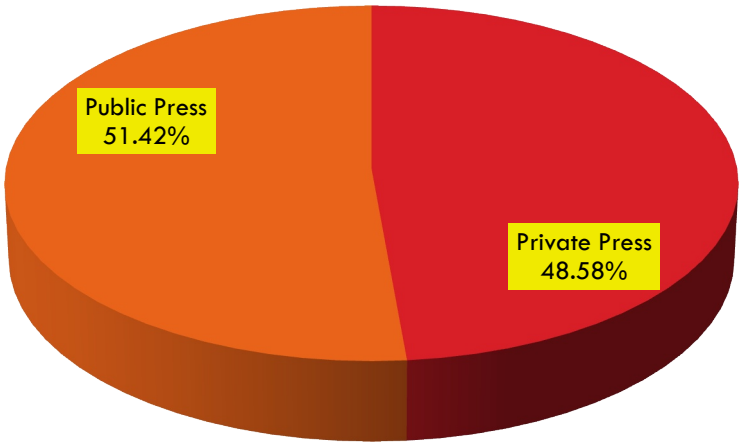
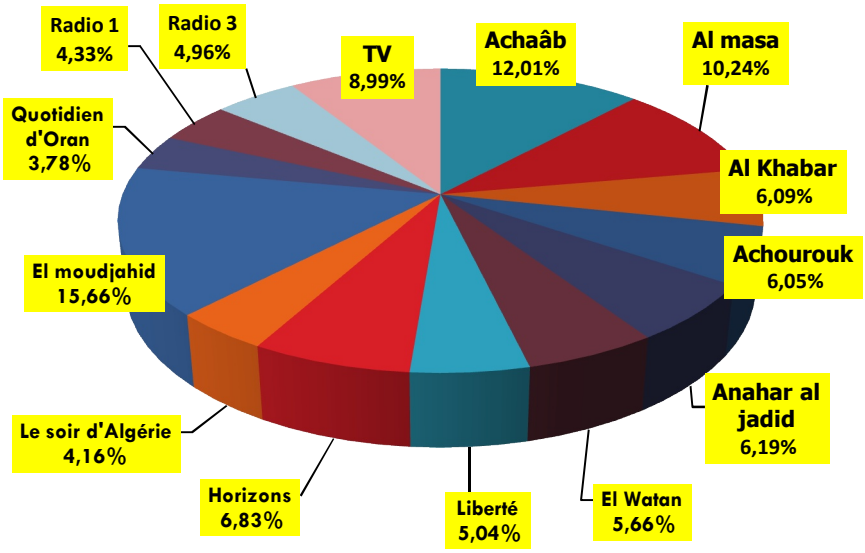


Table 03: Figures about the studied media content



Without making recourse to the qualitative assessment of the data, only an interpretation of the quantitative measurement is enough to highlight a flagrant bias in favour of candidate Abdelaziz BOUTEFLIKA at the expense of all others candidates in the written press, television and radio.

These figures clearly depict the concentration of the public written and broadcasting media on the elections event.

Besides, table 03 highlights that the four public newspapers alone came in the first position in terms of the area they allocated for covering the electoral campaign, 44.74 %. Al-Moudjahid newspaper is in the first position with 15.66 %. One of the instances that show this tendency is the coordination between Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Communication and directors of public media institution which were

assigned to launch large media campaigns in order to persuade people to massively vote. Their work was translated by broadcasting frequent television and radio flashes which link between elections, patriotism, fighting for the country and other types of discourse.

The area devoted for the covering the electoral campaign in the public and private newspapers is shown in the following tables:

Table 04: Total area of allocated for the political actors in the written press (cm²)

	Area mean	Total area
COMMISSION FOR MONITORING ELECTIONS	36,4899	**43350,01**
GOVERNMENT	28,1077	**86403,11**
President BOUTEFLIKA	32,1966	**26304,62**
Candidate BOUTEFLIKA	33,9180	**206187,23**
Louiza HANOUNE	30,8867	**59765,74**
Moussa TOUATI	20,9084	**35553,30**
Faouzi REBAINE	32,6843	**50399,22**
Djahid YOUNSI	22,2799	**36271,63**
Oubelaid MOHAND SAID	21,6622	**31800,12**
ABSTAINERS	26,8115	**20912,99**

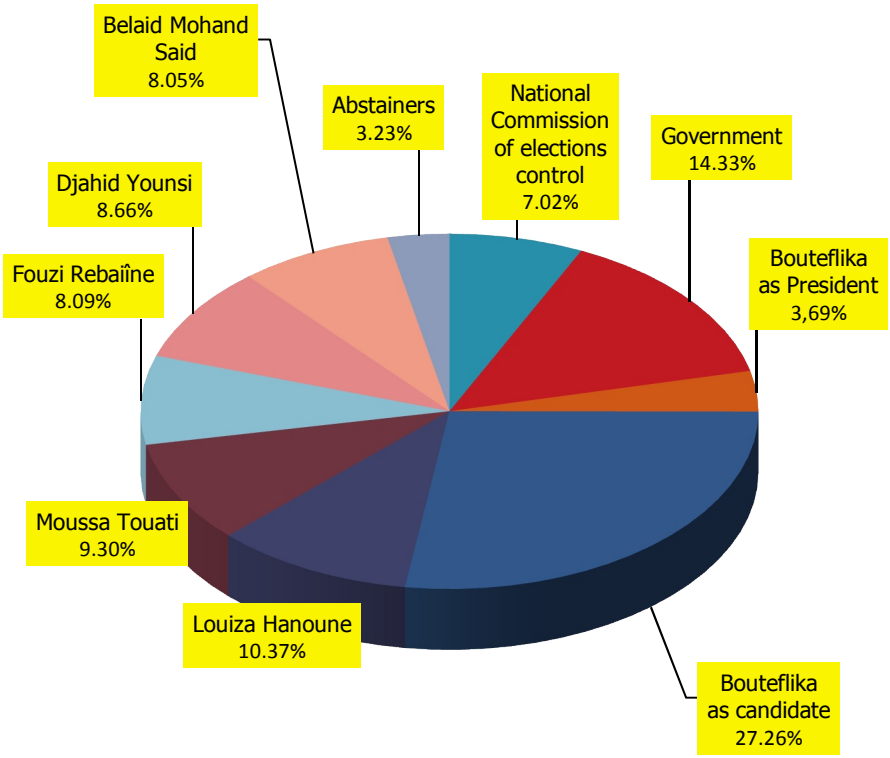
II. Coverage of candidate BOUTEFLIKA's campaign equals the coverage of all candidates' campaigns together

1. The areas political actors occupied

This table shows that candidate BOUTEFLIKA's activities prevailed over any other candidate's activities in the written press. The total area occupied in the written press by all candidates (213.788 cm²) is almost the same as the total area candidate BOUTEFLIKA alone had (206.187 cm²). This fact is enough to illustrate that candidate BOUTEFLIKA cornered the majority of the areas in the public and private newspapers. If we merge all the areas BOUTEFLIKA the President and BOUTEFLIKA the candidate covered, we find that the result, 232.491 cm², exceeds by 18.703 cm² the area covered by all candidates together. This portrays the large divide the presence of candidate BOUTEFLIKA caused in the written press between BOUTEFLIKA and the rest of the candidates.

BOUTEFLIKA the candidate, BOUTEFLIKA the President, the government and the Commission for Monitoring the Elections occupied an area estimated at 366.244 cm². These political actors are put together because they all acted within a campaign which endeavoured to maintain President BOUTEFLIKA in the power. In fact, they did not hide their objective in their statements through what they refer to as His Excellency's achievements. In their pursuit, they used all means, among others, mosques and patriotic and popular discourses. Press also covered during the last days of the electoral campaign ministers' ground visits during which they inaugurated what they call the President's achievements during the last ten years in addition to the press coverage of some ministerial activities during the electoral campaign (Ministry of Solidarity in particular) which consisted in distributing aids for marginalized fringes.

Table 05: Percentages of the areas political actors occupied



When we put together the percentages of all candidates, we find that President BOUTEFLIKA truly had the monopoly in the written press. He alone had 27.26 % whereas the luckiest candidate among others during the electoral campaign, LABOUR PARTY's candidate Louiza HANOUNE, did not exceed 10.37 %. The percentages of the all other candidates are ranging between 08.05 % and 09.30 %.

These figures become more significant particularly if we know that, contrary to all other candidates, journalists who covered the campaign of President Abdelaziz BOUTEFLIKA were the same throughout all the campaign. These journalists were appointed by their newspapers as special envoys only in charge of covering BOUTEFLIKA's activities. They accompanied the President during all his tours in a special presidential plane. Such means were not made available for all other candidates whose campaigns were covered by press correspondents.

It is a paramount difference since there is an agreement about the presence of a large divide between the training of journalists specialized in covering political activities and local correspondents who would cover a football match or a concert or unusual events or an electoral meeting. Besides, local correspondents are in their majority not professionals of journalism; a lot of them are schools' teachers or local administration's clerks. ***(17)***

The area occupied by abstention advocates is estimated at 3.23 % which is the lowest percentage in this table. The total area political actors which called for the boycott of elections occupied in newspapers was 20.912 cm² which is the smallest area in the table. It is even far from the smallest area allocated for candidate Mohand Said OUBELAID which is estimated at 31.800 cm².

Thus, the majority of the opposition political parties which called for the abstention of the vote, namely FRONT OF SOCIAL FORCES, RALLY FOR CULTURE AND DEMOCRACY, AL-NAHDHA MOVEMENT and others, was in the last position of the classification of the areas devoted for the coverage of the political activities. There is a difference of 11.000 cm² bellow the lowest area written press allocated for Mohand Said OUBELAID.

2. Collective campaign on abstention: "abstainers are saboteurs"

Attacks launched in several newspapers on abstainers are utterly unprofessional and blatant violations to the press deontology. These newspapers did not allow this category of political actors a space to defend their opinions. All means and ways, inter alia, religion, patriotism, State's symbols, were used in the assaults led on abstainers. For instance, religion was dramatically utilized in the campaign; public written press in particular and the majority of the private papers attached a paramount importance to Minister of Religious Affairs and some imams' interventions from inside and outside the country.

Bouabdellah GHLAMALLAH, Minister of Religious Affairs and one of the leaders in the political party of the Head of the government, National Democratic Rally, gathered the imams of 15000 mosques in Algeria and issued a directive calling for the mobilization of worshipers around the rejection of abstention. He made press statements published in several newspapers' front pages in which he said: *"abstention is an obscurant act and far from the major objectives Islam has enshrined"*. *"Failure to elect the President of the Republic and to the legal and legitimate duty of voting, he added, is akin to dying in the pre-Islamic obscurant era"*, quoting a Prophet's Hadith: "dying without allegiance is similar to dying in the pre-Islamic obscurant era" ***(18).*** He maintained that a call for abstention is a call for sabotage; and he urged imams to serve the State: "the imam who does not serve the State's policies is not admitted in the mosques sponsored by the Republic" and he asserted: *"just like the court, the university and the radio, the mosque is a State's social institution which must meet the needs of the society which could not exist without a strong State which enforces the rule of law"*. ***(19)***

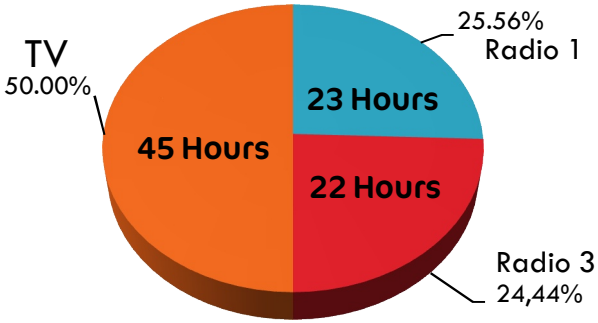
In addition to Minister of Religious Affairs' statements, a lot of imams and sheikhs of Koran schools were called to find religious grounds for the obligation of voting. A letter issued by Sheikh Abu Bakr DJABIR AL-DJAZAIRI

(20) was widely spread by the majority of newspapers ***(21)*** which published its integral text in special newspapers' pages entitled "document". It was published during the second week of the campaign precisely on March 26th.

Among other things, the letter says: *"O people! Our country, which your fathers and grandfathers defended and for which one million and half martyrs sacrificed their lives, calls upon you to vote and to show to its friends and to its enemies that Algerians are all unified in one people standing by the side of his leaders for prosperity, security and stability. It calls upon you to vote during the presidential elections, to show your attachment to your country and to choose your leaders who serve the country and its people".* ***(22)*** The Sheikh made a sermon about the religious obligation of voting and said: *"I call upon you, honourable people, to heavily participate in the upcoming presidential elections. Voting is the right and the duty of all Algerians. I am deeply convinced that my brothers in Algeria are aware of this and ready to do their duty"* ***(23)***

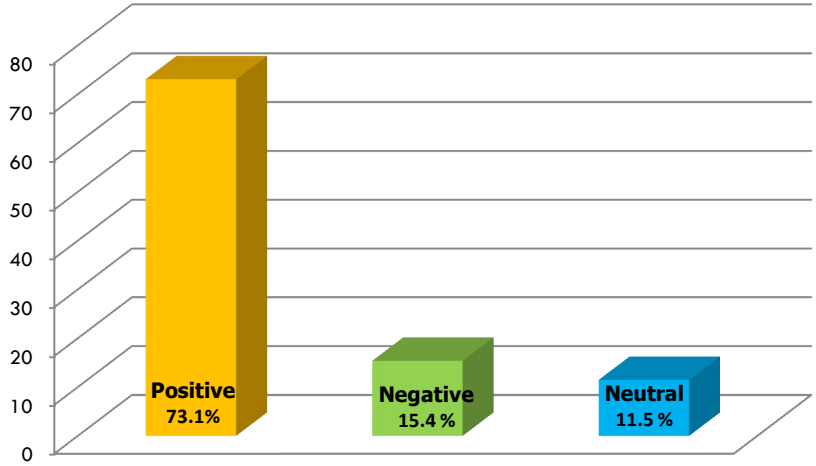
For several days, newspapers continued writing about the content of the letter. Among others, there was an article on April 07th ***(24)*** entitled *"Answering the call of scholar Abu Bakr DJABIR AL-DJAZAIRI: more than 1000 penitents announce their support for candidate Bouteflika"* ***(25)***

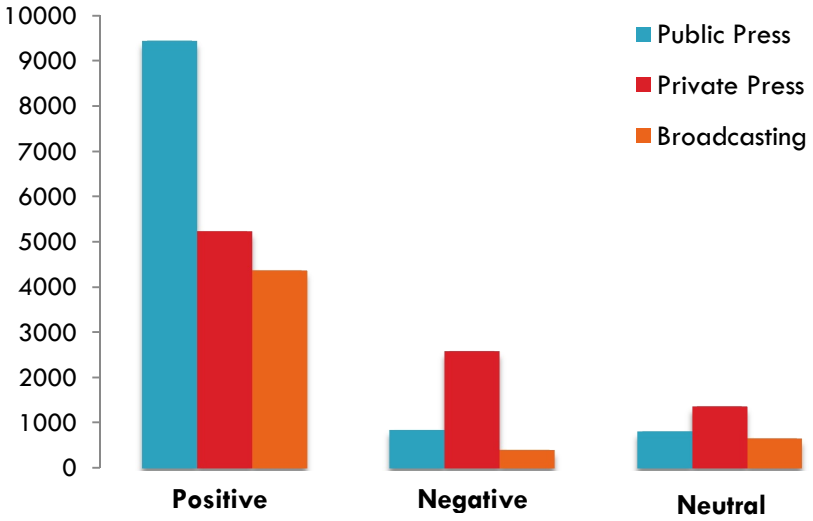
Table 06: Time allocation in the broadcasting media



III. Media coverage tendencies

Table 07: Media tendencies during the electoral campaign





1. 88.5% of the media content was not neutral

The quantitative measurement revealed that 88.5 % of the media content was not neutral. This percentage shows that 73.11 % of the media content had a positive tendency whereas 15.4 % had a negative one and only 11.5 % was neutral.

These figures depict unfortunately an utter lack of professionalism, a flagrant breach of the profession's deontology and of the fairness standards which electoral campaigns require from all journalists. Indeed journalists have a heavy responsibility during elections so as to guarantee equal opportunities for all candidates, provide as much as possible of unbiased information about political actors. In this context, specialists who laid down the rules of election's media coverage, particularly during electoral campaigns, require from journalist:

A. Accuracy

Access to accurate news is one of the most important pillars of the press. Transmission of news, such as names of candidates and their statements, must be accurate and true. Reported figures, names of persons, places and objects must be precise. Elections make candidates and voters emotional; therefore, one must be careful in reporting their statements; and must clearly show the meaning of the contents and provide their contexts in order to avoid misunderstandings.

B. Neutrality (fair balance)

A good press stresses the importance of objectivity and neutrality. To embody these two rules, journalists endeavour to write balanced articles. In other words, journalists have to include in their writings the views of both parties. When a candidate makes political accusations or promises during an electoral campaign, a good journalist must include in his report antagonist positions as a guarantee of objectivity and impartiality. Finding different views and opinions discards bias in favour of one party. Still it is necessary to make fair and balanced reports. A journalist may

shed light on a particular candidate given the importance of his statements and actions in a given context; and may give more importance to another in a different context. Even though a fair balance requires great efforts, it is a sine qua non condition in the press profession. Thus, any press report must include at least two different views.

Journalists including those who work for any pro-political party media institution must be neutral and observe a balance in their news reports. Also journalists of public media institutions must cover the campaign of opposition political parties. This is the balanced press and it should be fair. Furthermore, both public press and private one must separate between political opinions and comments on one hand and news on the other.

A lot of electors do not voice their ideas with journalists who write only about a particular political party. Also, voters who do not trust journalists tell them what journalists want to hear. Consequently, the truth becomes hidden. There is another meaning of the concept of neutrality. It is the absence of journalist's allegiance for a particular political party or group. Whenever a journalist delves into political activities, his writings will be questioned and enshrined with suspicion even if they are very objective. A journalist should not campaign for a particular category, provide funds or any other kind of supports whatsoever for a political party or accepts presents from it.

C. *Responsibility*

Journalists have great responsibility to people they transmit news from and to their audiences. Whenever required to, journalists have to keep their news sources confidential because people would not release facts unveiling political corruption if they are afraid of being cited. Furthermore, professional journalists, in their quest for news, limit themselves only to the use of the means provided for by their

deontology. Journalists should observe the international standards of journalism.

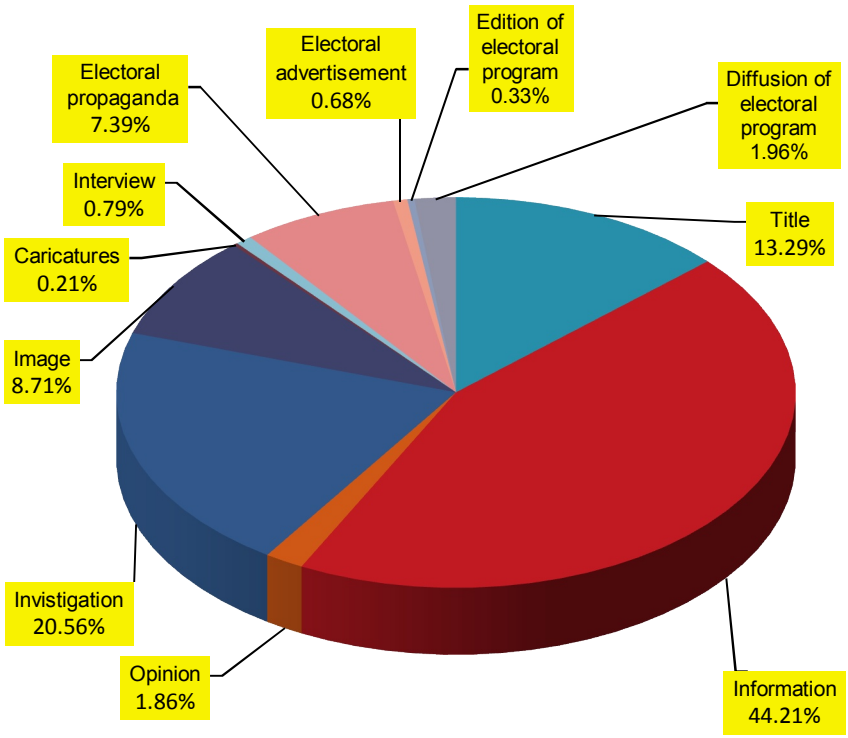
According to the study, the majority of the media neglected these standards and rules however. Breaches made to these standards and rules were not all similar. Private written press, despite all the kinds of pressure and the gaps in training journalists and correspondents, was more neutral and less biased in comparison to public written press which was also better than the television and the radio channels, the less neutral and the most biased. The role of television and radio channels will be further analyzed under the qualitative assessment.

The analysis of bias phenomenon and flagrant lack of neutrality reveals the factors already referred to, among others, the pressures exercised on journalists, the limits imposed on freedom of speech along with the historical background which links the emergence of the Algerian press to the history of the political struggle ***(26).***

2. Only 02.29 % of the media content tackled candidates' programs

The most striking fact the analysis of the figures pertaining the media forms adopted by the studied media in their coverage of the electoral campaign is the absence of techniques which provide the newspapers readers, the television viewers or the radio listeners with a maximum of news about the candidates' programs which are necessary for understanding and distinguishing between the programs of all candidates. Press interview, for instance, which is paramount in presenting programs and counter-programs, was only exploited at 0.79 %. Besides, the broadcasting of the candidate's programs was only used at 02.29 %. It is a very low percentage as the electoral campaign is supposed to be in the first position a race between programs. Still in this field, these deficiencies should not be imputed to the press only. The importance of the candidates on one hand and their electoral strategies

on the other are crucial factors. The follower of the campaign will note that the objective of all candidates was as if they were pushing people to vote and not to open a dialogue about ruling the City.



The analysis reveals also the restriction imposed on freedom of the press. The press forms concerning the freedom of opinion were used only at 01.86 %. This figure depicts to some extent the control “gate keepers”, as referred to in the language of socio-communication of masses, i.e. editors in chief, editorial directors, heads of department, and all other parties which have the power to publish or censor news and opinions, have in guaranteeing a coverage which does not upset those who have interests in maintaining the status quo. This issue is linked to the political structure of the Algerian press institution on one hand, and to the economic structure which is subject to advertising, tax and even

security pressures on the other ***(27)***. In an article entitled *"Intelligence services: a partner which became the owner of the press"* ***(28)***, "Al-Khabar" daily newspaper wrote in its front page about general intelligence services which interfere in the work of journalists.

Sherif RAZKI, director of the newspaper, has asserted the involvement of the intelligence services: *"freedoms in Algeria know degradation over these last years particularly since the elections of 2004 …"* ***(29).***

The decline freedom of the press knows and the inclination of the press to propaganda instead of information was the focus of several foreign journalists. In a press release published after he left Algeria, the correspondent of the French-German television channel, ARTE, pointed out: *"it was my first visit to Algeria and I had never witnessed a similar political and press blackout to the one I saw in Algeria"*, adding *"it has become easier to be a journalist in Belarus and in Russia than in Algeria"* ***(30)***

Even during the electoral campaign, Algeria lived pressures exercised on both journalists and Algerians. Samia BABA AISSA, an Algerian journalist based in Paris, was aggressed while covering a meeting held on March 28th, 2009 in support of President Abdelaziz BOUTEFLIKA. The assault was condemned by large organizations for the defence of the freedom of the press ***(31)***. Furthermore, Algerian police arrested on April 11th, 2009 a group of journalists of "TF1" French television channel while making a report in Media city, located some 80 km south of Algiers ***(32)***, in addition to a series of events which clearly denote that the coverage of the elections was conducted under tight surveillance measures.

A careful reading of the forms of journalism used in the coverage of the elections illustrates the decline of the freedom of the press. Algerians did not read articles nor did they watch programs about candidates' funding sources. No investigation was conducted about corruption,

money laundering during the electoral campaign and exploitation of the State's means for campaigning purposes. Although several presidential candidates accused in their statements the President of exploiting State's properties and using suspicious funds in his campaign, debates between candidates on their programs and on files addressing the Algerian crisis were absent ***(33)***.

Even though the qualitative assessment of the news about elections unveils a flagrant bias, the following chart shows clearly a relatively positive factor, namely the emergence of an important form of press: "facts" which is used up to 44.21 %. The first and main objective of daily newspapers consists in imparting facts. However, "Facts are sacred, comment is free" rule is not deeply rooted so far.

IV. Journalists, the Commission for Monitoring Elections and "Pacemakers"

According to a report published by "Al Quds Al Arabi" newspaper in London, the threat launched by the president of the Political Commission for Monitoring Presidential Elections with bringing lawsuits against some private newspapers which described the candidates as "pacemakers" surprised the observers of the elections who know that this notion in neither new nor insulting candidates.

Mohamed TAKKIA, the Commission's president and former minister of justice (1993-1994) threatened the newspapers which qualify candidates for April 9th presidential elections as "pacemaker" and asserted that the law will be enforced regarding this matter.

He said that the Constitutional Council adopted a list of six candidates for the presidential elections and put them on an equal footing. Therefore, it is meaningless to call some candidates "pacemakers". The statement of the president surprised primarily journalists especially that

"pacemaker" notion has been circulating for years in every presidential election; and was not used with the intention to defame or abuse any candidate. Journalists consider using this notion has become necessary in explaining the map of each presidential election, and to provide the laypeople with information about the importance of each candidate.

In a statement published by "Al Quds Al Arabi", lawyer and human rights activist, Mokrane AIT LARBI, said that "pacemaker" is not an Algerian neologism. It is a widely used political term and every person who is candidate in an election without chances to win is described as a "pacemaker". He added that a candidate may not have great importance in the elections but may have a program, ideas and be credible; and even if the candidate does not win in the elections, one could not describe him as "pacemaker". He mentioned Olivier BESANCENOT as the best example of a candidate who does not have an electoral importance and who could not be qualified as a "pacemaker" however. He said that candidates of 1999 and 2004 presidential elections cannot be described as pacemakers because figures like former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ahmed TALEB AL-IBRAHIMI, former Head of the Government, Mouloud HAMROUSH, or Hocine AIT AHMED, a historical personality, would win if elections were fair. He stressed that a candidate who wins only 2 % of the votes, who himself does not believe that he would win, who does not have credibility or weight in society would not but be qualified as pacemaker.

He stressed that the threat of the Commission's president was not serious because "pacemaker" term cannot be considered from the legal point of view as defamatory; and consequently, journalists or newspapers which described candidates as pacemakers cannot be prosecuted. He added: *"should Mohammed Takkia decide to give credibility to the upcoming presidential elections, he will have to focus on other matters, knowing that mass media, television and radio channels, are clearly biased in favour of President Bouteflika who is*

running for a third term through an exaggerated emphasis on what they call the achievements attained during the President's rule"

He said that BOUTEFLIKA's victory is *"beyond doubt yet the principle of equal opportunities for all candidates should be respected at least technically". "The State as well as its institutions, he stressed, are all mobilized for Bouteflika's campaign and the Political Commission did not react."*

AÏT LARBI said that TAKKIA's statement is not strange as long as the Minister of Religious Affairs, Bouabdellah GHLAMALLAH, says that voting is a religious duty, and as long as the Minister of the Interior has vowed not to let the abstention advocates promote their position; while democracy entails equal opportunities and equal means for vote advocates and abstention ones as well"

As regards Mohamed IWANOUGHEN, deputy editor in chief of Al-Khabar newspaper, he said that the Commission's president's threat cannot be considered as a real one since "there is no law text which imposes sanctions on whoever describes candidates as pacemaker". Surprised, he added that it is strange how such statements would come from a former Minister of Justice.

He pointed out that normally the Commission's president should attach importance to the violations recorded during the campaign, particularly with regard to the absolute bias of State's institutions, public media and press which support openly BOUTEFLIKA at the expense of other candidates. IWANOUGHEN expressed his surprise about how some independent newspapers would cause inconveniences since the whole electoral machine is operating in favour of BOUTEFLIKA and his victory has become evident.

V. Television largely accused of bias

All the presidential candidates, except the president-candidate, accused the Algerian television of bias in favour of Abdelaziz BOUTEFLIKA. The representatives of the five candidates at the level of the National Political Commission for Monitoring the Presidential Elections condemned what they described as *"a flagrant bias of the television" in "the Annals of the Presidential Elections"* program broadcasted just after the main news bulletin. While this program is conducted by associations and political parties campaigning for candidate Abdelaziz BOUTEFLIKA; no similar campaigning space was made available for all other candidates. After discussions in this regard, the representatives of the candidates decided to maintain the program on condition of limiting the interventions only to calls for voting and without campaigning for candidate Abdelaziz BOUTEFLIKA ***(34)***.

In an interview, Aissa BELMEKKI, representative of candidate Faouzi REBAINE, asserted that *"the television coverage was unfair"*. He qualified the performance of the television as inequitable and the example he gave was "the Annals of the Presidential Elections" program broadcasted directly and every day after the main news bulletin ***(35)***. Djamal BEN-ABDESSALAM from the National Reform Movement and director of Djahid YOUNSI's electoral campaign, heaped on the television with critics and qualified it by "*disaster and biased in favour of one candidate"*; adding *"it is clear that authorities have not changed their way in treating the candidates"*. Besides, he availed himself of the opportunity to criticize the Commission for Monitoring Elections and said *"the Commission, which was supposed to guarantee the consecration of transparency, committed a series of violations and the administration as well"* considering that such deeds jeopardize democracy. As concerns radio channels, he expressed some satisfaction toward its role which he deemed "reasonable".

The national director of candidate MOHAMED SAID's electoral campaign protested against the television which did not broadcast in its main news bulletins their activities in several provinces, inter alia, Aïn Defla, Chlef, and Tiaret. He considered such practices as a violation to the principle of equity and to the National Political Commission's decisions regarding the right of candidates to televise their activities; and as a scorn for the citizens' right to fair and neutral information. According to a statement issued by the candidate's campaign head office, "flagrantly violating the decisions of the Commission, the national television, since the start of the electoral campaign, has deliberately denied access to candidate Mohammed Said and prevented him from telecasting his domestic activities. After the television did not broadcast the activities the candidate conducted in Aid Defla and Chlef provinces, it imposed on Thursday a blackout on all his activities in the main news bulletin". Consequently, the candidate's office lodged a petition at the National Commission's coordinator.

Television imposes the spiral of silence

The quantitative measurement revealed the roots of the most critics directed to the television whereas the qualitative assessment provided a more accurate picture of the television's bias. As an example, we deliberately decided to analyze the appearances of the presidential elections' candidates in the eight o'clock news bulletin for a whole week starting from Friday, March 27th, 2009 to Thursday, April 02nd, 2009. We found among other facts, that the bias is present at several levels which are:

- Candidate Abdelaziz BOUTEFLIKA movements were shot in 120 sequences which is the largest number of sequences in comparison with those of the rest of candidates which were focusing in their majority on the masses.

- The interpretation of candidate BOUTEFLIKA's table shows the diversity of shots. Using several types of shots is a way to avoid the viewer feel disgusted or tired if only two kinds of scenes are adopted during each time allocated to each candidate (this is what we saw in the case of some candidates such as Ali Faouzi REBAINE). On the other hand, the American shot was used several times for it has a well-known characteristic namely embodying power and heroism; and probably it was used with the view to make the image of the strongest candidate prevail over others.

It is worthy to point out that this shot was used only once for candidate Louiza HANOUNE and once for MOHAMED SAID. As for other candidates, this shot was not used at all.

- Camera movements were also diversified in covering BOUTEFLIKA's activities. Fixed shots were used only in situations where the candidate gave speeches, while panning was adopted in shooting BOUTEFLIKA with masses. Different types of travelling camera movements were utilized with the view to have a strong impact and give the scenes an aesthetic aspect on one hand; and in order to highlight the relation between the candidate and the public as to show the close tie that binds them on the other. These camera movements were probably used to stress the popularity of the candidate in order to attract more supporters and impose what German scientist, Elisabeth NOELLE-NEUMANN, calls the spiral of silence through the exaggeration of BOUTEFLIKA's popularity, pushing those who do not adhere to his ideas to isolation; and thus, deepen the phenomenon of withdrawal from the public space.

- As regards shooting angles, it is worthy to note that the lower angles were considerably used for masses. It was used only for candidate BOUTEFLIKA and it has a significance of strength, glory and the ability of the masses to decide in favour of BOUTEFLIKA.

- The number of shots is the largest number in comparison to the rest of candidates. The largest portion of these shots was used to show the masses.

- Use of diversified shots in order to avoid boring the viewers.

- Use of moving camera technique for describing the scenes, highlighting the aesthetics of the picture and of the scene.

- Use of the lower angle in shooting the candidate as well as the masses given its important role in imparting more significance.

- Focus on the candidate while giving his speech without tackling the speech itself in the coverage which is limited to illustrate the interaction of the candidate with the masses.

Television bias is a purely political problem in Algeria since its independence. It is clear today that media pluralism provided for by law 1990 is not accompanied by a will for the emancipation of the audiovisual sector. On the contrary, a lot of officials in the power, particularly since the cancellation of the democratic process in January 11th, 1992, have expressed their absolute rejection for opening the broadcasting sector for private investment and this is the position defended by the President.

In his speeches, President Abdelaziz BOUTEFLIKA has always asserted that the television, the radio and the Algerian News Agency are State's properties which are accessible for State's officials only. According to the President, the political opposition can use the public media once it reaches the power and the media cannot be opened for any party criticizing the State (the meaning of "State" in the Algerian context is "power")

In one of his statements, the President has asserted that he is the supreme official in charge of the Algerian public media. He also went to the extent of pointing out in 1999 that he is the editor in chief of the Algerian News Agency.

Recent statements show that all State officials unanimously agree on the necessity of keeping radio broadcasting sector closed in front of private investment and opposition political parties. This is what the President of the Republic, the Head of the Government, and both Speakers of the two Houses of the Parliament. Authorities put forward that the society is not prepared for opening the broadcasting sector for private investment and they pretext that what they call “national interest imposes such a decision”.

It has become clear that official propaganda, exclusion of democratic opposition and blackout imposed on all actions of the associations which refuse to adopt the stances of the power - the Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights is a striking illustration of exclusion - are all practices which prevail over the news part of the television broadcasting services.

The Algerian television devoted in its news bulletin which lasts for 40 to 50 minutes no less than 25 to 30 minutes every day for covering the official activities which are in their majority President’s activities. Consequently, some observers described the main news bulletin as the presidential bulletin as long as it aims at glorifying the President, reports his activities, reads his letters, and the letters sent to him from inside and outside the country.

Conclusion: Closed public space and impossibility of organizing free elections

The use of television by ruling authorities in order to muzzle any opposition voice and to exaggerate all voices which support authorities' stands are all practices parallel to prosecutions incriminating journalists charged of defamation; more than ten imprisonment sentences and heavy fines pursuant to the provisions of the criminal code adopted by the Government four years ago. Besides, Algeria remains under the state of emergency decided by authorities in February 9th, 1992. Despite the national and international campaign the Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights organized two years ago in order to immediately lift the state of emergency, all parties in the power unanimously reject this demand.

The state of emergency decree is used as a tool to prevent public demonstrations and popular marches in public spaces and to close the public space in front of all people and various political and human rights elites which do not share the same opinions with the Algerian authorities.

In these conditions characterized by a closed public space and inaccessible broadcasting media, the decision makers go on promoting the picture of the authorities which adopted political reforms; even though the reality has proven clearly the limitation imposed on the activities of accredited political parties and

associations which oppose the authorities' line; in addition to refusing to accredit new political parties, associations and trade unions.

The less that can be said about such a situation is that it is unsatisfactory. It does not translate any will for changing the governing logic and it portrays the rejection of a democratic alternation in power. This has always been the outcome of all past elections. The signs of exclusion of whoever refuses a general amnesty for individuals found guilty of the crisis and civil strife Algeria lived since January 1992 from the public life and heavy mass media (television and radio broadcasting services) are becoming manifest. For instance, however the number of the victims of various security forces which is estimated at 7000 thousand people according to official figures and over 12000 according to human rights organizations, associations of families of forced disappearances which authorities refuse to accredit are excluded from television and radio. How could a general amnesty be conceivable without consulting families of the victims! All these facts and so many others depict the impossibility of exercising freedoms in Algeria.

It is arduous to separate the problems of a biased press, a flagrant scorned deontology, and rules of elections coverage from a hermitically closed political space, and from an Algerian electoral process which all human rights and political observers, academicians, researchers as well as important organizations concerned with the follow up of elections in the world deem irrelevant to free and fair elections.

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(2) *Extracts from Abdelaziz BOUTEFLIKA's letter to the Members of the Parliament, November 12th, 2008*

(3) *The position of opposition political parties which boycotted the elections*

(4) *Cf. Communication Annals, State Secretariat for Communication, Algeria Mai 2009*

(5) *ibid.*

(6) *Cf. Al-Shourouk Alyaoumi, issue of May 3rd, 2009*

(7) *ibid.*

(8) *The figures were gathered on the basis of a questionnaire filled and returned by a group of journalists*

(9) *Cf. Dr. Redouane Boudjema: The journalists and the press correspondent in Algeria*

(10) *Cf. Dr. Redouane Boudjema in Cairo Center Magazine*

(11) *Cf. Bashir Al-Aourassi: Web site of Doha Center for Media Freedom*

(12) *ibid.*

(13) *Algerian Law on Information 04-90 dated on April 3rd, 1990*

(14) *Criminal code 09-01 dated on June 26th, 2001*

(15) *The electorate as defined by the Ministry of the Interior and Local Governments which is in charge of organizing the elections*

(16) *These petition were reported by some newspapers*

(17) *Cf. Dr. Redouane Boudjema: The journalists and the press correspondent in Algeria*

(18) *Cf. Al-Bilad newspaper, issue of Wednesday, February 19th, 2009*

(19) *ibid, issue of March 11th, 2009*

(20) *Born in Algeria in 1921. He left Algeria to Saudi Arabia in 1954. He is one of the most eminent scholars of Wahabism in Algeria and in the Muslim world. He is well known for a book he entitled "Muslim's paths" in which he preached the necessity of not letting girls go beyond intermediate schools as parrying evil.*

(21) *The letter was published in Al-Shourouk Al-Yaoumi, Al-Bilad, Al-Nahar, Akhbar Al-Yaoum and other newspapers*

(22) *Extracts from the letter of March 26th, 2009*

(23) *ibid.*

(24) *Cf. Al-Shourouk Al-Yaoumi, issue of April 7th, 2009*

(25)*The news was reported as follows: "the representatives of the penitents from Bouira, Tizi Ouzou, Boumerdes, Algiers and provinces of the west of the country (1000 penitents), have announced their support for independent candidate Abdelaziz BOUTEFLIKA during the elections of April 2009"*

According to a statement which Al-Shourouk was sent a copy, the support of penitents is aiming at completing national reconciliation and moving to a global reconciliation for peace and security in which there is no winner and no defeated. The statement asserts that the support is a response to the call of Sheikh and scholar Abubakr DJABIR AL-DJAZAIRI who called through the

television the Algerian people to stand by the side of President BOUTEFLIKA who is a source of good and who exhorted the people to vote…

(26) *Cf. Dr. Zahir Ihaddaden, The history of the Algerian press*

(27) *Statement made by al-Khabar newspaper' editor in chief to Radio France Internationale on May 3rd, 2009. He asserted that Al-Khabar is subject to pressures exercised by public authorities. For example, 10 billions centimes (1 million Euros) was the amount of the taxes imposed on the newspaper.*

(28) *Al-Khabar newspaper, issue of May 3rd, 2009*

(29) *Al-Khabar newspaper's director Sherif Rezki in an interview with Radio France Internationale on May 3rd, 2009*

(30) *Vladimir Vasak in an interview with Rue 89 paper*

(31) *This journalist made a report entitled "Algérie: présidentielles sous contrôle"*

(32) *Cf. El-Watan newspaper, issue of April 1st, 2009 and the communiqué of Reporters Sans Frontières of April 3rd, 2009*

(33) *Cf. Al-Khabar newspaper, issue of April 6th, 2009*

(34) *Interview with the representative of candidate Ali Faouzi REBAINE at the AHD 54 political party's headquarters on April 22nd, 2009*

(34) *Al-Fadjr newspaper, issue of March 28, 2009*

(35) *Interview at the AHD 54 political party's headquarters on April 22nd, 2009*

Photo on the cover :
PASCAL GUYOT – AFP


ر ج د ح ا
الرابطة الجزائرية
للدفـــــاع عن
حقوق الإنســـان
LADDH
Ligue Algérienne
pour la Défense
des Droits de l'Homme

"The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures", article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers", article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Undoubtedly, media play a crucial role in electoral campaigns. Media have a large impact on the orientations of the electors and on their opinions about candidates and their political programs. Therefore, it is paramount that the media performance in electoral campaigns be fair, objective and integral. Free choice of electors is fundamentally based on true and sufficient information which portray to some extent the reality.

In order to further the media performance, the Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights conducted this first monitoring program about the national media performance in Algeria.

This program monitors performance of media during the electoral campaign of April 9th presidential elections which lasted from March 19th to April 06th, 2009. A group of young monitors followed and analyzed the performance and the role of the national press, radio and television.

The report provides an overall picture about the media coverage of 2009 presidential elections. Furthermore, it highlights the reality of the Algerian media in a context characterized by the absence of freedoms of expression and press which is an indicator about a political isolation as known in Algeria.

The Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights (LADDH) is a national nonprofit association founded in 1985 and officially recognized by the authorities in July 1989.

The League actively campaigned for the protection and promotion of human rights under the Charter of Human Rights the UN, using the slogan:

"Human rights are universal and indivisible."