

Statement (Algeria): Long live our popular Hirak! The struggle continues!

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Two years ago, one week after the great demonstration of Kherrata, the Algerian people adhered over the weeks, in a large majority from 22 February 2019, to the national uprising against the 5th mandate of the autocrat Bouteflika, and to impose respect for democratic freedoms and the consecration of popular sovereignty.

But, in essence, as the political slogans and the social composition of the millions of demonstrators attest, it was also an uprising unprecedented in its scale against precariousness and social inequality, against unemployment and impoverishment, against predatory oligarchy and corruption, against the submission of our economy and national wealth to the interests of private employers and the imperialist powers. In other words, an uprising against the disaster engendered by decades of liberal economic policies that have destroyed our national economy, aggravated our dependence on imports and darkened the horizons of economic development and social progress of our country. This is the obvious meaning of the most popular radical Hirak slogans, such as “Yatna7aw Ga3!” and “K’litou El Blad Ya Essrakine!” which expressed an unequivocal rejection of the entire system and its factions and which objectively translated the social nature and revolutionary potential of our Hirak.

The eruption of the Covid-19 pandemic certainly halted the popular demonstrations that had been going on for a year in several cities of the country, especially in the capital. But, long before that, the signs of exhaustion of our Hirak had become perceptible. Without a clear political project drawn up democratically and without democratic self-organization at the base, our Hirak was weakening in the face of repression and the muzzling of democratic freedoms. In fact, from the first months of our uprising, especially after the positive impact of the partial general strike of March 2019, which moreover had forced Bouteflika and his gang to throw in the towel, we had to strengthen the strategic convergence with the strikes and workers’ struggles and the social demands of the youth and the poor. This would have given us the possibility of maintaining the balance of power in our favour by using general strike action and the massive and permanent mobilization of the workers and all the oppressed. We also needed to set up the structures of a democratic and mixed self-organization at the base to coordinate our actions, prevent any opportunistic recuperation of the movement and organize the indispensable democratic debate among the people. This would have helped us to better resist repression and prevent manoeuvres that would allow the regime to continue, and it would also have allowed us to formulate and adopt at the popular level an alternative revolutionary political project that would reflect all our democratic and social aspirations.

This fragility of our Hirak has facilitated, at least since the aborted presidential election of July 2019, an acceleration of the process of restoration of the regime, ensured notably by the return of the army to the centre of political decision-making within the government. Despite an insignificant participation rate in the presidential election of 12 December 2019, the de facto power that resulted from it has reinforced the continuity of the system. The promulgation of the new constitution, despite the fiasco of the referendum of 1 November 2020, as well as the announcements made by

Tebboune concerning the organization of early legislative elections in the coming months, are part of this same strategy of legitimizing de facto power with the aim of ensuring the continuity of the same oligarchic and liberal, anti-democratic and anti-social regime with a renewed institutional dressing.

Tebboune has only the continuity of the regime to offer!

As his last speech attests, apart from the incomplete release of the political detainees from Hirak, thanks to the mobilization and solidarity of all, Tebboune had nothing to say and nothing to offer in this pandemic context to the hundreds of thousands of Algerian workers who have lost their jobs. It had nothing to say and nothing to offer either, to the citizens who are experiencing a historic and unprecedented fall in their purchasing power due to inflation and a policy of almost permanent devaluation of the dinar. And still nothing to say to the young people left to unemployment, hargha and despair. Worse, Tebboune indecently self-glorified himself by referring to the miserable and insulting increase of 2000 DA of the SNMG, conceded in 2020, while still maintaining the average wage in Algeria at what is recognized at the lowest level in the Mediterranean basin. Neither did he have anything to say to the hundreds of thousands of workers on strike for not collecting their meagre wages for several months, or to the workers fighting to save their companies asphyxiated by the banks and threatened with closure, or to those fighting for the defence of trade union freedoms openly questioned by the oligarchs and private bosses.

Faced with this state of affairs, the Socialist Workers' Party (PST) calls, on this second anniversary of our Hirak, for the widest possible mobilization for participation in demonstrations and popular rallies.

To this end, the PST calls, as a matter of priority, for the immediate release of all other political prisoners and prisoners of conscience and for the immediate removal of all obstacles to the effective exercise of democratic rights and freedoms, in particular the freedoms of expression, assembly, organization and demonstration, as well as trade union freedoms and the right to strike. With this in mind, the PST encourages and participates in all united front initiatives allowing the emergence of a specific front of democratic forces.

For the survival and strengthening of our popular Hirak, the PST considers it imperative to link up with the struggles and social and economic demands of workers, the unemployed and all the poor who, despite the pandemic and repression, have maintained the permanence and combativeness of Hirak. Popular sovereignty will only have its full meaning if it is exercised in particular on the economic and social choices of our country, in accordance with the aspirations and needs of the majority of our people and not for the benefit of a tiny minority of oligarchs, private bosses and multinationals.

Furthermore, the PST reiterates its call, on the occasion of this second anniversary of our Hirak, for the construction of the indispensable and strategic popular self-organization at the grassroots. We need to set up everywhere, in cities and in the countryside, in neighbourhoods and villages, in workplaces and places of study and in all other social spaces, the nuclei of popular, democratic and autonomous self-organisation. It is by developing these frameworks of grassroots self-organisation (committee, collective, network, etc.) and coordinating them locally and nationally that our Hirak will resist repression and attempts to recuperate it on the one hand, and will organise, on the other hand, the democratic debate enabling the people to participate directly and without hindrance or tutorship in the elaboration and adoption of the alternative political project corresponding to their democratic and social demands and aspirations.

Finally, for the PST the realisation of these preconditions, that is, the junction with social struggles and self-organization at the base, will help to crystallize a broad "Democratic, Anti-liberal and Anti-

imperialist Convergence” which will be indispensable in the construction of the balance of power in favour of the workers, youth, women, small farmers and all the oppressed, in the battle for the election of a Sovereign Constituent Assembly that is truly representative of the interests of the popular masses. It is to this Assembly, elected under the most democratic conditions possible, with parity between men and women, without any hindrance and without the interference of the force of money, that the task of drawing up our new democratic and social Constitution will fall, and which will be presented to the popular vote.

Long live our Popular Hirak! The struggle continues!

PST National Secretariat in Algiers, 20 February 2021
