

Tunisia and Algeria are gripped with violence in the beginning of 2011. The starting points for the violence were different for each country but the basic motivation is the same: lack of confidence, uncertainty in a future for young people without any real reason to believe.

The economic and societal liberalism of Tunisia and the ambiguity of the Algerian Authorities regarding the Muslim extremism does not provide a spiritual basis for the two countries. God is no doubt allowing such events to happen in order that the problems of these societies, characterized by authoritarianism, intolerance and corruption, may be at last examined.

The Christians in North Africa and in the larger world can only unite their prayers for a rapid return to calm in Algeria and Tunisia and for the authorities of the two countries, that they may find reasonable solutions to the valid aspirations of their populations.

The information regarding the violent protests which have shaken the two countries is broadcast sparingly. Especially in Tunisia, where the authorities muzzle the opposition media. This country has "one of the most discrete dictatorships in the world" according to the newspaper *Le Temps*

The demonstrations started in mid-December over unemployment and the economic situation. They worsened beginning January. The authorities have acknowledged that the sporadic fighting has already produced 14 deaths, but an opposition leader Ahmed Nejib Chebbi, traditional head of the Democratic Progressive Party, has reported at least 20 people killed in gunfire in Thala and Kasserine, in the mid-west of Tunisia. The government says that the police opened fire in "legitimate defense." In Tunis, at a public meeting, the Central unified trade union of Tunisian workers (UGTT) proclaimed its support of the "valid" demands of the movement. Suicide attempts have been reported at Sidi Bouzid and at Kasserine. At Sidi Bouzid a father of four children, at Kasserine a young unemployed man doused himself with petrol near a high school in order to kill himself.

In Algeria the spark came from a rapid increase of around 20 to 30% in the price of basic necessities. The population has not accepted this price rise at a time when the financial reserves of the country are enormous because of its petrol sales. The riots may have directly or indirectly caused 5 deaths. The official total of wounded is 400, 100 civilians and 300 police according to official sources. The riots took place in Alger, in the popular Bellecour neighborhood and in Oran, the two main cities of the country. But other cities were also inflamed: Annaba, Tidjelabine (Boumerdès), Béjaïa, Tizi-Ouzou, etc. The demonstrators attacked economic or political symbols such as banks, police stations or public offices. To calm

the anger of the population the government has suspended customs' taxes on sugar and oil for a period of eight months.

The anger of the demonstrators, often young people, is the sign of real unease. Over and above the cost of living, they denounce "undeserved privileges," corruption and what they call their "bad-life." Without reason to hope they give themselves to violence. Those under 30 years old represent 75% of the 35 millions of Algerians and 20% of them are unemployed.

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