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## **THE ILC INFORMS – THE ILC INFORMS – THE ILC INFORMS**

October 14, 2019

The interim government of Algeria, supposedly in charge of expediting current affairs, wants to implement extremely important counter-reforms. A 2020 austerity budget which removes the 51/49 rule (limiting foreign capital holdings in an enterprise to 49 percent, with 51 percent Algerian), and a bill on hydrocarbons. In reality, these measures open the way to increased penetration by foreign capital. Reaction to these measures was sharp as soon as they were announced. At the Friday demonstration of October 11, in addition to the usual watchwords for the release of political prisoners and rejection of the presidential election, came the massive addition of slogans against the hydrocarbons bill, with the words: “Algeria is not for sale!”

On Saturday, October 12, the Workers Party issued a declaration on these matters. We draw your attention to the end of this text, which establishes a relation between the Constituent Assembly, the sovereignty of the people and sovereignty over the wealth of the country.

On October 13, demonstrations took place for the first time on a Sunday – until now they have taken place only on Friday and Tuesday – Sunday being the first day of the working week. In all the towns of Algeria, there were demonstrations against the hydrocarbons bill. In Algiers, thousands upon thousands sought to reach the National Assembly, chanting: “Gang of traitors, you’re selling out the nation!”

The same day, the government adopted the draft law on hydrocarbons that it plans to submit to the National Assembly. This is provoking a crisis, up to and within the regime itself. Benflis, former prime minister under Bouteflika and candidate for the presidential election scheduled for December 12, has asked that the bill be postponed. The RND, one of the two parties that control the assembly at the service of the regime, has also asked for a postponement. The other party of the regime, the FLN, has counseled caution. Numerous political figures have come out against the bill. The press – apart from that at the service of the regime – has multiplied articles asking why the regime wants to ram through this bill, 8 weeks before the presidential election.

See hereunder (after the statement of the Algerian Workers Party) a significant extract from these articles:

# Declaration

Parti des travailleurs – October 12, 2019

**The people say no to a sell-off of the country!**

**The people reject all forms of foreign interference!**

**For the sovereignty of the people, guarantee of national sovereignty!**

The 34<sup>th</sup> Friday of national revolutionary mobilization was marked yesterday, Friday, October 11, by massive demonstrations which took place in the four corners of the country.

Unquestionably, in addition to condemnation of the repression, the demand for release of prisoners of the revolution and the massive rejection of the presidential election, it is the economic and social questions, which marked these demonstrations.

The draft bill on hydrocarbons and the draft 2020 finance bill have been condemned throughout the country. “No to the sell-off of hydrocarbons”, “Algeria is an AMANA (legacy) sold by traitors”, or “Hydrocarbons bill and the 2020 finance bill mortgage the country” and “Hydrocarbons bill=crimes against the nation”.

The regime and the system that it incarnates are in crisis. The regime is in a dead-end, for after failing in all its efforts to convince “politically” that the way out resides in a presidential election, it is unable to impose it by force. For the overwhelming majority of the people, the presidential vote is synonymous with maintenance of the regime. That is why the mobilization and rejection of the presidential election and the system is not abating, and this is creating doubt even among those who have decided to participate. The press is wondering about the lack of response from the candidates and “the enigmatic silence” of the principal ones.

Meanwhile the regime is in panic and is cranking up the repression. As illustrated in Algiers with the ferocious repression of the 33<sup>rd</sup> mobilization of students, Tuesday, October 8, marked by unheard-of violence against demonstrators and journalists and the dozens of arrests.

The regime is panicking, it wants to move rapidly, knows that time is against it. Its instability and the political dead-end into which it has plunged the country are accentuating the economic crisis, which is in turn “accentuating the social discontent”, as the media note with worry, raising the specter of a “coming social flare-up”.

It is the policies of this illegitimate government, which are fanning the social flames. It is the 2020 finance bill, with its “rigor” and its “rationality” sought by Bensalah/Bedoui, which will further burden broad layers of the population. Meanwhile it gives every advantage to “foreign investors”, beginning with suppression of the 51/49 rule (for sectors deemed non strategic), which even if it has not been wholly able to avoid foreign pillage, thanks to ingenious and sly techniques by which to get round it, had nevertheless limited this pillage. To sum up the 2020 budget bill: crumbs and poverty for the majority of the people, the workers and their families, and billions for the multinationals.

By re-introducing recourse to external debt, this government, which claims to have broken with the policies of the governments of the “Issaba” (the “gang”), which sold out the national economy, nevertheless dares to do what the latter never dared do.

Daring, this government really is that! It announces sessions for this month of November to draw up a reform of the pension system with a view to studying proposals for raising the retirement age from its present 60 years to 65, to reduce the pension level from its present 80 percent to 60 percent, and to reduce the index for the calculation of pensions from 2.5 to 2.3 and the basis for calculation from the present last 10 years to five years.

It has begun with a hydrocarbons bill, which exhumes the legislation of Chakib Khellil, successfully fought by Louisa Hanoune and the Workers Party (PT).

Precisely, Louisa Hanoune has been arbitrarily jailed in order to silence a voice of the revolution and of the fight against every infringement of national sovereignty.

Thus, this government, which had been presented to us as one of everyday business, has just rushed through a hydrocarbons bill, thereby selling out the principal wealth of the country to the benefit of the big international oil groups.

The energy minister himself admits that this bill was drawn up in concert with the “oil majors”, that is to say the bigger oil multinationals, essentially French, British and American.

And they dare speak of national sovereignty, of foreign interference. Precisely, can one speak of preserving national sovereignty without preserving one's sovereignty over one's wealth?

Some are asking the question: why does a government, which is supposed to be in charge of everyday affairs

rushing to get such a sensitive bill adopted? Now, a few months before the presidential election, which it wants held at any price?

Because everyone will have understood and says so: this bill has been drawn up in relation to this electoral calendar. For the regime, which wants to perpetuate itself come what may, is seeking international approval for the organization of this pseudo-election.

Need one recall that the war of national liberation was prolonged for four years in order to win sovereignty over the south of Algeria where colonialism had just discovered the oil field of Hassi Messaoud?

The Algerian people who wrested independence of the country and the sovereignty of the nation at the cost of 1,500,000 martyrs reject this shameful sell-out. They have just said so, loudly and clearly throughout the country, on the occasion of the 34th Friday of the revolution.

How can this government claim to defend national sovereignty, oppose foreign interference and promote adoption of a hydrocarbons bill, which mortgages and throws into question the economic sovereignty of the country? Indeed, can there be political sovereignty without economic sovereignty over our resources and our wealth? Can one claim to reject all foreign interference and accept that a delegation of the American congress comes and meddles in our internal political affairs at this pivotal moment that the country is experiencing?

Can one claim to be sovereign and accept that experts from the IMF come and spend several days in our country, have access to our accounts, dissect our public finances and all of our economy with a view to dictating to us their orientations, their measures, drawn up for the benefit of the governments of the great powers and their multinationals?

Is it therefore an exaggeration to say that this regime constitutes a true danger for the Algerian nation, because it is the gravedigger of its sovereignty?

It is because it defends national sovereignty in all circumstances that the Workers Party, which opposed with all its force the legislation of Chakib Khalil for the privatization of hydrocarbons in 2005, which was annulled a year later, and the privatization of the El Hadjar complex and the sell-off of all public enterprises. It is because it considers that there can be no national sovereignty without sovereignty over national wealth.

And it is also in defense of this sovereignty that it campaigns for a sovereign Constituent National Assembly, because the sovereignty of the people is the guarantee of national sovereignty, of the wealth and resources of the country. Popular sovereignty immunizes the country against all foreign intervention, be it American, French or other.

Because for the PT nothing is superior to the interests of the nation, no legislation or political choice is irreversible, which is why it has decided to do everything it can to abort this policy of destruction of the material foundations of the nation.

**The PT political bureau,**  
Algiers, October 12 2019

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### **Extracts from TSA:**

#### **“Salvo against the hydrocarbons bill: This is dispossession” – Oct 13, 2019**

The draft bill on hydrocarbons continues to arouse sharp reactions and rejection on the streets, by specialists and by civil society.

On this Sunday, October 13, hundreds of citizens crowded before the parliament building in Algiers to demand withdrawal of the text, which was due to be examined at that very moment by the Council of Ministers. Its content and the timing have raised fears of a sell-out of the country's wealth aimed at buying the silence of the great powers regarding the political projects, which are under way.

The academic Mohamed Arezki Ferrad was most cutting. “This is corruption, he exclaimed Friday during the weekly march in Algiers, we have a government managing current affairs, which is forbidden by the Constitution from taking serious decisions which put the future of the country at stake. This draft bill on hydrocarbons is therefore rejected by the people and has no reason to exist, from a legal point of view and according to the Constitution. This is a case of corruption aimed at obtaining the silence of the western powers for the present process and their support for regeneration of the system. The West is only after its own interests, it fears the Hirak (the popular Algerian revolution -- translator's note), because with a

legitimate government it will not be possible to mortgage the wealth of the country. That's why they want to sell out the country, so that everyone stays silent before the masquerade of next December," he accused.

"This is not the moment to adopt such legislation. It gives the impression of having been drawn up hastily. One cannot in these conditions promulgate a law, which has implications for the future and do so at the drop of a hat. This needs calm and studied reflection," said for his part Chemsiddine Chitour, another academic who regularly comments upon current affairs.

"When Chakib Khelil promulgated his legislation in 2005, I went to see him and I discussed with him. I told him that as an academic I disagreed with him, but we were not many who spoke of that. Madame Louisa Hanoune was there; one must give her recognition for that. She was one of the few people to say no. (...)"