



Letter about the French nuclear tests in Algeria on the occasion of the International Day against Nuclear Tests

August 29, 2023

It is well-known that France initiated nuclear explosions in Algeria, extending beyond the period of independence, specifically from 1960 to 1966. During this time, France conducted 17 nuclear explosion tests in various locations in the Algerian desert, precisely in "Reggane" and "In Eker." The catastrophic effects of these tests continue to impact the population and the environment to this day.

Despite more than 60 years having passed since the French nuclear tests in Algeria, France still evades responsibility and insists on keeping the nuclear test files highly classified. This is despite numerous efforts by concerned parties to at least identify of nuclear waste burial sites in order to take necessary measures to protect the environment and the population as a precautionary step, due to fears of radiation exposure in areas where various types of cancer cases have increased, along with incidents of abnormal births and congenital deformities recorded in those areas and other disturbing health phenomena.

The world has entered a new phase of nuclear disarmament since the United Nations adopted the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on July 7, 2017. This treaty came into effect on January 22, 2021. Algeria was among the first signatories of this treaty when it was opened for signature on September 20, 2017. In 2020, Algeria expressed its intention to ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons "in the near future." However, the process of ratifying the treaty is still pending.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons includes positive obligations that are highly relevant to addressing the issue of the French nuclear tests in Algeria, if the treaty is ratified. Particularly, Articles 6 and 7 of the treaty commit the parties to assist victims and engage in environmental remediation, as well as providing international assistance.

On the other hand, the French state did not participate in the negotiations of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons adopted by the United Nations, and it does not intend to join or commit to it. France justifies this by claiming that the treaty does not align with the current international security context marked by increasing tensions and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. France continues to pursue a policy of evasion, denial, and irresponsibility. As of now, the files related to the French nuclear explosions remain secret and unavailable for scrutiny, citing defense and national security secrets.

Given the lack of tangible progress between Algeria and France regarding the accurate identification of nuclear waste burial sites and finding suitable solutions for final rehabilitation of affected sites, as well as implementing necessary measures to protect the affected population, environment, water resources, aquatic and plant life, and involving Algerian victims in a similar process to the one carried out in recent years in Polynesia to identify and compensate nuclear test victims.

On the occasion of the International Day against Nuclear Tests, observed on August 29th of each year, and in line with the responsibility, the undersigned organizations send this message to Algeria, France, and the international community:

Message to Algeria:

- 1- We encourage the Algerian state to continue the process, which began on September 20, 2017, of ratifying the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). This will, on one hand, strengthen non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament efforts, and on the other hand, enable measures for the rehabilitation of former test sites and providing assistance to nuclear test victims. It will also allow requesting assistance (technical, humanitarian, financial, etc.) from other parties to the TPNW.
- 2- The Algerian state should exert its legal and diplomatic efforts to assist nuclear test victims in regaining their moral and material rights, allowing every claimant or their families access to or obtaining a copy of the archive related to French nuclear tests in the Algerian desert from 1960 to 1966.
- 3- The Algerian state should enhance communication about prohibited access to these areas by implementing clear measures: reinforcing fences, installing information panels at the sites, displaying information in city halls and health facilities in cities and villages near "Reggane" and "In Ekker."
- 4- Taking necessary measures to facilitate the formation of associations by providing necessary facilities for establishing rights-based and environmental associations, ensuring the right of civil society to access information to contribute to national and international attention to the catastrophe of French nuclear tests in Algeria.

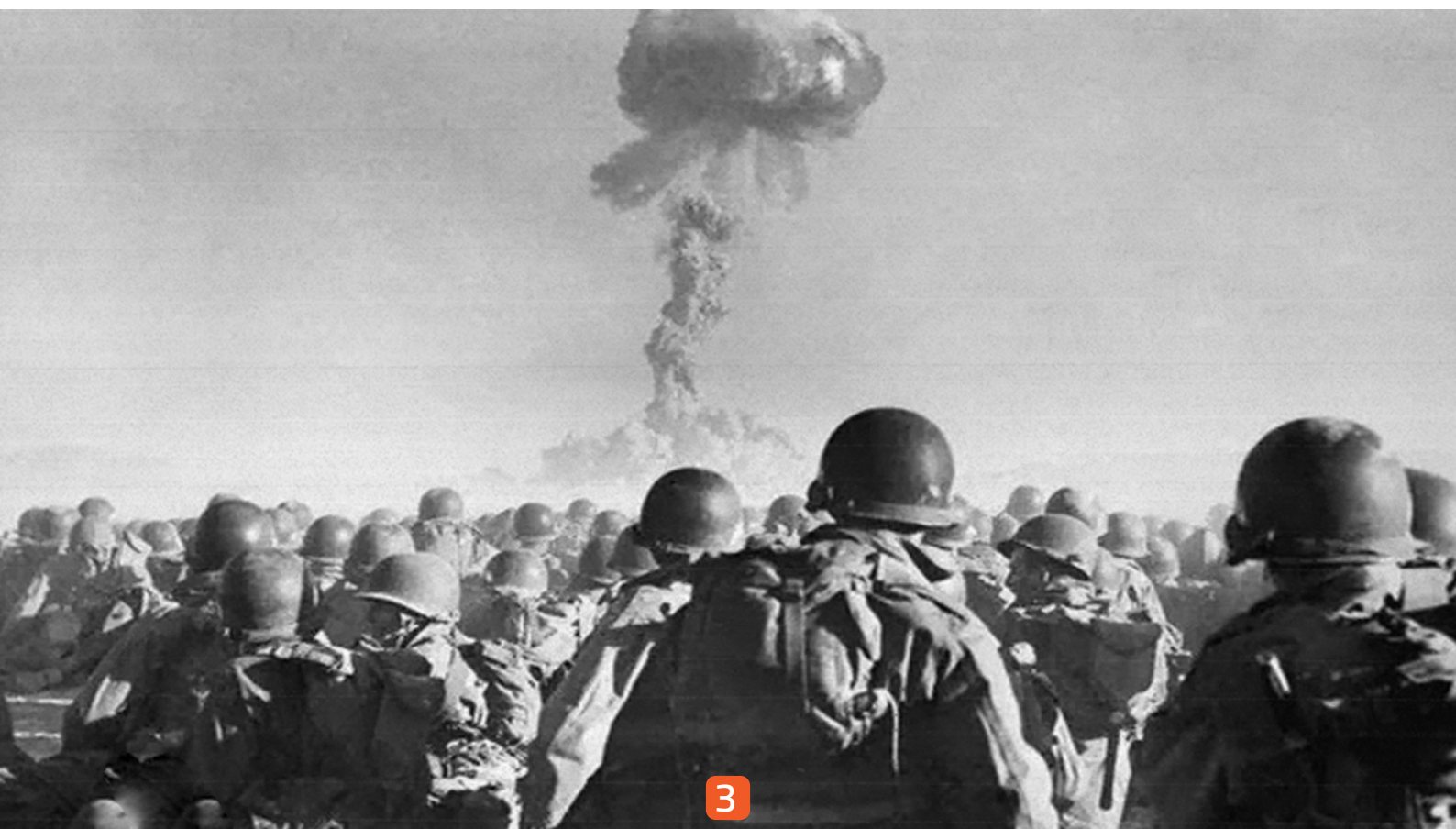
Message to France:

1- The French state should declassify files related to nuclear explosions and tests in Algeria for scrutiny by international organizations overseeing monitoring. It should not invoke defense and national security secrets, and should provide a comprehensive list of burial sites of waste to the Algerian authorities, specifying their locations and describing the buried materials. France should also disclose data related to contaminated areas.

2- The French state should provide the plans for underground facilities belonging to the military plateau of "Reggane" to Algerian authorities, as well as the plans for various locations in "In Ekker." It should also collaborate with Algerian authorities in cleaning up these areas.

3- The French state should facilitate the filing of compensation claims and expedite the compensation process for Algerian victims, particularly by allowing access to the medical records held by the military hospital archives.

4- The French state should sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of nuclear weapons, ratify it, or join it to demonstrate good faith in addressing the issue of its nuclear test's catastrophe in Algeria.



Message to the International Community:

1- The international community, especially the Secretary-General's Disarmament Affairs representative and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs at the United Nations, should pressure France to provide detailed maps of its nuclear explosions and nuclear waste burial sites in the Algerian desert and assist Algeria technologically and logistically.

2- The international community should assist Algeria in addressing the humanitarian consequences resulting from the use and testing of nuclear weapons by France on Algerian territory and should press for an agreement between the two sides, Algeria and France, regarding the legacy of nuclear tests in the Algerian desert.

3- We call on all states to sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of nuclear weapons, ratify it, or join it "as soon as possible."

4- We call on all states to enhance collaboration with the United Nations, civil society organizations, academic institutions, and affected communities in pursuit of a world free from nuclear tests.

Signatures:

1- SHOAA for Human Rights

2- National Association of Victims of Nuclear Explosions

3- International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War - IPPNW

4- Initiatives pour le Désarmement Nucléaire - IDN

5- Peace Education & Art Communication Institute (PEAC)

6- Rocky Mountain Peace & Justice Center

7- International Peace Bureau (IPB)

8- Women's International League for Peace and Freedom