



LGBTQI IN ALGERIA,  
**VIOLENCE**  
IN EVERYDAY LIFE

  
**TransHOMOS**  
ENSEMBLE · PROTÉGEONS · NOTRE · INTÉGRITÉ



arab foundation  
for freedoms  
and equality

338

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# I INTRODUCTION :

In our previous report, we aimed to show how statements made by public figures, combined with media frenzy, can lead to crimes against LGBTQI individuals. In fact, the hatred and rejection experienced by these individuals are the direct result of a whole system that does everything to reinforce and magnify violence against them.

The legal criminalization of homosexuality - through Art. 338 - arms this system with a powerful pretext to legitimize crimes against such individuals whose only crime is the fact that they do not conform to cis-heteronormative standards imposed upon them socially.

In this second report, we will address the consequences hate-speech manifestations. As we will see, these acts of violence take place in all environments and at all levels, whether in families, universities, work spaces, or prisons. These displays of hatred and viciousness remain collective, institutional, and, above all, destructive.

TransHomosDz and its partner, the Arab Foundation for Freedoms and Equality (AFE), decided to systematically document these cases of violence. Our strategy is to uncover these violations and end the complicit silence surrounding them. We believe that by highlighting these incidents, which are often hidden, we can end the isolation of the victims and help in the development of solutions.

These forms of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity leave our social fabric fragmented. They constitute a major obstacle to the consolidation of a healthy society, one that is ready to move forward. Therefore, it is our individual and collective responsibility to play our role in the fight against injustice.

## II CASES OF VIOLENCE :

### A - IN THE FAMILY :

It is in their own families that LGBTIQ individuals are first confronted with violence on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity and expression.

In such a context, violence is often extreme, but paradoxically hidden. These instances of violence usually remain hidden out of solidarity and respect to the family.

We have received a large number of testimonies about such forms of violence, often leading to irreparable damage and fractures. In some cases, unfortunately, individuals subjected to familial oppression end up taking their own lives.

Unlike violence in other contexts, domestic violence lasts for longer periods of time, often starting in childhood and leading eventually to tragic events years later.

In this report we have selected three stories that showcase familial violence, these stories involved one lesbian woman, one transwoman, and one young homosexual man.

1 - Rather dead than gay

2 - Lesbian Algerian's Prison

3 - The ordeal of an Algerian transwoman



## 1 - RATHER DEAD THAN GAY :

Massinissa is a young nineteen-year-old man living in the city of Khenchela, in the eastern region of Algeria. At the time of the official exams, while all his colleagues were doing the Bacallaureate tests in the summer of 2016, he was locked in his room, struggling to survive. The only reason for his situation is that his family discovered he was homosexual.



Massy is the youngest of seven boys. For as long as he can remember, he has always been attracted to men, not women. Though he had never engaged in sexual contact with either genders, he was quite aware of the fact that he was different from his brothers and male friends. He spent years educating himself online about his sexual orientation. The web was his sole refuge, the space in which he can be himself and see how other homosexuals around the world can live fulfilling, good lives without hiding their identity.

In his family environment, things haven't always been easy. He may have the support and protection of all his brothers, but these same brothers never hesitated to treat him roughly, hoping that would make a tough man out of him.

In January 2016, Massy met a young male student from Constantine on Facebook. They became closer with time and Massy became very attached to him. He would spend every night chatting with him, or talking to him on the phone, discussing their plans for the future and such. Massy wanted to get his high school degree as soon as possible so that he can move out of town, possibly somewhere closer to his friend.

As the dates of his exams approached, Massy spent many sleepless nights studying. The stakes were high, the results of the exam will determine the course of his whole life, it could be the end of his isolation and suffering. He dreamed of living far away from his family and socializing with people without hiding his true identity.

Two days before the exam, his phone was out of battery and he desperately needed to talk to his friend, he was very stressed and only he could calm him down. He decided to use the family computer. When he was done, he got back to studying in his room.

One of Massy's brothers came home late and wanted to use the same computer. He discovered that Massy forgot to sign-out of his account. After reading the chat history, he had no doubts that Massy was in a romantic relationship with another man.

At about 1AM, Massy hears his brothers yelling in the living room, heading towards his room. They barge in all at once and start beating him up ruthlessly, shouting at him things like "you bring shame to our family," "we are known as men and you want to soil our reputation," "we will kill you and wash our honor clean." They were extremely violent with him, and worst of all, he had no one idea how to react. All he could do was to beg for forgiveness and promise them that he will never do it again. Eventually, his parents put an end to the violence. His brothers confiscated his phone and locked him in his room.

All of a sudden, Massy was surrounded by darkness and deafening silence. He cried and cried, he tried to think of a solution but couldn't really find any.

He looked at his belt hanging at the door and decided to end his life. He hanged the belt to the ceiling from one end, and to the pants wrapped around his neck from the other. He climbed up the chair, hesitating for a second, but pushed the chair away with his feet. He suffocated for a short period of time in which he thought he was dying, but the belt broke and he fell on the floor. The sound of the impact was loud enough for his mother hear. She rushed into his room and called for help.

His brothers came to her calls and revived him. He had lost consciousness but was breathing normally. The mother wanted to take him to the hospital but the brothers refused. They worried others would know he was gay. They'd rather see him dead instead.

The father found a doctor who is his friend; he gave him the necessary medical treatment. Massy is not doing well at all, but he will not die. The next day was the Baccalaureate exam. Massy, however, was still locked in his room, forbidden to leave or to use his phone. He is watching helplessly as all his plans go down the drain, as his life is destroyed.

Today, Massy dropped out of school. He lives his days subjected to his brothers' insults and contempt.

## 2 - LESBIAN ALGERIAN'S PRISON :



Little is known of the situation of Algerian lesbians. Individuals sentenced to prison for homosexuality are predominantly men, but other prisons exist for women who love women, prisons of a much crueler and more lethal nature.

Nora is an Algerian lesbian telling us about her life, uncovering the prisons she has been sentenced to. Upon Nora's request, and for her own safety, both her name and the name of the woman she loves have been changed.

**THDZ:** Hello Nora. First of all, we would like to thank you for agreeing to talk about your life, despite the danger and the pain that may be involved. To start, could you present yourself to our readers?

**Nora:** *I am a twenty-five years old woman and mother. I believe my life is over, for I have fallen madly in love with a woman, without even meaning to feel that way, and that has ruined me.*

**THDZ:** Ruined you?

**Nora:** *This love story has destroyed my dreams, my hopes, my studies, and basically my whole life. The day this love story was uncovered was the last day of my life.*

**THDZ:** Could you give us more details?

**Nora:** *I come from a very conservative environment. I have two brothers, one that is two years older than me, and the other one year younger. Since the earliest years of my childhood, I was fully aware that I was different. When I was ten years old, my younger brother would beat me up because he would see me playing outside with the boys, and that irritated him. When I was young my father took my side and scolded my brother for his behavior. However, as soon as I hit puberty, even my father took my brothers' side and I was no longer allowed to leave the house if I was not*



accompanied by one of my brothers or my father himself. They wanted to take me out of school at some point, but my mother begged and pleaded until they finally conceded and allowed me to study.

I finished high school and was very excited to study hard and become a journalist. A female cousin had graduated in the same year, so she moved in with us to pursue the same degree as well. Her parents had only accepted she continues her studies on the condition that she lives in our house. It was absolutely out of question for them that she lives on campus.

Lamia used to sleep in my room, and everyone in my family loved her. We were very close. Anyone who knew us knew that we were inseparable. At college as well as at home, we never left each other's side, we did everything together. I became quite anxious at some point, for I didn't know what was happening to me. One night, she snuggled next to me in bed because she had a secret she needed to tell me about. She was very nervous and kept talking in codes and riddles for hours, but eventually she admitted that she was in love with me and kissed me.

I told her she was confused, that she was simply attached to me because she is living away from her family for the first time in her life, such a love is simply not possible. It took me weeks to acknowledge the fact that I feel the same towards her and that she is the love of my life. Eventually, I confessed to her. We made love and both finished in tears, we were feeling so conflicted about it. We were in love, we loved what we were doing together, but we were terrified at the thought of what could happen to us because of it.

One day, we were home alone, so we let down our guards. My older brother - who was serving in the army - came home for a surprise visit. He walked in on us naked in bed. That is when the nightmare began.

**THDZ: Then what happened? Did your brother hit you?**

**Nora:** No. He just vomited a flow of unimaginable insults in our faces. He called us all the foul names he could think of and threatened us with hell for our actions. He immediately told my father. My father said nothing to me, which worried me even more. The first thing they did was to make sure we no longer slept in the same room. Two days later, Lamia parents came to our house to meet with my parents, they closed the doors of the living room and talked for hours. They made sure we cannot hear what they were saying. Linda packed her things and left with her family. From a hiding spot behind the curtains, I watched her leaving, greaving silently the end of our love story. That was the last time I ever saw her.



*A few minutes later, my mother came in to inform me of the verdict. I was to marry Linda's brother in thirty days. He was thirty-five, married, and father to two children. I never liked him, he always gave me nasty looks whenever he came to visit his sister. My mother – without even looking me in the eye – declared that Linda will be married to my older brother, the same brother who walked in on us. I fell to the floor at my mother's feet, begging, telling her we were sorry, and that we were willing to do anything to avoid such marriage arrangements. My mother declared that the damage was already done, and that this was the only way to avoid the deterioration of our illness. Thirty days later, I was married off to the monster.*

**THDZ: Did you consider running away before the wedding?**

*Nora: All the time. I was constantly thinking about it. I would contemplate various scenarios to escape. However, every time I gather the courage to do it, two things would stop me. First of all, my mother had a heart condition, I was afraid she may not be able to take the shock. Second, I had no where to go. I was positive that I would end up in the hands of human predators that would do me harm. As someone who was never even allowed out of the house after 6PM, how am I supposed to survive in the streets?*

**THDZ: We are sorry to be bringing back all this pain, but can you tell us how the wedding went?**

*Nora: Torture, plain and simple. That's the only word I can think of when I remember it.*

**THDZ: A moment of silence lasting for a few minutes...**

*Nora: My mother prepared me, there were no invitees nor any celebrations as it would be the case usually with weddings. Everything was prepared in haste and discreetly. My husband-to-be came wearing a suit. We went to the municipality building to register the union. Then an Imam came and did the religious ceremony. In less than one hour, it was all over and I had to get in the car with my husband. I wanted to kiss my father but he turned his face away, so I only kissed my mother and left.*

*My tormentor drove the car; it was the first time I found myself alone with him. The car-ride lasted for three hours and a half, in which he kept repeating statements about him "fixing my problem" and how I shouldn't worry about anything.*

*That night, when we arrived at his house, he told me to kiss his mother and his first wife on the forehead. I did as I was told and was then led to his room. Once in the room, he told me to get prepared for prayer. I had never prayed in my life. Then he came close and told me to get naked. I said that I don't want to. At first, he tried to be gentle. Eventually, he lost patience and tore off my dress. I suddenly found myself naked in front of him. I tried not to let him touch me. I swear I tried everything. He slapped me across the face and said "now you will know what a real man is like." That is when I gave up and gave in, I let him do whatever he wanted with me. He finished, turned around, and fell asleep. I went to the bathroom, vomited, cried, and scrubbed my skin bloody. That is how my first night ended.*



**THDZ: How would you describe your life with a man you did not choose?**

**Nora:** *Every night, I try to stay as late as possible in the kitchen, hoping he'd fall asleep or go to his first wife instead. Sometimes it works, but if he really wants to be with me, he just comes to the kitchen and orders me to follow him. Whenever I tried suggesting he goes to his other wife, he'd get extremely angry, telling me that he is a good Muslim and is therefore obliged to spend as many nights with each wife. He'd also remind me that he only accepted to marry me to cover up for the dishonor brought to the family by what his sister and I had done. Now, he has to make the sacrifice since he is a good Muslim.*

*For months, I was thinking of escaping again, but then I found myself pregnant.*

**THDZ: The pregnancy made you reconsider?**

**Nora:** *Yes, it changed everything.*

**THDZ: What has become of Linda?**

**Nora:** *She married my brother. She is living very far away, and gave birth to two kids, who are my nephews at the same time. I never managed to see her, they made sure I never have any way to contact her. They made sure our paths could never cross and we could never talk.*

**THDZ: After all these years, do you have any hopes that you would break out of your prison?**

**Nora:** *The three women of my life, the same ones who have given me all the love in the world, have also killed any hope of freedom in my lifetime. My love for Linda altered my life and projects. The fear for my mother's health forced me to accept walking into my own prison with my own feet. My little angel forces me to stay in this prison. My daughter is four and a half years old. She is adorable and she is the reason I wake up every morning. If I left, I would lose custody for sure. Considering my history, no judge would ever grant me custody.*



*I have learned to live under these conditions. The only thing I can't seem to ever tolerate is sharing his bed. Every time he lays his hands on me, it feels just as painful and murderous as the first time.*

**THDZ: Would you like to add anything as a conclusion?**

**Nora:** *As I speak of my experience, I know for a fact that there are other women who are struggling with the same ordeal as well. I know they would want to know they are not alone.*

*I have a confession to make, I still hold on to the childish hope that, perhaps, Linda may manage to get her hands on this testimony and read it. If that ever happens, I would just like to tell her that, no matter what happened, I still love her. Every time my tormentor is done with me, I close my eyes, and I imagine her sleeping next to me in bed, and all the pain dissolves.*

*Linda, my love, I regret nothing, you will always be the love of my life. Take good care of yourself, and if you ever feel that you are collapsing under all the pressure, remember that one day, in this life or in another, we will meet again. I love you my sweet basbousa. That's what I used to call her, you know?*

**THDZ: Thank you Nora, we would like to thank you for your confidence. Above all, we are very grateful for the effort we know it required to speak of all this suffering. We also hope Linda manages to read your words.**

### 3 - THE ORDEAL OF AN ALGERIAN TRANSWOMAN :

I was born in a winter night in the seventies, somewhere in the south-west of Algeria. I was the first son after three girls. My birth made my father extremely happy, it was a great relief. He finally saved his honor, he secured his male descendent, which is all that matters in his tribe. My father himself was the oldest son in a family of thirteen children, of which nine were boys and four were girls.

My father decided to name me Tahar, meaning the pure. He organized a whole week of festivities, in which representatives of all the other tribes came to see me and present my father with gifts, as it is the tradition in our area.

When I was a child, at about six years old, I used to go to the other side of the house to see my uncle's wife. She was from Algiers and had moved to our town after marrying my uncle two years before. I loved her more than anyone else in the world, perhaps even more than my own mother, and she loved me just as much. Mariam couldn't have kids, and being the only child that would come to visit her, she had grown very fond of me. She was a seamstress, so I would usually come back from school and play around with the fabrics she would have laying around. When she wasn't looking, I would arrange them on my body to make them look like my princess dresses. I was obsessed with that for weeks. The only thing I wanted to do was to finish school, go to her place, and see myself as a princess in the mirror. You could say that this became my drug, my obsession. One day, she caught me in the act, so she came and fastened the dress with pins. At last, my dream dress became real. From that moment on, this became our little secret, and we kept doing it for years.

One day, when I was twelve, Mariam had to urgently travel to Algiers, her father had just passed away. I was deprived of my dresses for several days. I decided to wait until my uncle left for work and sneak into their place to put one on. I was terrified, but I needed it just like I needed the air I was breathing, so I couldn't go back. I sneaked into the room, put on my most beautiful dress, took out Mariam's make-up kit and put make up on my face. I was beautiful. I was so happy, walking around the room and checking myself out in the mirror. Then my uncle came in. I didn't even notice him until the first blow landed on my face. I can still remember the taste of that blow even now. Then he tied me up and left. It was dark and I was terrified. I had no idea what would become of me now. Almost two hours later, my uncle came back with my father. When I saw my father was about to hit me I almost screamed, but he put his hand over my mouth. He told me that if I made any sound whatsoever he will cut my throat with his own hands. My uncle left the room and my father beat me senseless. He hit me like adult men would hit each other in a fight, and I took it all without making a sound. When he was done with me, he sprayed me with a bucket of water. I was grateful for that because that way it didn't show that I had pissed in my pants. Starting then, my father no longer perceived me as his son. I believe I lost him as my father figure as well. He told no one about what happened and I'm guessing he also forbade my uncle to say anything. My mother was clueless, she couldn't understand why my father suddenly became so harsh and cruel with me. She tried to question me about it, but I said nothing. I kept the secret. I did, however, break down in the arms of Mariam a few months later. I told her everything. She cried even more than I did and

understood at that moment why I stopped visiting her like before.

I may have given up on my dream to be a princess, I may have stopped wearing dresses, but I could not change the way I behaved. The way I spoke, the way I walked, everything about me betrayed my identity. I wanted to hide the woman in me, but she would not take it. My father just couldn't stand me anymore, whenever I walked passed him he'd kick me. I had bruises on my body all the time. My mother could only cry silently.

Mariam was my only refuge, the only safe place I could go to. Whenever I saw her, I would forget the terrible life I was living. She understood and accepted my womanhood long before I did. She would constantly tell me: "You're a woman. Nature has made a mistake. Truth is, you're a woman and that's what you will always be." I didn't know how to respond to such statements. It both pleased me and scared me. Obviously, as the years passed, I had to see Mariam in secret, at that age I was not supposed to hang out with the women.

The day I turned sixteen, Mariam brought me a gift and a cake. When my father came home, he lashed out on me. He always detested Mariam. As far as he was concerned, it was this city woman who corrupted his good descendent. He threw away the cake, locked me in my room, and left me there.

The next day, he went to work without releasing me. My mother sat outside my door and cried endlessly. She was crying and trying to check on me, to see if I was ok. I took refuge in my silence and said nothing, as I always do.

At some point, Mariam stormed into the house, broke the lock of my room, gave me some money – I'm guessing that was all her savings – and said: "From this day on, your name will be Houria [Liberty], because you are a free woman. Get away from this place." My mother just stood there, clueless to what was going on. That day, I took the first train I found to Algiers, leaving my hometown once and for all. That day also, my new life started, as a transwoman with no family.

Mariam died fifteen years ago of cancer. She died as I had started taking hormones. I tried to get in touch with her to tell her the good news, but it was too late. Mariam never went to school but she knew more about freedoms and the right to be different than most intellectuals. To her, I owe all the battles I fought and won, and all the fights I am still fighting and winning.



## **B - IN PUBLIC SPACES :**

Public spaces, or streets, are an environment where we find all forms of violence against LGBTIQ individuals. Insults and verbal aggression are the most common form of violence reported. If your appearance challenges social norms, if your outfit is slightly too well groomed for a man, your hair a bit too short for a girl, that will be a good enough excuse for a random stranger to insult you in the street.

In some cases, verbal aggressions escalate to physical violence, often perpetrated by mobs of young men legitimized by popular endorsement of their actions. In some cases, bystanders may go as far as encouraging and validating such displays of violence against a man they see as “too feminine” or a transperson whose mere appearance is considered as a provocation. It has also been reported that, in some cases, there would be police officers present, but that go on their way as if nothing unusual was taking place.

In this report, we have selected two testimonies that narrate cases of violence in public spaces. The first relating how a group attacked a young homosexual man, and the second relating the attack against a lesbian woman because others did not like the way she looked

### **1 - TOO MASCULINE FOR A GIRL :**

Sarah is a twenty-two years old student. She lives in Boumerdes, a coastal town east of Algiers. One day in February 2016, she was supposed to meet some friends in Algiers. She took a train from Boumerdes, heading to downtown Algiers, before heading to the bus station to take a bus to Hydra.

Sarah is quite an unusual person, she likes to look, and be, different. Her choice of look and wardrobe challenge social conformism. Her hair is black and short, with a strand dyed red, she has piercings, and colors her nails only in black. She is out to her close friends as a lesbian, but says that her looks have nothing to do with her sexual orientation.

As she waited for the bus to Hydra, as usual, she heard comments from strangers, usually young (or not so young) men. Usually, she acts as if she doesn't hear them, she just ignores such verbal aggressions. This time, she had to hear several insults. From one passerby saying “do you think there is shortage of men in Algeria?”, to another, in his sixties, saying “you know child? God curses women who try to look like men.” Sarah tried to bottle it all in, but was starting to feel very uncomfortable, she couldn't understand why the insults were more numerous on this day. She had to change location several times while waiting for the bus. At some point, a group of young men, aged eighteen and nineteen, walk into the station. Out of the blue, one of them says: “You like to lick pussy, don't you? You want to take away our job [role].” His friends laugh and agree with him, saying things like “you're right, brother, it's the end of the world with people like her.” Encouraged by such comments and Sarah's silence, he puts his hand on her shoulder to provoke a reaction and says: “Now tell me, what do you have between those legs? Is it like mine?”. Outraged by such an

extreme violation, Sarah loses her temper and slaps him. Then, he takes out his umbrella and starts hitting her with it, all the while, his friends were shouting: “Massacre her, show her what a real man is like.” He kept hitting her, but Sarah was defending herself by hitting him back, she also bit him at some point. People around them tried to break out the fight. Even worse than the physical beating she was enduring, she could also hear what they were saying to calm him down: “Don’t let her drag you down to her level, you’re a man, don’t let her drag you into this”, or “Don’t touch this piece of shit, she will soil you, didn’t you see the way she looks?”. The physical violence couldn’t have broken her, but hearing people speak like that – holding her responsible and treating her aggressor like he was the victim – that is what hurt her the most. She broke down in tears, shouting back at them: “You’re all the same, a bunch of sick people, you’re all responsible for this savagery.”

Eventually, Sarah gave up and took a train back home. Now, months after the attack, she still refuses to use public transportation, she only moves by car, and avoids public spaces.

## 2 - THE LONGEST MOMENT OF MY LIFE :

**Imad, a twenty-three years old Algerian homosexual telling, for the first time, the events of a violent homophobic attack he was subjected to three years ago:**

I was twenty years old at the time. For the first time in my life, I was invited to the TenTen event organized by the LGBTI association, Abu Nawas. It was the national LGBTI day in Algeria, 10 October 2013. My friends and I were very excited to take part in the event.

At 6PM, it was still too early to head to the meeting place. So, we decided to go back to a café in Hussein Dey Algiers. We were pleased to find the terrace area of the café empty, that way we could have some privacy and be more comfortable.

We were four, as usual, and were using feminine pronouns for fun since we were alone. A few minutes later, a young man came out to the terrace with a woman. One of our group said to the others “Appliquez vous” [Behave yourselves], which is a community code word meaning “be careful how you talk and behave because we are no longer alone”. Unfortunately, the young man from the other table overheard the phrase and understood what is meant by it, he commented saying “behaving yourselves, right?”, in a sarcastic and mean tone.

Shortly after that, he came to our table and asked for a cigarette, in an aggressive tone. We told him we don’t have cigarettes. He tried then to take my friend’s phone from his hands, the latter trying hard to stop him gently. The guy eventually managed to snatch the phone and rushed away, leaving the woman companion where she was.

The friend who owned the stolen phone went to the police with another one of us, to report the theft. So the fourth friend and I stayed behind at the terrace, waiting for them. To our shock, only a few minutes later, we saw the aggressor come back. Only this time, he was accompanied by three other men. We ran away and headed to the

metro station. The thugs were chasing us with sticks and knives. Eventually they caught up with us. The friend that was with me got away with just a punch but got away.

That is how I ended up alone, at the mercy of four terrible monsters. I was thrown at the floor and blows and hits were raining on me from all directions, landing on my thighs, my head, I was kicked in the stomach... I was begging them to stop, pleading with them and asking what I have done for them to do this to me, but to no avail. They kept hitting me and calling me “a filthy faggot”, “a son of a bitch”, and other insults.

At some point, I managed to get away and ran to a mechanic’s workshop. I hid behind the counter, hoping that this would be the end of my ordeal. But my attackers were not done just yet, they followed me to the shop and encouraged the owner to kick me out, saying: “throw him out, he’s a filthy faggot”. The guy did as he was told and started pushing me out of the shop. I clung to the counter as hard as I could and begged him not to do this, telling him they will kill me. None of that helped. I found myself again in the hands of my tormentors.

They resumed beating me, they were burning with an unnatural hatred...

At some point, a man in a car slows down and I plead with him to help me. He opens the door and lets me in. My attackers did the same with him as they did with the workshop owner, telling him: “He’s a faggot, kick him out.” However, my savior did not listen to them. So, the attackers started attacking the car. Luckily, we eventually managed to drive away.

The man who saved me seemed to have some sort of medical training. At some point he pulled aside and started inspecting my head. He told me that there is a hemorrhage at the level of the ear, but that it was nothing to worry about. He drove me to a hospital where I received four stitches and a medical statement (fit note) from the doctor for 10 days.

The three friends that were with me joined us at the hospital and my savior drove all four of us to the police station in Kouba in Algiers.

To our surprise, we found the guy who stole my friend’s mobile, and later attacked me, already arrested. He had been identified and arrested for theft. When my attacker saw the bandages on my head and realized I was determined to press charges, he started begging me to drop the charges, telling me how he was the only son of the family and they would be lost without him. I had no intention to do so, I kept remembering myself begging them and their inhumane treatment. I was determined to press charges for assault and beating. Then everything changed when the police officer – the one who was supposed to be taking my testimony – started defending my attacker, saying: “Have some forgiveness, just this one time.” When I showed no signs of softening, he added: “You know that these charges will eventually turn against you, right? You know, your homosexuality, everyone will know about it, your family, your parents, everyone.” And suddenly, I felt guilty myself. The things this police officer was saying to reassure me ended up convincing me, and my friends.



We left the police station without pressing charges.

I came home late that night. I told my mother that a doctor had identified a cyst behind my ear and had to operate on me to remove it. I had to make up that lie to explain the bandages and the blood on my clothes.

I avoided the street where I was attacked for more than a year. I was seeing my attackers' faces everywhere, they were haunting me, appearing whenever I was anxious or panicking about anything. I will never forget that day, the day when TenTen came to symbolize something completely different for me...

## **C - IN UNIVERSITY :**

One would assume that the academic, professional environment in a university would not be plagued by violence on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. That is unfortunately not the case. Violence and aggression take place regularly in such contexts, and may vary in gravity. The students that are victims of such violence are left feeling embarrassment, pain, and trauma. Some of them being forced to interrupt their studies, temporarily or even permanently.



## 1 - GUILTY OF BEING GAY :

Testimony of a law student in the University of Ben Aknoun, Alger, during the academic year of 2013/2014.

My name Mohammed. I wish to give a testimony regarding my experience as an openly gay student at an Algerian university.

During my final year at the University of Ben Aknoun, Alger, two students from my class constantly harassed and insulted me for being effeminate and well loved by the girls that I frequently hung out with. Aside from homophobic insults, they had great fun flipping over my meal tray at the cafeteria, while other students watched with great amusement. Everyday life was an unbearable hell. When I finally could take it no more and got myself to complain to the rector, he simply told me that if I want people to treat me better then I better man-up and deal with my womanly mannerism. He said: "Be a man and no one will come near you anymore."

One day, I was alone in the restroom, two students stormed into my bathroom stall and told me that, since I'm a faggot and all the girls love me, I should hook them up with a couple of the girls, or else "we will rape you." They were so serious about their threat and gave me two days to deliver. I was terrified so I resorted to the police, explaining what had happened, but the officers sent me away because I had nothing to back my claims. Two days later, I was with some friends at a tutorial (supervision) class, the same two students came up to us and asked the others to leave because they had something to discuss with me.

As soon as I was left alone with them, they demanded to know what I have done regarding their request. My answer was that I did nothing that I do not intend to do anything. One of the guys started to get angry and said: "You will see what we do to faggots like you." Then, he started beating me while the other put his hand over my mouth to prevent me from screaming. To conclude their act of violence, they threw me to the floor and hit me on the knee with a chair. When all of this was over, I was on the floor, incapable of any movement. I dragged myself to administration offices to complain, they told me to go to the police, which I did. Back to the police station, I pressed charges, backing up my claims with medical certificates this time, I figured that this way my attackers will certainly pay for their crimes. When the attackers were confronted with their act, they simply said that, considering the fact that I am a faggot, I had asked them to have sex with me and then threatened them with violence if they refuse. The police officer, while looking at me as if I am the criminal here, said to me: "Look, it is in your own interest to withdraw your complaint. You are clearly a homosexual, if those you are accusing of assault press charges, you will be the one to go to prison. We have laws against YOUR kind of people in this country." And so I left the police station without filing a complaint, avoiding to look at the - very satisfied - faces of my aggressors.

In the end, the biggest lesson I learned in law school will always be: "I am gay, therefore I am guilty."

## C - IN THE WORKPLACE :

We cannot imagine a socially cohesive society when a whole group of people are being discriminated against and intentionally sidelined from the workforce. Discrimination on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation in a professional context further isolates the LGBTIQ community, preventing its members from achieving financial independence, which is a prerequisite for their battle against other forms of violence.

### 1 - YOU'RE GAY, REGARDLESS OF YOUR RESUME :



Chahine is a very qualified young Algerian man, he has already obtained several diplomas and masters' degrees in several languages. He had put in a lot of energy and time in developing himself and his career, which he thought would be enough to secure a bright, successful future. Chahine had unfortunately underestimated a crucial detail, one that would eventually compromise his whole career. Chahine is effeminate, and that will ruin all his plans.

Chahine's mannerism and his self-expression had always caused him problems, especially at college where – in addition to his mannerism – he was a hard working student. During those years, he was constantly harassed and bullied by colleagues. However, Chahine armed himself with his nerves of steel, he would always tell himself that once armed with diplomas people will look at him differently.

In 2014, his degree in hand and with the help of his father, Chahine secured an internship in a renowned company in London.

In 2015, he came back to Algeria confident and ready to dive right into the job market. His resume was excellent, a degree from the School of Economics with excellent grades, a certificate of completion of an internship in London as well as a letter of recommendation from his sponsors in London, and finally, an excellent level of English proficiency, a highly desired skill in his field – international commerce.

He landed his first job interview in Algiers. He was interviewed by the director of a major international company specializing in maritime trade. The director was a foreigner and was therefore less focused on the interviewee's looks, he offers him the



job without a second thought. Chahine was ecstatic, he immediately moved to Oran where the company offices were.

The first day on the job, Chahine was very anxious, he was determined to leave a good first impression among his colleagues. He wore a new suit, new shoes, and headed to the office. His line-manager gave him a tour of the different departments, showed him his desk, and provided him with all necessary documents and tools necessary for his work.

On the second day on the job, however, the nightmare began. First of all, none of his colleagues would answer him when he greeted them good morning. He told himself it may be because he is new and they are being reserved. Then he started hearing comments and snickering about him being effeminate. Despite the pain that caused him, he did his best to ignore it, to just keep walking as if he didn't hear the comment or didn't understand it. Every single day at the job he would be subjected to such treatment. Every time he would walk into the office, or go out for a cigarette, he would be greeted with silence, and unpleasant smiles.

Unfortunately, Chahine's ordeal was not limited to inter-personal antagonism, it quickly started affecting the professional aspect as well and his ability to perform his job well.

One day, he received the minutes of a very important staff meeting he was not invited to participate in. Reading the minutes, he realized that some of the action points involved his department, but he was not even included. He also noticed that his assistant took part in the meeting instead. When he confronted her and asked for an explanation, she informed him that he was excluded from the meeting upon the request of the other departments.

This ordeal went on for a good six months, Chahine tried very hard to do a good job, in spite of the daily harassment he was subjected to. One day, he couldn't take it anymore and decided to confront one of his colleagues, he demanded respect for his status and prerogatives, the colleague simply responded by saying: "This is a space for men, real men, if you cannot be one, feel free to leave." The Director himself was present and witnessed the whole incident. Chahine was shocked by the silence of his line-manager in the face of yet another insult. He submitted his resignation letter and left the office.

For more than a year, Chahine has been doing small work from home, translations, activity reports, etc. He basically does the little needed to survive, while watching passively as his dreams dissolve slowly, but surely, simply because of his identity.

Collective, organized homophobia recognizes no qualifications and no skills. It forces homosexuals to only imagine a better future beyond the borders of their country, even when they have no intention to leave.



## B - IN PRISON :

It is usually difficult to document acts of violence that take place in prison. When someone is incarcerated for homosexuality, not only are they socially considered dead, but they also prefer not to talk about what happened in such a closed and isolated environment.

This is the first testimony we have ever been able to document regarding the penitentiary world. We will refrain from sharing some details with the public to protect the privacy and safety of the witness. Such information will only be shared with human rights and prison rights organizations.



### 1 - PRISON EL HARRACH :

Nadir is a twenty-eight years old man. He was released from prison in September 2016, after serving a sentence of two years. It is worth mentioning that Nadir was sentenced for a common crime, not under charges of homosexual acts. However, he has what could be considered an “effeminate” look, making it difficult for him to conceal his identity from other inmates. Nadir told us about the conditions under which he lived for two years, which is the same for other people in similar situations.

**At arrival:** On my first day in prison, I was thinking: “Ok, so I’m gay, should I make an effort to hide that fact in this environment?”. It didn’t take long for my question to be answered. The moment I entered the registrar’s office, he could immediately tell that I was gay, he tried to slap me but missed my face. He turned to his colleague and said: “Here’s one of those, he’ll be pregnant in less than a month.” I was petrified, I immediately understood that I needed to do anything possible to keep a low profile.

During my medical visit, the doctor asked me directly about my sexual orientation, I denied being a homosexual. Once the mandatory check-ups were done, I was taken to a cell for newcomers. It is basically a room of eighty people, but with only thirty-six beds. Some prisoners slept in the space between the beds, “El Oued” [the river] they called it. The space under the bunk beds is called the “drawer”. That’s the space designated for homosexuals, or those labeled as such. As soon as I walked into the room, the “Brivot” – that’s basically the boss of the cell – came up to me. He was almost certain I was gay, he started joking around with his little gang of prisoners, singing bring him to me. I was lucky, some of the people that were detained with me before were also there in that cell. I was relieved that they intervened on my behalf with the Brivot, later on, I discovered their ill intentions, they had only done that with the intention to take advantage of me as a payment for their protection. Two days later, before they had the chance to assault me, I was moved to another cell. The cell you are transferred to depends on your age, the gravity of your crime, and your physical looks. Those they call “cuties” or the “daddy’s girls” are sent to cells that are close to security guards. Then there are the dirty rooms without beds, those are for prisoners classified as dangerous, mildly dangerous, and recidivists. In the cells you have what they call the “Gourbi”, which is basically a group of three to five prisoners that hang out together, they eat together, keep an eye out for each other, and protect each other. If you fail to get yourself a Gourbi to fit into, you’re screwed. You will be the weakest link in the cell, you will be victim to unthinkable atrocities. You should keep in mind that when you’re in prison, the best way to kill time is to mock and victimize the weakest. Eventually, some just can’t take it anymore and end up killing themselves. I was personally witness to two such incidents. Once, there was this guy who was so terrified of prison he started acting extremely “sociable” and nice to everyone. This only led to other prisoners making fun of him, then groping and molesting him. Soon after, he was being undressed against his will, groups of prisoners manhandling him and mimicking fucking movements, or even crushing his testicles against metal bars. One day, they stripped him naked, took him to the bathroom and put a stick up his anus. This young man put up with this for two months. Eventually, he climbed up the wall and jumped. He died. It was September or October, 2015.

In the cell, if a prisoner makes the mistake of giving into another’s advances, if he allows himself to be touched, then he is screwed. The one who did that to him will go around bragging about the fact that he managed to take him sexually. He will go to the Brivot with the story, to score some points and be on his good side. Sometimes, the Brivot will send his men to seduce the new ones, eventually using this as an excuse for their abuses. In the end, you will end up victim of a gang rape.

I was never the victim of gang rape, but one day, in August 2015, while I was working at the zone chief’s office, I was witness to a terrible scene. In the morning, the guards brought a prisoner in a pitiful state, he had bruises and blood covering his whole body. He told us that he was collectively raped by the fifty-seven inmates in his cell. The guards of the cell, along with the Brivot (in fact, one of the rapists), were invited to give their testimony. It was a festival of mockery, everyone was laughing as the officer “interrogated” the victim about which “penis he liked best” and which was “the biggest.” Then, the officer turned to the Brivot to ask him if “the fuck was good.”

Humiliated by the jokes and giggles, the prisoner started screaming and crying. The officer scolded him and threatened to return him to the same cell where he was raped. Then, faced with all this, the prisoner broke down, hysterical, he starts banging his head against the wall, cutting his head open. The head of the medical team, a woman whose office was right next to the one we were in, stormed into the office when she heard the screams. The young man, unconscious, was taken immediately to the hospital. Soon after this incident, we started having regular external monitoring visits.

As far as I'm concerned, I was lucky to have a set of skills that are useful in prison. This has spared me many aggressions that other inmates were subjected to. This also allowed me to move around when performing my duties. In fact, I started working on the third day of my incarceration. There was however one officer that was convinced that I was gay. He was constantly harassing me, telling me he was certain I was doing sexual things with other inmates, promising me that I would end up in with my "sisters" in the "Cabanos". He was referring to the gay cells. I tried to ask around about it, I was told that those were the cells reserved for those who "give away their asses", also known as their "merchandise". One day, when performing some duties, I passed by those cells. The Cabano is a three square meter cell, hosting five to eight inmates. They have a different outdoor schedule than the rest, they are only allowed for half a day every two days, basically, to get a haircut or shower. They are always escorted by officers. Whenever other inmates walk past their cell, they throw insults in their direction, or rotten fruits, or whatever object they have on them. These inmates are basically homosexuals and transsexuals, they are packed together to serve as a spectacle, for guards and inmates alike. Cabanos are located in the solitary confinement zone, where perpetrators of vicious and dangerous crimes are held. Security measures there are very extreme. The weakest are subjected there to rape and other aggressions...

### III REPORTING VIOLATIONS :

If you wish to continue reporting and sharing with us cases of abuse and violence you have been subjected to, or you have been witness of, you are kindly invited to use our new, simple, and practical application. This way, you will be able to safely and anonymously tell us about incidents that you wish to share with us, or inform us of. The development of this tool would not have been possible without the generous support of our regional partner, AFE. The reports you send us will allow us to be better informed of the situation, and thus develop better solutions to confront such instances of violence. In some cases, we may also be able to offer support to the victims.

The application covers all regions of the Algerian territories, and covers numerous forms of abuses. However, you can also add more fields you find missing.

To access the application, please use the following link:

<https://transhomosdz.org/declarer-un-abus-form/>



## IV ACKNOWLEDGEMENT :

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Finally, we would like to thank the activists that will use this report, contributing to the ending all forms of discrimination and violence against LGBTIQ individuals in Algeria

Zoheir Djazeiri / Coordinator

### **Contact us:**

**Website :** <https://transhomosdz.org/>

### **Facebook :**

<https://www.facebook.com/TransHomosDz-1658224427756105/?fref=ts>

**Email :** [contact@transhomosdz.org](mailto:contact@transhomosdz.org)

**Whatsapp :** +961 81 659 059