

Trade Union Action in Algeria: From Freedoms to Restrictions 1989-2019

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Abstract---Trade unions emerged around the world as a reaction to the deteriorating social and economic conditions of the working class, a result of the dire and harsh conditions experienced by societies during that period. The first trade union representations emerged in the form of trade union federations in Britain during the 1720s, the cradle of economic transformation and the development in the level of work by replacing traditional manual work with industrial machines, despite the fact that the workers protested against the harsh working conditions and the long working hours, which exceeded 18 hours a day, in order to obtain compensation that was neither sufficient nor satisfactory. The fever of chaos and protests spread throughout all European countries, such as France and Germany, which are major industrial and economic countries. Then the demands expanded to the various colonies of these countries, demanding that governments change and find solutions to raise the standard of living of the working classes and their purchasing power in order to confront the poverty and diseases prevalent in these countries. This made resorting to labor blocs in the form of unions to defend the rights of the working class inevitable. As for the emergence of labor unions in Third World countries, most of them came in the form of anti-colonial organ This is because major industries were geographically distant from these countries on the one hand, and because there was a lack of collective union awareness among workers on the other hand. Therefore, material and moral demands, such as raising the value of physical effort in exchange for work and reducing working hours, were the prevailing demands during that period. organizations with a revolutionary, liberationist, and political dimension, as they did not derive their historical roots from economic class struggle.

Keywords---union, union work, strike, union freedoms.

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Introduction

Algerian society in general, and the working class in particular, experienced harsh social and economic conditions, particularly during the period between 1919 and 1939. This was a result of World War I, during which Algerians sacrificed their lives and their precious possessions under the banner of the French occupation. They contributed to the forced defense of France against the Germans, and Algeria lost many victims, most of whom were from the working class.

The economic situation became more critical after the global economic crisis of 1929, which affected France and its colonies in general and Algeria in particular, as the social classes in Algeria were affected by the high cost of living, the spread of diseases and epidemics, and the spread of unemployment and poverty, which hastened the adoption of the union struggle and the carrying out of protests and strikes against the French administrations and authorities in Algeria in order to improve living conditions in general and working conditions in particular.

But the efforts of the social classes did not achieve their goal until the Popular Front came to power in France. The Algerians took advantage of their contact with French and European trade union organizations to develop their trade union awareness under the cover of the General Confederation of Labor (CGT).

Trade union awareness in Algeria was crowned by several protests and strikes during this period, including the strikes of 1920 and 1924 by port and harbor workers. The Algerian struggle scene witnessed the establishment of some labor union committees in 1935 and the establishment of the Independent Union of Agricultural Workers in 1936. After that came the formation of the Central Authority for Labor Affairs in 1947 under the leadership of *Aissat Idir*.

After the November 1st 1954 declaration, there was a break and end to the relationship between the Algerian and French labor movements, so that the working class took upon itself the role of the liberation and revolutionary struggle and contributed side by side with the National Liberation Front to independence from the French colonizer, especially after the founding of the General Union of Algerian Workers on February 24, 1956 under the leadership of the Secretary General* Aissat Idir*.

Who contributed to organizing the ranks of workers to engage in political and military action against France. The General Union of Algerian Workers exploited its historical legitimacy to monopolize union activity for several decades in most areas of work, especially public economic institutions, after independence. It remained the social partner of the authorities and successive governments at the head of the A So he lived through the various economic programs and strategies outlined by the ruling authorities between 1962 and 1989 until Algeria experienced some internal conflicts between the global economic crisis of 1986 and the creation of October 5, 1988, which hastened the adoption of the 1989 Constitution, which recognized political and union pluralism in Algeria. (Nasser Jabi, 1988)

lgerian state. Several changes occurred in Algerian society as a result of the political, social and economic crises in the period between 1989 and 1999, especially the black decade that Algeria experienced and the turmoil at all social and economic levels, such that public institutions were harmed. It has affected the standard of living of social classes in general and the working class in particular, as these conditions have contributed to the development of trade union awareness among working classes and forced them to unite in the form of unions that defend the trampled rights of workers and the harsh and miserable professional conditions that workers live in in the absence of an effective role.

To the General Union of Algerian Workers, which was busy polishing its image with the authorities as the sole mediator and social partner, ignoring international treaties and the 1989 Constitution and monopolizing sterile union work based on pleasing governments.

This paved the way for the emergence of unions independent of the General Union of Algerian Workers, adopting a revolutionary, combative approach based on the principle of escalating protest and strike to impose themselves in the union and representative arena, which weakened the power of the union centrality. Political and economic changes contributed to the development of trade union activity during this period, and the wave of strikes and conflict between the working class and the successive governments in power escalated, which necessitated the development of a strategy and plan to curb the ambitions of some unions by the state. Which in some of its stages reached the freezing of some labor unions on the one hand and the prosecution of some unionists and their referral to justice or the physical liquidation of others on the other hand, all of this data dictated to us the duty of research and sociological study into the reality of union work in Algeria in general and union freedoms and their relationship to the phenomenon of strikes in light of political and economic changes on the other hand. (Nasser Jabi, 2001).

We chose the National Railway Transport Corporation *General Directorate* to conduct the field study, as it is a national institution with an economic service nature, with union representation that exists in the institution represented by the union or what is known as the National Federation of Railway Workers. Its role and strategy for keeping pace with union work and defending workers' rights prompted us to pose the following questions:

- 1- What is the reality of trade union freedoms in the organization, and how does it impact workers' participation in union and political activity?
- 2- Do the restrictions on union freedoms imposed by the authorities push unions to resort to strikes every time, or are there other factors that motivate them?
- 3- What motivates labor unions to resort to strikes? And is political affiliation directly related to the decision to strike?

-Defining Concepts

A- Union:

John Cole considers it a group of workers who share one or more professions... established to defend the interests of members and provide for their economic needs related to their daily lives.

Ahmed Zaki Badawi also defines it as...a permanent, voluntary organization of workers that takes care of their interests, defends their working conditions, and improves their living conditions.

Based on these definitions, it can be said that a union is: a part that represents the whole. In other words, a union is a group of workers who have the competence and experience that enable them to play the role of administrative and legal mediator between workers and employers. Its role lies in defending the material and moral rights of workers, and its goal is to improve the professional and material conditions of workers and achieve their demands and aspirations.

B- Union work:

It is the practice or work or tasks assigned to a group of workers who represent their colleagues in their workplace. It is a legal and democratic act because it does not aim to create special privileges and because it is intended to raise and improve the standard of living of workers.

T-Strike:

Workers, employees, or professionals stop working, either completely or partially, as a means of pressure to achieve professional and material demands. The reasons and circumstances leading to strikes vary, but strikes are usually resorted to after negotiations fail or stall as a means of pressuring employers or the government.

C- Trade union freedoms:

This refers to the freedom of workers to form groups that represent them, and they have the freedom to join them or not.

Through the provisions of the International Convention on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise, freedom of association is defined in Article 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as: "Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. No one may be compelled to belong to an association." And in Article 23: "Everyone has the right to form and join trade unions for the protection of his interests." (Al-Zubair Boulanasir, 2010)

3 – The Role of the Union:

The primary role of the union under international laws is to defend workers' social and material rights. However, in reality, it plays different roles. It acts as a mediator between workers and the institutions for which they work, as well as a social partner to the state.

In other words, the union has a place in the political system of any country by virtue of its representation of a large number of workers. Sometimes its role is in providing social assistance to workers within the framework of charitable work, by providing some assistance to sick and needy workers.

By virtue of its political relationship with governments, the union participates in some of the tasks assigned to it, such as administrative and political oversight of some major projects related to means of production, equipment, and productivity. This is linked to the size and position of the institution in the economic system of the country.

4/Theoretical Aspect:

We decided to divide the theoretical aspect of the study into several chapters. In the first chapter, we addressed the methodological aspects of the study, including the problem, hypotheses, defining concepts, previous studies, and finally, the field and theoretical difficulties we encountered during the study.

The second chapter is titled "Labor Unions in Human Thought," where we tried to delve into the history of union work, its origins and development through the stages of development of societies from tradition to major industries. These economic and political developments created a kind of union awareness among the working class, and this is a result of the daily practice of demands and the defense of violated rights.

These difficult social and economic conditions that the workers lived through created a collective awareness among them. This hastened the emergence of a large number of trade union representations and blocs with different ideological dimensions depending on the ruling political currents. Some of these unions base their activity on the material aspect of workers' demands, such as improving professional conditions, increasing wages, and reducing working hours, such as the revolutionary current and the trade union current.

Then other movements emerged, such as anarcho-syndicalism, the socialist trade union movement, and finally the International Confederation of Catholic Trade Unions, which evolved into the World Federation of Workers. After their emergence, the first unions adopted many strategies to keep pace with the development taking place in the world of work. This was based on the crystallization of union awareness among workers and their members. We mentioned some examples such as Britain, which is considered the cradle of union work and the Industrial Revolution, where unions appeared in the form of labor federations in 1720. Then the fever of workers' and union demands spread to various major industrial countries such as France, which is considered the cradle of the revolution or intellectual renaissance, then Germany and Russia to America... until international recognition of union freedoms came with the issuance of the Waldeck-Russier Law in 1884.

This spread in the formation of labor blocs did not exclude the colonies of the great powers such as Britain and France. In North Africa, Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria had a share of the emergence of labor unions that resulted from direct contact with Western unions and the affiliation of some workers

in major companies after migrating to France in particular. This involvement created in them a union awareness of demands based on the professional experience acquired in French factories and plants.

The marginalization and discrimination experienced by workers in these countries were among the incentives that accelerated the emergence of a militant and revolutionary union consciousness against exploitation and the harsh professional conditions experienced by workers. All of these conditions and experiences culminated in the establishment of revolutionary, liberation union movements in their beginnings.

Its beginnings, the main goal was to contribute alongside the National Liberation Front in Algeria to independence from France, so that the trade union experience went through several stages, including joining the ranks of the French unions in Algeria *General Federation of Labor* until the founding of the General Union of Algerian Workers on February 24, 1956 at the hands of *Aissat Idir*, Which contributed to the fatigue of the workers in the revolutionary struggle to contribute to conveying the voice of independent Algeria to the corridors of the United Nations diplomatically, all this in cooperation with labor unions in Tunisia and Morocco.

The third chapter was about the development of the labor movement in Algeria. The General Union of Algerian Workers adopted several protests and strikes, including the strike of July 5, 1956, the strike of November 1, 1956, and the eight-day strike from January 28 to February 3, 1957. All of these union manifestations contributed to conveying the Algerian issue to all countries and peoples desiring independence. In 1959, on July 27, the owner of the saying was assassinated. The union carries the seed of life, and its death certificate cannot be signed as long as its birth certificate is signed in blood...*.

The General Union of Algerian Workers lived through all the stages and programs outlined by the state after independence on July 5, 1962. The historical and combative legitimacy of the union was a winning card that was indispensable to successive governments. Rather, it became the only social partner of the authorities in light of the state's unilateral orientation and in the midst of the ideological conflicts of the rulers.

From the socialist and communist orientations to the liberal system, the General Union of Algerian Workers monopolized trade union activity for 27 years of independent Algeria's history, exploiting its historical legitimacy until the 1989 Constitution, which established political and trade union pluralism. This occurred after the political and popular movement stagnate following the events of October 5, 1988, and the economic crisis of 1986.

All these events loosened the shackles of union monopoly and accelerated the emergence of several labor unions that adopted strategies different from the centralized union to mobilize workers in various government and private sectors.

Law 90/14 was issued on June 2, 1990, regulating union activity in accordance with legal conditions. Article 2 of Law 90/14 stipulated that...

Wage workers, on the one hand, and employees, on the other, who belong to the same profession or branch...have the right to establish trade union organizations to defend their material interests...* .

This pluralism has contributed to the emergence of new trade union forces, separate from the General Union of Algerian Workers. this separation and schism from the union harmed it structurally, which forced it, at the conference held between January 17 and 20, 1990, to abandon political independence and government guardianship, and pushed it to renew its structures and develop a strategy that kept pace with developments in Algerian society in general and the working class community in particular.

The conclusion of this chapter was on the result of the division of the trade union trend in Algeria after the 1989 Constitution into two conflicting currents, the first of which based its approach and struggle on consultation *the General Union of Algerian Workers* and the second of which sees the struggle and revolution against the officials as an approach based on escalation in protest and strike as a means of pressuring the government to respond to demands in the form of *independent unions*

The fourth chapter is based on the sociological theory of labor unions, so that we relied in the theoretical construction on some theories that serve our research, such as the ethical theory, the psychological theory, the economic content theory, then the political theory, the social conflict theory, and finally the systemic theory, considering that the union is a system of organizational systems within the institution.

In this chapter, we also addressed the sociological trends in explaining the emergence of the labor union movement, such as the genetic viewpoint, the functional viewpoint, the structural viewpoint, the ideological viewpoint, and finally the change viewpoint.

The fifth chapter was entitled "Economic, Political and Social Transformations in Algeria between 1963 and 1989 and the relationship of these transformations to the union and union freedoms."

The General Union of Algerian Workers, as the only legally and constitutionally recognized union, kept pace with all the changes that occurred in Algerian society, politically, socially, and even economically, by adopting the state's policies during that period, starting from the approach of socialism as a system of government to liberalism with all its positives and negatives in management.

And their repercussions on the working class, through the economic reform programs aimed at advancing the national economy in general and responding to the aspirations of workers in particular. (Zubairi Hussein, 2011, pp. 53-55)

At the end of the theoretical aspect, the sixth chapter comes under the title of the relationship between management and the union and its relationship to the phenomenon of strikes in light of the charged atmosphere between the central union and the independent unions, relying in this chapter on some topics that serve the study, especially diving into the factors that contributed to the phenomenon of strikes, as well as the sociological reading of the reality of labor strikes in Algeria.

This is followed by the fifth chapter, where we addressed the problem of the emergence of independent unions. This is followed by the sixth and final chapter, which deals with the theoretical aspect, in which we attempted to link the relationship between social movements and the development of union awareness among workers in the midst of the Arab Spring, the 2019 popular movement, and the birth of the New Algeria project.

It can be said in the end that Algerian legislation defends the rights of workers, especially in the practice of union work at its various levels, but in reality it remains far from the aspirations of workers and the basic goal enshrined in the international treaties in force, as union work is often considered a matter of struggle and power on the one hand,

And the conflict of interest relationship on the other hand, and this is what is shown by the many obstacles that the Algerian working class suffers from, especially after the black decade, such as disciplinary sanctions, dismissal, harassment, professional discrimination... ..which creates difficulties and obstacles to the practice of union activity and the establishment of union blocs and representations. In an organization where workers do not join union organizations for fear of punishment and management retaliation, this significantly impacts their social, professional, and legal protection. Therefore, these changes may raise fundamental questions about the role and future of the working class and its union organizations.

5/Despite the latter's advanced position in Algeria, the obstacles and challenges it faces at the same time could undermine the role for which it was created.

- The repercussions of pluralism and the crisis of independent unions

Many labor blocs have succeeded in establishing unions independent of the General Union of Algerian Workers, adopting a strategy of separation and avoiding political cover and protection from political parties. However, most of them have failed in this endeavor due to bureaucratic obstacles in granting legal accreditation. This is due to the connection of some of these unions to social movements of a cultural and religious nature, such as the case of the Islamic Trade Union (SIT)**, whose existence was

linked to the Islamic Salvation Front* FIS* party, which was able to seize control of many of the workers' bases in various public economic and administrative institutions after its success in the June 1990 elections their work was frozen after two years of existence in 1992, after the electoral process was stopped.

Many social movements tried to exploit the turmoil occurring at the political level and the social and political crisis that Algerian society was floundering in at that time to extend their presence and impose their control at the national level and mobilize the masses in their favor, until the authorities extinguished all attempts and put out all sparks under the pretext of the security and political stability of Algeria.

The General Union of Algerian Workers benefited during this period from the deadlock and the freezing of all efforts of independent trade union movements, especially after the internal crisis that the union experienced due to the reluctance of cadres to join it and the resignations of many of its executives. It was able to renew the union's blood with new members, especially recent university graduates, taking advantage of the connection of some student organizations to the ruling party *National Liberation Front (FLN)* *.

The conflict between the General Union of Algerian Workers and the independent unions continued to attract the working class and their attempt to gather the largest number of members, which divided the workers into supporters and opponents of independence from the union and joining it, despite the political and economic turmoil that existed until the end of the period extending between 1989 and 1999 and even after the rule of Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika came to power.

The General Union of Algerian Workers benefited during Bouteflika's rule, as it became the sole partner and representative of workers with the authorities under the name of the tripartite * union representing workers - employers - government *, as this period witnessed several labor strikes * demands * in particular led by the independent union within the framework of the plan to break bones and impose a presence in the union arena, especially during the fourth term of Bouteflika's rule * 2009/2019

Which witnessed many workers' strikes under the cover of the popular revolutions called *the Arab Spring* or *the Algerian Spring* or by another name *the oil and sugar crisis* where the independent unions exploited their participation in the strike in order to strengthen their presence in the field and participated in national consultations and dialogues that called for extending the fourth to the fifth term of Bouteflika's rule.

Bouteflika ignited the strikes again, which brought millions of Algerians out into the streets * within the framework of what is called the popular movement * to demand a change in power. (Mahmoud Ait Madour, 2013, pp. 9-10)

The Arab Spring and its relationship to the development of trade union awareness and the escalation of the strike phenomenon in Algeria

The popular revolutions in Arab societies in recent years have been a global media and political event, with their fame reaching most Arab countries known for their authoritarianism, where slogans like "The people want change" were raised.

This popular wave was exploited by major countries such as America and Britain to overthrow hostile regimes * such as Iraq, Libya, Syria, Tunisia and Algeria * as they were able to remove the Iraqi president in 2003, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia in January 2011 and Muammar Gaddafi in Libya in October 2011.

During this period, the Algerian government resisted attempts to overthrow the regime until 2019, during the second wave of the Arab Spring, under the banner of the so-called popular movement or the rejection of the fifth term of ousted President Abdelaziz B Algerians witnessed a popular uprising and

massive public mobilization in 2019, following the decision to run for a fifth term. Millions of Algerians rejected the decision in April 2019 and again in July 2019, rejecting any form of extension of the fourth term or a fifth term, despite the fact that the masses' primary goal was to radically change the ruling regime that had prevailed since 1962.

outeflika. The independent union took advantage of this opportunity by announcing several labor strikes, starting on February 22, 2019, and the October 2019 strike, which resonated strongly with the working class, gaining it popularity among working-class groups and muddling the credentials of the General Union of Algerian Workers, which lost many cadres and executives due to its failure to participate alongside the workers in the popular movement and its rejection of the idea of disobeying the authorities.

The announcement of the presidential elections in December 2019, which brought President Abdelmadjid Tebboune to power in Algeria, came after a long series of consultations with the country's active political and trade union parties. The amendment to the Algerian constitution was approved after a referendum in November 2020, where the new president proposed a course of consultations with labor unions.

To prepare a draft law related to union work and freedoms, separating union work from political work, and twinning with political parties with the aim of putting an end to legal violations and the exploitation of union membership in future electoral dates.

Independent unions opposed the draft law on union work and freedoms, which was unanimously approved by the Algerian Parliament under No. 23-02 dated April 2023. The unions demanded the withdrawal of this draft, considering it a crime against the legitimate gains of union work since the French occupation. This is what union leaders and activists considered an attempt to absorb the power of independent unions, after their strong participation in the movement and the demonstration of a working class force capable of destabilizing the authorities in the event of chaos and escalation of protests and strikes. (Al-Zubairi Hussein, 2011).

7/- Unions operating within the framework of the law, as well as unions that have not met the legal requirements.

The unions operating within the framework of the law, estimated at 17:

1. General Union of Algerian Workers (UGTA)
2. National Independent Union of Public Administration Employees (SNAPAP)
3. National Union of Joint Corps and Professional Workers of National Education (SNCCOPEN)
4. National Union of University Hospital Research Professors (SNECHU)
5. National Union of Public Health Practitioners (SNPSP)
6. National Union of Public Health Practitioners (SNPSSP)
7. National Algerian Union of Psychologists (SNAPSY)
8. National Union of Paramedics (SPA)
9. National Union of Paramedical Professors (SNPEPM)
10. National Union of Veterinarians and Public Administration Employees (SNVFPA)
11. National Union of Judges (SNM)
12. National Organization of Sports Journalists (ONJSA)
13. National Union of Algerian Commercial Aviation Personnel (SNPNCA)
14. National Union of Aircraft Maintenance Technicians (SNTMA)
15. Algerian Aircraft Technical Pilots' Union (SPLA)
16. National Union of Judges of the Auditing Council (SNMCC)
17. National Union of Air Navigation Personnel (SNPCA).

The 13 unions that did not meet the legal requirements are:

1. The Independent Union of Foreign Affairs Employees (SAPAE)
2. The National Union of Education and Training Employees (UNPEE)
3. The Independent Union of Education and Training Workers (SATEF)
4. The National Union of Education Workers (SNTF)
5. The Independent National Union of Secondary and Technical Education Teachers (SNAPEST)
6. National Independent Council of Education Personnel for the Three-Stage Sector of Education (CNAPESTE)
7. National Union of General Practitioners of Public Health (SNMGSP)
8. National Union of Journalists (SNJ)
9. National Union of Electronics and Electrotechnical Technicians for Air Safety (SNESA)
10. National Independent Council of Imams and Employees of the Religious Affairs and Endowments Sector (CNAIFSARW)
11. National Union of Vocational Training Workers (SNTFP).
12. National Union of the Algerian Professional Office of Cereals (SNOAIC)
13. National Council of Higher Education Professors (CNES)

8. Historical Overview of the National Railway Transport Corporation

1. Its Establishment:

The National Railway Transport Company was established in 1976 under Decision No. 28176 issued on March 25, 1976. It is a public industrial and commercial establishment "M.E.S.T", a legal entity under public law, and is subject to the supervision of the Minister in charge of Transport.

- Its headquarters:

2/The headquarters of the National Railway Transport Company is located on Mohammed V Avenue in Algiers. It may be transferred to another headquarters within the country upon the proposal of the Director General.

Its Historical Development:

- The National Railway Transport Company was founded in the mid-19th century during the colonial period, with the primary purpose of transporting raw materials.
- In 1860, the first network connecting Algiers and Blida was established. The network subsequently expanded significantly thanks to private sector assistance.
- Since 1938, the National Railway Transport Company (SNFT) has been under state control and was under French control.
- On June 17, 1963, the National Railway Transport Company (SNFT) was established.
- On March 25, 1976, the National Railway Transport Company (SNFT) was established as a public corporation.
- In 1986, the company restructured its organization.
- In December 1990, it became a public economic, service, and commercial corporation. Its tasks:
- Its mission includes the public transport of passengers and goods, which is assigned to it within the framework of land transport regulation.
- It is responsible, within the framework of the national plan, for developing, operating, maintaining, and expanding the public railway network.

Key findings:

- The emergence of labor unions came as a response to the deteriorating professional and material conditions of the working class.
- The first labor groups, in the form of labor federations, appeared in Britain in 1720, and later spread to other countries around the world.
- Labor unions were driven by demands in major industrialized countries, seeking to improve working conditions, wages, and shorten The industrial orientation of European societies and the transition

from the feudal system to the liberal and capitalist system contributed to the emergence of conflict and disputes between the owners of capital *the bourgeoisie* and the working class *the proletariat*.

working hours.

The success of the working class in regaining rights and achieving material and moral gains in the context of this struggle, especially after the success of the union experiment in Britain, contributed to the spread of union fever in all the major countries of the world and their colonies.

The crystallization of union awareness among the working class as a result of the deterioration of the professional, economic and even social conditions of workers, contributed to the emergence of labor blocs and union representations in the world.

Restricting and combating union activity by governments and employers increased workers' determination to engage in union activity and build an organization that would achieve the demands and aspirations of the working class.

The emergence of labor unions in colonized countries, such as Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria, is linked to workers' contact with foreign expertise, given that these countries were European colonies in general and French colonies in particular.

The migration of workers from North Africa to European countries and their employment in large factories contributed to the crystallization of trade union awareness among this group, which helped them transfer their expertise to their countries of origin, and then form labor unions to defend them.

The development of the conflict between the working class and employers gave governments and administrations an incentive to try to contain and control the unions and force them to work in their interests, on the one hand, and gave strength and determination to workers and unions to continue organizing their ranks in order to achieve demands and improve economic and social conditions.

The revolutionary and liberation dimension dominated trade union activity in Algeria, and there was a shift away from the demands-based path during the period from 1956 to 1962, with the aim of contributing to mobilizing workers in armed action and diplomatic work that served the liberation revolution.

-The labor unions in Algeria kept pace with all the developments and transformations that took place in society before, during and after the French occupation, acquiring a union awareness that helped them defend the efforts and demands of the working class on the one hand and adopt strategies that kept pace with the political and economic situation prevailing at each stage.

The General Union of Algerian Workers took advantage of the vacancy in the trade union arena, seizing control of trade union representation within the framework of a single party, and exploiting the historical legitimacy of its establishment to become the sole and legitimate representative of workers.

The General Union of Algerian Workers has experienced several organizational disturbances, including resignations and the reluctance of cadres to join the Union, due to the union's political orientation and its work in favor of the authorities and the political orientations of the state.

The global economic crisis of 1986 and the events of October 1988 in Algeria contributed to changing the map of trade union work and ignited the fuse of social conflict due to the deterioration of the economic and political situation, which led to a socio-economic movement calling for reform and changes in the political and economic system.

The events of October 5, 1988 contributed to the adoption of a new constitution that guaranteed political and trade union pluralism, after years of domination by the single party *FLN* on the political scene and the *General Union of Algerian Workers* on the trade union scene. Despite the administrative and bureaucratic obstacles placed by the authorities against unions independent of the union.

Trade union activity stagnated during the Black Decade in Algeria, which gave the authorities breathing space to find strategic solutions for dealing with the unions, on the one hand, and for the Algerian General Workers' Union to reorganize its ranks and adopt a new strategy for attracting new members to its ranks.

The unions independent of the General Union of Algerian Workers (UGTA) have been able to impose themselves on the scene by adopting a new strategy based on escalation and the threat of strikes as a means of pressuring the authorities to achieve the demands of their members, and to evade the policy of submission to the authorities in order to attract members from among the cadres and executives who have defected from the UGTA.

The General Union of Algerian Workers continued its strategy of approaching and currying favor with the country's highest authorities and playing the role of mediator and social partner for the working class, despite its activists' calls to separate from political twinning and move towards the demands-only dimension in order to achieve the workers' demands.

Independent unions in Algeria have achieved several accomplishments, allowing them to have a presence in several sectors previously monopolized by the General Union of Algerian Workers, especially after the events of 2011 and 2012, known as the sugar and oil crisis. These unions participated in demonstrations and called for several nationwide strikes, where they received support from the working class for their courage in opposing the country's highest authorities.

The highest authorities in Algeria practiced a policy of control and judicial proceedings against some unions and union leaders during this period in order to intimidate unionists and limit their practices, which led to the mobilization of the masses in strikes and demonstrations, according to the authorities' belief.

Independent unions in Algeria took advantage of the atmosphere and events of the Arab Spring in some Arab countries, which contributed to the overthrow of several political regimes, by participating in several labor strikes starting from February 22, 2019, and the October 2019 strike, which gained them popularity among working classes.

The General Union of Algerian Workers continued to monopolize union activity in major economic companies, such as the National Railway Transport Company, under the supervision of the National Railway Transport Federation, affiliated with the General Union of Algerian Workers, applying its policy based on loyalty to the authorities.*

The union at the level of the National Railway Transport Corporation was able to represent the workers due to its good relationship with the administration and its political twinning with the National Liberation Front Party, as well as the good relationship between some union leaders and the ruling authority, despite the failure to meet all the workers' demands, which did not rise to the level of their aspirations, especially the material ones* such as wage increases*.

The popular movement in Algeria *February 22, 2019* contributed to raising trade union awareness among workers, especially the stand of independent unions with workers and society in general, and improving the standard of living of workers through wage increases approved by the authorities in order to extinguish the flames of popular movements in the Algerian street.

The powers of labor unions have expanded, especially after the February 22, 2019 movement, as they have become an extraordinary social partner, with powers in most matters related to the professional, social, and even economic lives of workers, such as providing social services to workers in the event of illness... and the right to intervene in the administration's powers regarding social and employment housing, to the point that unions have become involved in political consultations with the authorities.

- Reducing the intensity of the escalation of the strike by the authorities and administrations, by using policies of threats and intimidation and even legal prosecutions of union representatives at the level of major institutions and sensitive sectors. These practices are considered a legal violation of international and national agreements related to freedoms of union work, especially the 1989 Constitution.

- The amendment to the Trade Union Freedoms and Labor Law, unanimously approved by the Algerian Parliament under No. 23-02 of April 2023, is considered by unions to be a restriction on union freedoms and union activity, and can be considered a key indicator of the severity of future labor strikes. (Kaf Moussa, 2009)

Conclusion

Algeria experienced a stifling political and economic crisis due to the global economic crisis of 1986, which led to the events of October 1988, the so-called "Algerian Spring," according to Professor Nasser Jabi. the higher authorities were forced to make changes in management strategies in all areas and at all levels, especially economic and political.

This change and reform at the political level was crowned by the adoption of the Constitution of February 23, 1989, which paved the way for political and trade union pluralism and opened the way for the emergence of new trade union blocs as an alternative to the traditional representation under the one-party system and the single-union union represented by the General Union of Algerian Workers, as Article 39 of the 1989 Constitution guaranteed the freedom to establish workers' associations and unions, and Article 54 guaranteed the right to strike.

This was followed by Law 90/14 of June 2, 1990, which established union pluralism.

The strategies of union action differed between independent unions and the central union, the General Union of Algerian Workers (UGTA), in their orientation. Independent unions were characterised by a revolutionary dimension of conflict with the authorities and administrations, adopting a policy of strikes as a means of pressuring officials to recognise them as a social partner on the one hand and to fulfil the aspirations and demands of workers on the other hand. As for the General Union of Algerian Workers, it maintained a policy of dialogue and consultation with the authorities in order to achieve its goals.

Trade unions faced several obstacles during this period, as the period of 1992 and 2002 witnessed a "black decade", with stagnation in the level of union representation, especially after the assassination of Mr. Abdelhak Ben Hamouda, Secretary General of the General Union of Algerian Workers on January 28, 1997, which was a setback and a painful blow to unions in general and the working class in particular, as he was the spiritual father, the legitimate representative and the ideal role model in union work.

The Algerian authorities controlled trade union activity and restricted trade union freedoms between 2001 and 2011, by keeping only the General Union of Algerian Workers as the sole social partner representing the working class within the framework of the so-called trilogy and excluding other unions from the political and trade union scene in Algeria under the rule of President *Abdelaziz Bouteflika*.

Until the threat of the *Arab Spring - Part One* to the authorities and the fear of the contagion spreading from the Arab countries to Algeria, which resulted in the 2011 and 2012 strikes called the *oil and sugar* crisis, which forced the authorities to involve independent unions in the consultations due to the latter's participation in mobilizing its activists in the strikes and demonstrations that swept the streets of several national states.

Algerian society witnessed the return of the signs of the Arab Spring - Part Two* after the political deadlock in 2019, following the announcement of the regime's desire to extend President Bouteflika's fourth term, which was met with rejection and street protests by the Algerian street, despite the failed attempts by the ruling regime to pass change programs from the extension to the fifth term.

These conditions were exploited by independent unions to participate in the strike and mobilize the working class to participate in the field strike against difficult working conditions and deteriorating

purchasing power despite the financial prosperity that Algeria experienced, taking advantage of the political instability during that period.

The authorities imposed restrictions on union activity in Algeria, particularly those related to strikes and protests, following the events of the popular movement on February 22, 2019. This was particularly true after the successes achieved by independent unions in attracting a large number of members from among cadres and executives, as well as their obtaining the authorities' recognition as a partner in political consultations.

However, the amendment of the law on union work and freedoms on April 23, 2023, under No. 02/23 amending the previous law, is considered a legal restriction on union freedoms and union work, which unionists see as an indication of the ruling regime's monitoring of union work and a restriction on union freedoms.

In the end, it can be said that union work in Algeria remains captive to the political system, such that unions continue to face the dilemmas of dilution and marginalization by the authorities, and attempts to restrict union freedoms in order to control their work and suppress their effectiveness in the field. But its continuity and strength lie in the effectiveness of its strategies of confrontation against the ruling regimes on the one hand, and the realization of the demands and aspirations of the working class on the other. (Iman Al-Nams, 2014)

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