



Statement commemorating the 64th anniversary of the first French nuclear test in Algeria, "Gerboise Bleue" (Blue Jerboa)

February 13, 2024

February 13, 2024, will mark the 64th anniversary of France's first nuclear experiment conducted on Algerian territory, specifically in the region of Reggane, in southwestern Algeria, dubbed "Gerboise bleue" (Blue Jerboa). This nuclear explosion, estimated to have a yield between 60 and 70 kilotons (approximately four times the power of the Hiroshima bomb), turned Algeria into a nuclear testing ground. The explosion was filmed and recorded and immediately transferred from Reggane to Paris to be broadcast at 8:00 pm. news the same day, accompanied by a speech by De Gaulle.

After this explosion, 16 other nuclear tests took place in the Algerian desert until 1966, conducted by France in Reggane and In Ekker. The catastrophic effects of these nuclear tests still persist today for the inhabitants and the environment in the Hammoudia region.

At the end of the tests, the Algerian population impacted by these nuclear tests numbered at least 42,000 people, many of whom suffered from illnesses related to radiation exposure. Additionally, traces of nuclear dust have been discovered in distant regions such as Senegal, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Sudan, and even today in France during sandstorms.

After more than 64 years since these tests, France continues to handle these issues with great confidentiality, citing national defense and security secrets. It still refuses to disclose precise maps revealing the locations of nuclear waste and to identify accurately the burial sites of these wastes. This situation raises concerns about radiation exposure in areas where the number of cancer cases, abnormal births, and congenital malformations continues to rise, especially in regions affected by nuclear testing.

As organizations representing affected communities, indigenous peoples, and those advocating for the prohibition of nuclear weapons, environmental protection, human rights, and peace promotion, we denounce the harmful effects of the terrible French nuclear tests conducted in Algeria from 1960 to 1966. We demand urgent measures be taken to address the ongoing disaster caused by these explosions. Through this declaration:

- We call upon the French government to lift the secrecy surrounding the files related to nuclear explosions and tests in Algeria, to provide the Algerian government with a comprehensive list of nuclear waste burial sites along with detailed descriptions of the buried materials, to publish data regarding contaminated areas, and to cease hiding behind national defense and security secrets. We call for facilitating reparations proceedings and expediting the compensation process for Algerian victims.
- Additionally, we urge France to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) to demonstrate good faith in addressing the disaster of its nuclear tests in Algeria.
- We also encourage the Algerian government to continue the process, initiated on September ,20 2017, of ratifying the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). This treaty is significant because it is the first of its kind to consider communities affected by nuclear weapons and contains positive commitments useful for addressing the issue of French nuclear test sites in Algeria upon ratification, particularly the provisions of Articles 6 and 7, which impose obligations on States parties to provide assistance to victims, remediate the environment, and provide international assistance (technical, humanitarian, and financial, among others).
- We also urge the Algerian government to utilize all legal and diplomatic means at its disposal to assist victims of nuclear tests in reclaiming their moral and material rights. It should allow any individual seeking redress or their relatives to access a certified copy of the archives related to the French nuclear tests in the Algerian desert from 1960 to 1966 through the administration. To this end, we request that the government regularly publish a report on the activities of the National Agency for the Rehabilitation of Former French Nuclear Test Sites and Explosions in Southern Algeria, established in 2021.
- We invite the Algerian government to provide the necessary facilities to legal, environmental, and health-focused associations and to guarantee the right of civil society to access information in order to contribute to national and international attention on the disaster of French nuclear bombings in Algeria.
- We applaud the establishment by Presidents Tebboune and Macron of the joint commission of historians and urge them to accelerate their work, especially on the issue of the consequences of nuclear tests.

Organizations signing:

- SHOAA for Human Rights
- International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN)
- ICAN France
- Observatoire des armements
- ICAN Germany
- International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW)
- Initiatives pour le désarmement nucléaire (IDN), France
- The Congolese Civil Society of South Africa
- Snake River Alliance
- The Nuclear Resister
- Perú por el Desarme
- Peace Education & Art Communication Institute (PEAC)
- Union Pacifiste France
- Youth Nuclear Peace Summit
- Abolition des armes nucléaires - Maison de Vigilance